

NEWS

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Information from SWISSCONSULT

Good or Bad Candidates?

In conversations with managers or decision makers in the hiring process, a Recruiting Consultant will often receive the verdict, „She is good“ or „He is bad“. Most people prefer to avoid naming specific characteristics which led to their opinion. Many supervisors and managers are challenged to recognize and describe the specific personal characteristics which lead to success in their organization. Thus, many resort to the old Roman method – thumbs up or thumbs down.

The decision is taken. However, the people who found, interviewed, screened and carefully selected the candidate end up asking themselves „What did I do wrong?“. The position requirements have been carefully aligned with the candidate's profile, the candidate interviewed well and in spite of that, the verdict is „Thumbs Down“, with the decision maker giving no indications as to why.

Whether working with internal or external recruiting resources, the reasons for a rejection need to be clearly documented. They are critical for the continued work to fill the position. Those executing the candidate search need to have information that is as precise as possible. The effort required for the search, documentation and selection of a

candidate is enormous. If this exercise needs to be repeated several times and the position still remains empty, the costs increase and the collection of „failed projects“ grows.

Black and white verdicts are often presented simply because of a lack of time to go into detail. It takes time to document why a candidate was rejected, time that most business managers would prefer to spend addressing their market, production or finances rather than on candidate selection. This is exemplified by the fact that many decision makers don't even look at the candidate's resume in detail until they are in the middle of the interview itself, which is obvious as the manager is constantly leafing through the documentation. To save this time, SWISSCONSULT has developed the following table which the interviewer can use to document aspects which impacted positively or negatively.

The evaluations express opinions. They are emotional and not objective. They are not the professional evaluation of an HR expert, a psychologist or a Recruiting Consultant, rather the impressions of a line manager or a decision maker who has strengths outside the area of personal evaluations. They serve the purpose of giving the internal or external recruiter points to



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Candidate Evaluation	
Evaluation for	
Candidat: _____	
Note 1 = very good	
Note 2 = good	
Note 3 = satisfactory	
Note 4 = disappointing	
Note 5 = unacceptable	
Characteristic	Eval
Appearance	
Mannerisms	
Charisma	
Spontaneity	
Verbal skills	
Adaptability	
Dominance	
Proactive	
Independence	
Goal Oriented	
Self Confidence	
Realistic	
Balance	
Honesty	
Quality driven	
Comprehension	
Sense for what is important	
Deductive logic	
Abstract thinking	
Creativity	
Ability to learn	
Motivation	
Prestige requirements	
Education	
Continuing Education	
Professional Experience	
Advanced knowledge	
Sense of responsibility	
Power as a goal	
Compensation goals	

understand how a subjective opinion and decision were developed. Through this, the recruiter gets a clearer picture of the decision factors and can better tailor their efforts to addressing the unspoken expectations that a Job Description simply doesn't have room for, leading to faster and better candidate selection. *Jb/ transl. ec*

Self absorbed managers destroy valuable resources

In every organization one finds people in leadership positions who do not possess well developed leadership skills, and thus fall back on power, bullying and underhandedness to realize their objectives. These bottom feeders are the subject of discussion in many forums and management schools. Even the author Robert Sutton has taken to the term "Assholes" for repulsive managers and leaders in his book "The No Asshole Rule" (ISBN-13: 978-0446526562).

Sutton differentiates between "temporary" and "permanent" assholes. The temporary assholes are generally positive characters that fall into fits of rage when they find themselves in over their heads. Afterwards, they regret their behavior. Because of these "fits", they are handled with skepticism and seldom accepted. The "permanent" asshole is different. These are permanent blowhards, manipulators, despots, bullies, and bastards. They can even be fantastically qualified people, however assholes de-motivate, humiliate, and depress their surroundings so that the processes that they contribute to often stagnate and stumble to a halt.

That assholes aren't just a pseudo problem has been well documented:

- A survey in Michigan has shown that 27% of interviewed employees feel bullied.
- 36% of a US administrative department felt themselves permanently exposed to hostilities
- According to author Jürgen Heidenreich, bullying costs Germany €15B every year
- A survey of 5000 in Great Britain showed that 30% felt themselves bullied at least once a week

In a climate where repression, fear and hate dominate, nobody wants to go out on a limb. The highest priority becomes self protection, not engagement and productivity. When a dressing down is threatened, risks are no longer taken and only the minimum required is done. The illness rates increase because nobody enjoys their work. And anybody who has to suffer under constant criticism will eventually find opportunities for revenge and subversion.

Even though assholes generate enormous costs, they are often kept in their position. Many costs are general costs: turnover costs, severance packages, court costs, loss of professional & technical knowledge, loss of customer, unproductive work, etc... Taking a look at these costs in an organization can often pinpoint the assholes and help remove their destructive personalities, which don't belong under a leadership role. *Jb/ transl. ec*

The crux between planning and reality

... and usually things work out differently than one plans. These words of wisdom are always

spoken, either derisively, regretfully or in astonishment, when something doesn't happen that should have happened. Management builds a plan of future events and then adapts the company to prepare for their realization. For example, an automobile manufacturer will announce what sales volume that they want to reach in 2008, and when all predications are accumulated, the market has to grow by 48% to reach their goals, which is absurd.

Management Science knows 5 key steps:

1. **Purpose & Planning** (Strategy, Operative Planning, Annual Budgets)
2. **Actions & Ownership** (Process Organization, Functional Diagram etc...)
3. **Goal Achievement & Evaluation** (Annual Target, Work Methods, Performance Appraisals, Compensation Plans)
4. **Personnel Development & Engagement** (Staffing Requirements, Organizational Structure and Hiring, Knowledge Management, Personnel Development)
5. **Controlling & Reporting** (Strategic and Operative Controlling and Reporting)

In spite of all of these systematic tools, every leader always experiences surprises. Company purpose experiences unplanned changes, strategies show themselves to be unrealistic, and budgets require correction based upon experience. Sometimes the changes are so significant that the organization falls completely off course. Afterwards, one is always the wiser, but also weakened, if only temporarily. How can it happen that UBS has to write off CHF 21B in one year? Did the planning simply not work?



Planning and Reality



There are three basic reasons why Planning doesn't match Reality:

1. Planning and budgeting is based upon historical data. They are often the result of generalized requirements (for example, reduce costs by 10%). The requirements themselves, however, can be damaging to the business' chances of growth. Equally well known are ridiculously high expenditures. (Systematic Problems).
2. Complex and time delayed feedback via the Management Information System. The amount of time required until market data reaches the right level of management and decisions can be made, can be very long. For example, UBS continued to provide sub-prime loans in the USA long after the crisis was known. (Information Problems)
3. Budgetary fidelity and management bunkering. Instead of adapting to the changing circumstances of the market, technology or financial situation, management hides itself behind administrative assistants and is unapproachable to employees and customers. They are constantly traveling and unreachable. Costly delays incur until changes can be made. (Human Problems)

jb / transl. ec

themselves as the best possible candidate. Doing this, they show themselves to be unqualified. It is not acceptable that people seeking positions of leadership and responsibility allow themselves to be so easily thrown off track. Only answers like the following are acceptable:

- Whether or not I'm the best, is not my decision.
- As I don't know the other candidates, I cannot say if I am the best.
- I don't think I am the best candidate, rather a candidate with excellent prospects.

These are answers from realists, who properly understood the question and answered intelligently. Those who seek to answer the question by positioning themselves as the best, espousing on their knowledge and experience, just flunked the test.

Similarly with the corny and often asked:

„What are your strengths and weaknesses?“

This question is so often used that an experienced candidate has a canned response, something like:

- „My weakness is my ambition“.
- Cleverer candidates find other answers, for example:
- The judgment of my strengths and weaknesses, I leave to my environment.
 - My strengths and weaknesses show in the challenges I face.
 - I try to be strong in every domain.

Dear reader, perhaps you use special questions in your interviews and judge the answers accordingly. Please send us examples of your favorite questions (Bachmann@swissconsult.org).

We will publish your examples on our homepage.

Jb/ transl. ec

Answers to Interview Questions

Recruiting Consultants are used to asking candidates the question:

„Why do you think that you're the best qualified candidate for this position?“

Most candidates attempt to answer the question by explaining their strengths and positioning

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