

Career Coaching International

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THE JOB IS NOT ABOUT SKILLS

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While most of us focus on displaying our job skills and talents during the job search, there is a rude awakening out there if you view it from the perspective of the employer. The employer's view is that: "It's not about skills, it's about personality."

"What a revolutionary thought!" "It sounds idiotic to me." "He's got to be daft." Whatever your reaction may be to the heading above, read on to discover how, perhaps, you may need to realign your job-search approach to fit today's job realities¹.

1. Facts to Consider

47% of new hires leave their jobs within 12 to 18 months of assuming that job. 1.2 million Canadians reported to Statistics Canada that they were unhappy in their jobs. Virtually, every advertised job has more qualified applicants than the opening requires. Every position of which we are aware consists of two stages: reviewing the resume (qualifications) and a personal interview of the finalists (personality).

2. The Traditional Hiring Method

The most commonly known scenario for filling a new position is for the employer to place an ad online or in a newspaper. Then, 20 or 50 or, perhaps a hundred people respond to the opportunity. The company, in its wisdom whittles the number down, perhaps to five finalists. So far the process has been logical, rational and unemotional, screening the resumes to decide who the

most suitable candidates are². If the company were to rely solely on its logic, it would keep looking at the resumes to select the final person. But no one ever does that. The next step is to say: "Let's get these people in here for an interview and see what they are really like." "I want to find out which of these people fits best with our kind of organization." They want to observe how the person interacts with their own staff in the interview, how they look and how they respond and a host of personal behaviors.

The reality of the selection process is a two-step approach: logical evaluation of the mass of resumes and a personal evaluation of the finalists. Of this you can be sure: all of the finalists will have the necessary skills. Probably, of the 50 original applicants, more than half of them fully meet the requirements. Thus from the employers' point of view finding people with the right skills was easy. Now comes the hard part for the selection team – ascertaining which person will best fit the company needs and culture.

3. The Problem with Tradition

The problem with this approach is that the interview, the second part of the two-step process, is cursory at best. One hour to ascertain the character of a person is simply not enough. Most people get it wrong. That is why 47% of people leave their jobs after 12 to 18 months – their personalities do not fit that environment. It is NOT about skills; they were one of the finalists after all, the best of a large lot, skill-wise. In your own experience of job interviews, did you ever feel that the interviewer did not get a really

¹ It is the author's opinion that we are in the fifth year of an economic recession that everyone can feel but no one is prepared to admit. Simple test: what part of our economy is thriving – i.e. consistently creating new jobs?

² Yes, yes, we know. This selection process is not always rational. See our view on it with the CCI Newsletter of December 2004. For the sake of this article, let's give the employer the benefit of the doubt and assume due diligence. The point is that, regardless of the method, it boils down to a few finalists.

good picture of who you were? Why don't they get it right? The human mind has about 700 trillion synapse connections that define who they are. How many trillion will you pick up at the interview? Not very many – lots of clues, but not a definitive conclusion.

This second part is about emotion. “How do I feel about this applicant?” “Do I like the person before me more than all the rest?” “Will this candidate fit into this company?” How can it not be this way? We do this every day, every time we walk into a room or a meeting. We decide in a moment whom we like, whom we dislike and whom we are neutral about. We just don't bother to tell them. And we do it at interviews – we just don't bother to tell them, either, for obvious reasons. But our body language says it all. We smile a lot at people we like; we remain stern in front of those we don't like. In fact we must do this, as it is part of animal self-preservation. Your dog does this every time you take your Fido for a walk. No one in their right mind would say “I can't stand this Albert person but I think he would be good for the company so I will hire him.” Or alternatively, “Jean is very sweet looking, but self-centred. I think we should hire her.”

Now, very large companies and governments have decided that this emotion business is not good so they attempt to create systems to work around it. The trouble is they are trying to thwart human primordial behaviors. And in that they will not, and cannot, succeed. But try they will with personnel selection boards (and bureaucratic purchasing models). Meanwhile human nature prevails by sneaking around, loading the job description (or purchasing specification) so that only one applicant will win, the one they have already chosen emotionally (and, who has the needed skills, we will assume – since that is the easy part).

4. The Significance of the Facts

47% of new hires leave their jobs after 12 to 18 months as stated above. How about Statistics Canada's report in November

2006 that 1.2 million Canadians reported that they were unhappy in their jobs? Combine that with the fact that over 90% of people who leave their jobs do so because of the poor relationship they have with their boss³. These are all indicative that the match between personality is: (a) important, and (b) not very well addressed.

5. Realigning your Approach

First you must get your real personality into your resume. While this paper is not the place to expound on the details of how, let us suggest that you determine who you are and how you behave. If one of your key assets is that you are persistent, reflect that persistence with a description of a task or job that illustrates that huge amount of persistence. Do likewise for all your strong characteristics, filling page one of your resume this way. With such a description, the interviewer will know who you are before you enter the room. In fact they will have invited you into the room BECAUSE THEY LIKE WHO YOU ARE. Or they will NOT invite you into the room because they do NOT like who you are – saving everybody a lot of time, expense and the unpleasant game of charades that accompanies rejection. Some people who use this approach find they are invited in before anyone else is considered (remember, skills are not in question – 50 applicants have the necessary skills). Some people reported that they were hired from the resume; the interview was just for confirmation. We always recommend that you be your natural self at the interview because they picked you for who you are, not who you think they might want you to be.

Next, reduce the skills portion of your resume to less than one page, locating the list of degrees, awards and job tenures on page two. Keep the resume to two pages. More than that is boring to someone scanning 50 resumes a day – or even ten resumes a day.

³ See W. Caswell, *The Climb to Excellence*, General Store Publishing House, Renfrew ON, 2005.

If you are clever, make your resume tell a story. It might consist of: Intro – what kind of job will satisfy you. Then add a Modifier in bullets of facts of how well qualified you are for the job you want above. Now insert your personality paragraphs as described two paragraphs ago. Finally add all the bumph of your degrees and noble history.

Lastly, shift to the “Unseen” job market where 70% of jobs lie and stop competing with the mob. Start visiting people in an inoffensive, non-demanding manner. Let chaos theory weave its magic.

6. The Results you should anticipate

Less useless interviews
More useful interviews
A job you can love
Working with people you can love
More money
More happiness.

Need we say more? Good luck in your search.

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