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IN THE RIGHT JOB

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Article: Why Job Interviews are Often Misleading

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Studies show that interviewing a candidate for a job position is only 14% effective in determining 'job fit.' On a nice day, it would be just as effective and more enjoyable to on a park bench and hire every seventh person who walks by!

The steps of hiring and firing employees are similar to those of marriage and divorce. When you are dating, you are searching for someone with whom you are comfortable and who is as good for you as you are for them. Next, in the courting stage, you are on your best behavior. You are nice to your companion's mother, you might buy flowers and you refrain from burping at the table. You get the picture. Your companion may think, "He/she is not perfect, but when we are married, I will change that." So you marry, and spouse tries to change the other. If it can't be done (the usual case, unfortunately) the couple may separate and then divorce. Of course, divorce is extremely traumatic and often very costly.

In a process similar to dating, a company advertises for candidates. After sifting through many applications and resumes, the finalist candidates are called for a face-to-face interview. With the interview begins the courting. The candidate is on his best behavior. He has researched the company and says all the right things.

Finally, the interviewer concludes, "Well, he's not perfect, but I'll train him after I hire him."

Sound familiar? Have you ever regretted hiring someone on the very first day? It hurts, doesn't it? Or someone asks, "What idiot hired that person?" Ouch! But you don't give up. You pay for training, trying to mold the person to do a job he will never do well. Eventually you begin the sad process of firing the employee. This too is a traumatic and often costly process. In our litigious society, it can be very costly.

I call it "hiring rabbits to swim." You might teach a rabbit to swim, but how effectively? Why not hire the rabbit into a running job and then train it to run faster and more effectively? In other words, hire to the rabbit's strengths, or job fit!

When I conduct workshops on hiring, I ask the participants to list what they want in their ideal candidate. They often list the following descriptions: honest, good people skills, hard working, self-starter, gets along with everyone, relevant work experience, stable, trustworthy, does quality work.

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Then I ask how they determine if the candidate has these qualities. Often, they admit, if the interviewee is outgoing, they infer he must have good people skills. If she maintains eye contact, she must be honest.

Except for the relevant work experience, the traits we seek may be hard to see. Since it is difficult to determine these traits, we use behaviors (like eye contact or a firm handshake) to infer their presence or absence.

Consider punctuality, for example. A hiring official may think a candidate's early arrival for the interview is a good sign of integrity or good work ethic. In reality, it may be the first time the candidate has been on time for an interview in his life!

In a hurry to hire, we may neglect to examine whether we are hiring a rabbit to run – or to swim. Haste to hire is a costly exercise and results in both the company and the employee being unhappy. Valid, scientific assessment of the characteristics necessary for job fit can reduce these errors in the hiring process and increase hiring success!