

This examination was given using the chain oral testing process, and candidates were given ten minutes to respond to each question. Candidate responses to each question were rated on a five-point scale (1 to 5) from nil response through optimum according to determinations made by the SMEs. Oral communication for each question was also rated on the five-point scale. This five-point scale includes 5 as the optimal response, 4 as a more than acceptable passing response, 3 as a minimally acceptable passing response, 2 as a less than acceptable response, and 1 as a much less than acceptable response. The appellant received the following scores for the technical component for each question, in order: 2, 5, 5 and 5. He received the scores of 4, 4, 4 and 3 for the oral communication components.

The appellant challenges his score for the oral communication component for the Incident Command – Fire Incident scenario. As a result, the appellant's test material, audiotape, and a listing of PCAs for the scenario were reviewed.

For oral communication component of the Incident Command – Fire Incident scenario, the assessor noted that the appellant demonstrated a major weakness in Inflection/Modulation/Rate/Volume as evidenced by eight long pauses when responding to question 1 and three long pauses when responding to question 2. Additionally, it was noted that the appellant demonstrated a minor weakness in organization as he read question 2 then went back to question 1 then reread question 2 and responded to question 2. On appeal, the appellant states that he is a Toastmaster member at the confident communicator level. He argues that he intentionally paused rather than using distracting verbal mannerisms, and that pausing is a learned and encouraged skill in public speaking. He states that he purposely reread question 2 to be clear and concise.

One factor in oral communication is inflection/moderation/rate/volume (I/M/V/R). This factor is defined as speaking at an appropriate rate, maintaining appropriate pitch and volume, and properly using pitch to convey meaning or emphasis. Another factor is organization, defined as presenting ideas in a logical fashion, stating a topic, and providing supporting arguments as well as a conclusion or summary. In his appeal, the appellant provided a short article regarding the use of the pause as a tool in speaking instead of fumbling. In this article, it states that 2 or 3 seconds at the end of a major phrase or sentence may feel like an eternity but that 2 or 3 seconds of silence gives the listener time to digest what has been said and lends significance and credibility to the speech. A review the appellant's presentation indicates he paused six times for between 4 to 8 seconds each, while answering question 1. He did so while looking down at his notes, as though evaluating what to say next. These pauses were not for emphasis or to take a breath, but were to allow him time to read his notes. After responding to question 1, the appellant paused for 11 seconds before going to question 2. He paused for 6 seconds before answering question 2, and he paused three times, between 4 and 8

seconds each, when answering question 2. Additionally, in his response to question 1, the appellant began most sentences with "I'm concerned with..." and in his response to question 2, he began most sentences with, "I would..." As such, the appellant seemed to be reciting a "laundry list" of concerns and actions, rather than giving a formal presentation. Thus, the appellant's presentation had a weakness in I/M/V/R.

Next, the appellant's presentation did not have a weakness in organization. He responded to question 1, read question 2, then asked to continue with a response to question 1. This was not a distraction. Nevertheless, the appellant's lack of eye contact, a component of non-verbal communication, was a weakness. Nonverbal communication includes using gestures effectively without causing confusion or distractions, and making eye contact when speaking. For much of his presentation, he talked down to his notes on the table. He occasionally looked up, but most of the time he did not make eye contact with either assessor. Candidates were instructed by the monitor at the beginning of each presentation to direct their response to the assessors, and the appellant did not do so. While the appellant's presentation did not have a weakness in organization, it did have weaknesses in I/M/V/R and nonverbal communication. The appellant's presentation was acceptable, but it was not "more than acceptable." His score for this component is correct.

CONCLUSION

A thorough review of appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be denied.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
THE 16th DAY OF DECEMBER, 2015



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