Are You Really Hiring The Best Candidate?

My sister, who is a biomedical sales manager, was telling me about a young professional her company hired in 2016. The applicant had a less impressive resume than her fellow candidates, was late for the interview, and generally did not interview all that well. However, in her closing remarks, she "sold" the hiring team, and ultimately convinced them to select her. When the team was discussing who to hire, they kept coming back to her closing statements. She had somehow gained their "buy-in," and they were so impressed with what she said, that they were sure she was the best person for the job. Yet, less than six months later she was fired due to poor performance.

Decisions are Emotional

Often, we gravitate towards candidates who are most like us – whether consciously or unconsciously. When a candidate speaks about the things we believe in, we emotionally connect, and feel a sense of kindship. Or sometimes, it's the way the person talks, or laughs, which we are drawn to. Some would say this is our intuition guiding us, but I say we need to guard against our natural tendency to "like" or "dislike" a candidate based words used, or mannerisms, and go deeper in our assessment.

Jean Haner, author of The Wisdom of Your Face, has to say this about our intuition:

> *"For many people, without training, practice, or awareness, it's rarely possible to discern whether reactions are based on unconscious judgement or true intuitive knowing. But when you come into balance with yourself, you're more easily aware of when your personal biases are intruding, and your inner guidance can flow without resistance."*

Culture-Fit *Is* Important, but *Not* an Absolute

Much has been written about culture-fit and values-based interview techniques (not using values-based interview questions? Look out for our future article coming soon). While aligning candidate's values, and finding a candidate that fits to the organizational culture is an important part of the interview process, it shouldn't be the only deciding factor. Keep the following considerations at the forefront of decision-making:

1. Understand how different personalities interview: Values and personalities go hand in hand. **Introverts** want to work with other introverts, and they value alone time. **Extroverts** love to think out loud and value conversation. Some people like to make

quick decisions, and move-on, never revisiting prior decisions. Some employees like to *gather all the facts, or make detailed plans*, while others rely on their intuition and simply act. Remember when interviewing, we tend to gravitate towards those candidates that are most like us in terms of our personalities and values. However, *research has taught us that diversified teams often are the most successful*. By seeking out candidates who think and act differently than us, we might be making the team, and organization stronger!

When you guard yourself against gravitating towards the person whose personality is most like yours, you'll be better equipped to assess each candidate in a fair and open-minded way. The key is to be aware of personalities differences, during the interview process. Keep in mind:

- Visionary personalities generally use concepts or abstract ideas, and don't give tangible detailed responses to questions.
- Feeling personalities, tend to talk about the "people" and how they were affected, whereas big picture personalities often give organizational/structural examples.
- Process people will give detailed process responses.
- Extroverts will sometimes over talk!

2. Develop a scientific approach to hiring decisions: Before you advertise your vacant positon, develop a matrix of what you're looking for. I have often used a three-category approach: skills, knowledge, experience. By identifying what you're looking for in each category you will be more focused when reviewing resumes, and can then select a much smaller group of people for first interviews. It's also important to balance what you need and what you want. If your company is struggling financially, you might want a finance-oriented person. However, what you may need is a process-oriented person, or even perhaps a person that values employee-engagement. Once your matrix is developed, utilize it, with each team member participating in the hire process. Avoid feedback that focuses on why one candidate is better than the others, but instead focus on which candidate best meets all your criteria. Having a scientific process allows us to understand why we are gravitating towards a particular candidate.

This article was written by staff member Veronica Barber.