

Why you shouldn't use your gut instinct for hiring staff.

Using your intuition – Help or hindrance?

When you're ready to push the button on hiring that new staff member, it won't be long before you start the critical process of evaluating your preferred candidates.

Every manager knows that hiring great people can deliver a competitive advantage - but that getting it wrong can set both you and your business back.

With so much riding on selecting the right person, it's surprising that so many experienced managers are prepared to rely on something as risky and unstructured as "gut feel" to determine who will join their organisation.

So to what extent can our intuition help us in choosing the right person and more importantly, are there risks associated with relying on intuition? Unfortunately, the answer is yes.

For this exercise we're going to consider a typical candidate interview, and allocate a score out of 10 for their performance.

Now, let's look at how the most common pitfalls of using intuition can artificially bolster a candidate's interview performance.

1. Personal presentation – The easiest mask to wear. *Score 2 points.*

We all have a reference point for the minimum level of personal presentation we will accept in our candidates. However for those candidates with high levels of personal presentation, we may subconsciously award them a few bonus points on our scorecard.

We naturally associate good presentation with professionalism and skill – and where the candidate also possesses strong verbal communication skills, the effect is enhanced.

2. Talking the talk – We're both on the same wavelength. *Score 1 point*

If you have selected a candidate with experience in your industry sector, it's almost certain that at some point in the interview, talk will switch to discussing current industry issues, mutual contacts or views on competitive firms.

In other words, interviewing a candidate from your own industry will allow them to build rapport and establish trust – but is it warranted just because they know your industry?



3. Demographics – Similar tastes and life experiences. *Score 1 point*

Think about how many people you've met in the last 12 months that you really felt a connection with. There's a fair chance you were both of a similar age, had similar tastes in music, fashion, culture or perhaps even the same political views.

It's understandable that when we meet these people in an interview situation, we readily connect with them. Discussion becomes easier because you've got some shared life experiences.

4. The halo effect – My kind of person! *Score 3 points*

The single greatest danger in using your "gut instinct" for recruiting staff is what's known as the halo effect.

The halo effect is when you meet an individual who is very similar to you.

Mostly, this relates to personality and style. As an example, if you're a real people person and your candidate is exactly the same, you're bound to identify with them very strongly. The interview then tends to go off on a tangent – another sure sign that the halo effect is in play.

The halo effect is hard to resist for the occasional interviewer – of which most managers are.

We can't help but to be drawn to people who seem exactly like us and we have an appreciably higher regard for them – and why not? After all, they're just like us and what's not to like about that?

5. The real danger of using intuition – An unfair advantage. *Score 4 points*

Of course at some point in your interview, you're going to start talking about the duties and responsibilities of the job vacancy. If you ask the right questions, you should receive answers that give you some confidence that they *can* perform the job.

In reality, just being able to do the job does not guarantee success. The danger in relying on intuition is that the factors identified above (points 1 to 4) can unfairly boost a candidate's score (possibly, all the way up to 10 points).



Summary

Can they do the job - Will they do the job and, - Will they fit in?

Professional recruiters know that hiring the right person depends on much more than finding someone who can just “do the job”.

Will they do the job and will they fit in, are as important as *can they do the job*. In fact there’s a strong argument to say they are more important.

So how can you answer these important questions? Not by using intuition, but by applying some science to your recruitment process...

See the “real” person *before* you hire them – Getting it right the first time.

Even professional recruiters know that a highly organised and structured interview still can’t uncover and confirm the key attributes that determine success in the workplace.

This is the domain of the psychometric test.

Psychometric tests report on the important attributes required by all employees for success in the workplace.

To gain the most out of these tests, they should only be used after your interview.

Importantly, the test results along with your interview findings will help you to frame the right questions to ask the candidate’s referees.

Your intuition still has a role to play in the recruitment process, but it needs to be supported by both psychometric testing and good reference checking.

This article is © 2011 by Gary Costa, Managing Director of StaffMatcher®

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