



Career Advice from Aristotle

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Aristotle loved studying argumentation and the methods of appeal used to convince someone of a given idea. Aristotle believed that people can be persuaded by the following means:

- Ethos (an appeal to credibility)
- Pathos (an appeal to emotions)
- Logos (an appeal to logic)

Each of these three methods of appeal is useful for you in your job search. In fact, if you use each of these means of persuasion effectively in your search, you should be very successful in getting a job.

Ethos involves convincing someone that you have credibility. Ethos refers to your reputation independently of what you are saying—such as your previous employment experience, degrees, and your record for being an expert in the subject matter you are being interviewed for. Aristotle believed that for someone to make a good argument, they needed credibility in the subject matter.

When you are looking for a job and interviewing for a job, an employer wants to know that you have experience in what you are interviewing for and can be trusted. Employers want to hire people with credibility and who can be trusted. They want to see that you have extensive experience in what you are interviewing for, that you have done a good job in your previous jobs, and that you can be trusted.

I am an expert in the hiring of attorneys and have been in the attorney placement business for my entire career. Attorneys (for the most part) will not say bad things about an attorney they have hired in the past. I once knew of an attorney who was addicted to crystal meth and worked in one of the largest law firms in the United States. He was so strung out on drugs all the time that he needed to keep a fan on his desk to stay cool or else he would be sweating all the time. Some of his teeth were also falling out. When this guy was "quietly" pushed out of a major law firm, he quickly found a job with another major law firm. His references were checked and the law firm he was kicked out of gave him excellent references. The new law firm was astonished when they discovered they had hired a drug addict.

Because lawyers are so careful about saying negative things about each other, when a lawyer is interviewing another lawyer, they are generally doing everything they can to try and discern whether the attorney they are interviewing has "ethos"—credibility and a good reputation. They ask probing questions - looking for problems you have had in the past with colleagues, problems you may have had getting work done, issues you may have with details—and more.

The way attorneys generally prove themselves is by building up credibility. They go to the best law schools they can, they work in the best law firms they can, they try and get industry awards, they join associations, they write articles, they may teach. The more of this stuff that an attorney does, the better they will appear when they interview. Credibility and background is a big thing and lawyers love it.

I once knew a woman who went to Yale Law School and failed the California Bar Exam 6 times over three years. Yale is the #1 ranked law school in the United States. Despite the issues she had with the bar exam, she was able to get multiple jobs over several years without having passed the bar—all based on the law school she went to.

In your job search you need to convince the employer you have credibility and are worthy of being considered for the job they have. You can do this by flaunting your past accomplishments, by discussing your skills, by discussing positive reviews you have had, and by making sure the employer is aware of everything you do that is worthy of you being considered the best person for the job. You cannot afford not to be considered credible for any job you are interviewing for. You want to appear to be the best choice due to a strong background in what you are interviewing for.

If someone respects you, they are more likely to believe you and hire you. One of the greatest obstacles to getting a job is convincing the employer that you are someone worthy of respect and someone who can do the job at issue. You need to portray yourself as having a background, experience, and so forth that is worthy of being respected. Your resume should also be targeted for the job at issue and it is often a smart thing to redo your resume for each specific sort of application you fill.

Pathos involves appealing to someone's emotions. When you are applying for jobs and interviewing, it is important that you appeal to the emotions of an employer. You want to have the employer identify with you and where you are coming from. You want to appeal to both, the employer's imagination and their sympathies.

Pathos means, essentially, that you are allowing the interviewers and employer to identify with you. If someone can identify with you, they are more likely to want to hire you. You absolutely need to make sure that the employer is able to identify with you in some way. This is extremely important.

I have been in interviews in law firms that are composed of people who are all Catholic. I have interviewed with law firms in New York that are predominantly made up of attorneys who went to law schools in the South. I have interviewed with law firms that are overwhelmingly gay. When I first came out to Los Angeles to interview with law firms, I will never forget interviewing in a small office of a national law firm that was made up of 10 gay male attorneys. I can only presume that being gay would help one get hired there.

There is nothing wrong with this and this is how the world works. Employers want to hire people they can identify with and who they are comfortable with. This is just how it works.

When I was in my first year of law school, I went to interview with a very well-known attorney in Detroit. I got the interview

because the attorney was friends with someone my mother knew. The person my mother knew was a reformed alcoholic who apparently had been pretty wild in his days. When I got into the interview, the attorney started talking about Alcoholics Anonymous, staying sober, and all this stuff, and I had no idea what he was talking about.

"How long have you been in the Program?" he asked me after some time.

"I am not in Alcoholics Anonymous," I told him.

He told me he assumed I was since I was recommended by the person I was recommended by. After this, the interview went downhill. It was clear that since I did not identify with him, he was not interested in hiring me. We want to hire people we identify with.

You need to appeal to your interviewers' emotions. It is important that they see you as like them and can understand where you are coming from. This means being honest in many cases about your feelings and the things you have been through. The more the interviewer sees you as like them, the better off you are going to be.

This can be difficult in many circumstances. For example, if you are a minority, interviewing with an organization made up of a majority, or if you share little in common with the people inside the organization. In these cases, you need to strive to show the people inside the organization that you, in fact, share many similarities with them. For example, if you are a woman interviewing with an organization made up of athletic-men, talk about sports (if you are interested in them). You need to find similarities you share between you and your interviewers.

Logos involves having a message that is consistent and supported by logic. When you are interviewing for a job, it is important that your message is consistent and supported by reasoning. Logos was Aristotle's favorite technique of argumentation.

In terms of searching for a job, the best thing you can do is to insure you give the employer lots of logical reasons to hire you over other applicants. This means you need to take into account that you have competition for the job you are after, and that you need to give strong reasons you are the best applicant possible. You can do this on your resume. You can do this discussing your experience. You can do this by anticipating the potential objections a given employer may have to hiring you compared to other applicants.

One of the most effective things you can do during interviews to logically convince an employer that you are the best choice for the job is to demonstrate commitment. One of the most compelling things you can do during an interview is to tell the employer that if you are chosen for the job it will be your #1 priority and you will work extremely hard at the job. You want to leave the employer with compelling reasons for hiring you that they can justify logically.

Ethos, pathos, and logos should all be used and taken into account in your job search. By using these styles of argument effectively you can position yourself for success in your job search and career. It is also important to note that these strategies and styles of argumentation are useful for keeping a job and getting raises and promotions. In fact, if you investigate the careers of the people who have risen to the top of most companies you will see they made effective use of ethos, pathos, and logos. Similarly, the most successful companies typically make effective use of ethos, pathos, and logos with their products and services they offer to the public.

THE LESSON

Aristotle introduced the concepts of Ethos (an appeal to credibility), Pathos (an appeal to emotions), and Logos (an appeal to logic), means of persuasion that you can employ in your job search. Utilize Ethos by convincing others of your credibility, Pathos by appealing to their emotions, and Logos by logically supporting a consistent message. The effective use of these methods can position you for career success, as well as for raises and promotions.

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