

rB Judging Judgment | Rod Brace

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Conducting an interview always hits me as a bit superficial. It's a hide-and-seek game of Q&A designed to get to know the real character of the candidate based on their practiced response to routine questions. They nail the hand shake, ask the probing questions drawn from your web site and quickly relate to whatever book, plaque or picture you have on your desk. It's an odd little dance, but necessary. The trick is in finding what you are looking for in the midst of the smoke screens.

As a leader, one of your most important roles is to bring the best possible talent into the organization. It is difficult to judge that talent in a static setting and outside referrals and contacts often help. Yet there is much to gain and much to lose in our choice. The remedy, I've found, is to decide what you want (characteristics, experiences, education) and then go in search of that ideal person during the interview. While these things are important, they pale in comparison to judgment.

There is nothing more painful than hiring someone with poor judgment -- personal experience has proven that to be so. If an employee does not display proper judgment in the use of their experience or the application of their education, their experience and education are of little use. Judgment is the core competency on which the organization depends to stay lawful, productive and competitive. Without good judgment the reputation of the organization and those in the organization are severely at risk. We must hire for judgment. We must go in search of judgment in the interview.

Judgment, like creativity or competitiveness, is best seen rather than described. However, in an interview setting, I've found there are traces of judgment that can be displayed or exposed giving a hint to the candidates capacity for sound judgment. My favorite question for peeking at their judgment quotient that lies just below the candidates best posture and engaging eye contact is: "When you think of people in general, what frustrates you about them?" I can't put my finger on exactly why that question bubbles up statements of bad judgment (many of which are somewhat humorous after deciding not to hire the candidate), but it does. I've received responses that shriek of pride and prejudice, while others showed a lack of capacity to understand people -- and still others are down right insulting to past relationships.

Some candidates give it the old Miss America try concluding that nothing really frustrates them and they love everyone and would love everyone at our company and everyone would surely love them. Others, in a swing of nerves driven exasperation blurt out that they are frustrated by people who ask stupid interview questions -- happened once, he had just finished a long day of interviews -- I was his last -- his very last .

Perhaps there are other questions that reveal the substrate below the shine of the contrived interview. If you discover your own you should stick with it. It is in the comparison of how people answer your telling question that provides you the best laboratory of trial and error

when it comes to judgment. Whatever the question, listen closely to their answer. Watch closely for their reaction. Judgment is one of the most important traits for which you should hire. In your judgment, if they don't show it, proceed very carefully as the price for misjudging can be quite high.