

## Candidate Infatuation

Here at AssessSystems, part of our “built in service” is to provide our clients with verbal feedback on any candidate we have tested. In fact, we strongly urge our clients to take advantage of this added value service as it gives us the opportunity to highlight, in more detail, areas of strengths and weaknesses. Particularly the areas where the hiring manager needs to do extensive background checking to validate what we're seeing in the test results.

However, it never ceases to amaze me when giving verbal feedback how often the hiring manager will say, "The person you are describing is not the person I saw at the interview", or "I've done some reference checking already and I didn't hear any comments relating to the weaknesses you have outlined.”

Remember, at interview, this is the best you are ever going to see this person, plus, it's impossible to understand the “real” person during that first-meeting interview. As far as referencing goes, how can you possibly expect previous employers to comment on weaknesses outlined in the test results if you have done reference checking before receiving those results!

As humans we learn to rely on our instincts; in psychology we call this the *fight or flight* mechanism. It's the initial trigger that helps us to survive in specific situations. In most circumstances this internal mechanism serves us well – if danger lurks, we make a quick assessment on the immediate information available and then instantly decide to run, or stay and fight (figuratively speaking).

In the hiring process this built-in instinct *does not* serve us well. Yes, some people do have great instincts, but they are almost never burdened with the reminders of failure. They have blinders on and selective memories. The mind has a wonderful ability to forget failures and promote successes. Our survival instinct is quite useful, but when hiring, it can trip us up. It's a lot like that old boyfriend/girlfriend you had that your parents and friends didn't like. You harped on that they just didn't understand, or know the person like you did, when in fact your parents and friends, who have known you for a longtime, were almost always right.

On meeting a candidate for the first time we make a judgment call on whether or not we like this person, or not – the first impression error. I call this *Candidate Infatuation*. Just because a person looks good, speaks well, is tidy and polite does not necessary mean they will fit the job role. It's very easy to say “yes” to a person you like (and of course “no” to those you don't like!).

Many managers take great pride in their ability to “read” job candidates. Funny how those managers don't have a total team full of star performers! Let me tell you now, clairvoyancy is a load of old crock and when hiring, many hiring managers are putting themselves into this category. In fact, there are reports (Tassinari, 2009) that 70 to 80% of managers say they use gut instinct to

select a candidate! Add to this, upwards of 66% of job applicants fudge their resumes and background, it's no wonder six months down the track managers are commenting, "This isn't the person I hired!"

Yes, it is also important that you “like” your prospective new employee, but this organizational fit should be the last criteria after assessing their competency to be successful in the role. To accomplish this you need to design a systematic process (At AssessSystems we have done this for you – check out <http://www.helpmehireright.com>).

Not only do you need to check out the knowledge, skills and experience (application form, interview and background check), but also their personality, mental ability and attitudes (a “job-fit” profile). To help you understand the latter I’d like to gift you a free copy of my new eBook, “How to Avoid Putting Square Pegs into Round Holes”. Just email me and I will send you out a copy.

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