

Having a hobby could land you a top job

Swati Anand | TNN

Chennai: "What are your hobbies?" A cliché question that once served as a perfunctory during interviews by human resources (HR) personnel is assuming increasing importance in hiring, especially at senior levels. What a candidate for a position like CEO does in his after office hours is becoming essential in determining what kind of person he is, his inclination and even his leadership style.

"A person with interest in art displays a creative bent of mind. A person who plays a sport is likely to display a sense of sportsman spirit and competitiveness. A quizzier has thirst for knowledge," says Ronesh Puri, MD of Executive Access, an HR firm. "So a candidate with a hobby tells the company something about himself and what he brings to the table, apart from his experience and qualifications."

Hobbies and interest are not deal-makers in an interview, but in a scenario where experience and qualifications are given, a hobby certainly lends another dimension to one's personality.



WORK AND PLAY

Some companies express an open desire to hire someone who has an active hobby. For instance, N Srinivasan, vice chairman and MD of India Cements (which owns the Chennai Super Kings IPL team), is said to prefer candidates who participate in sports. His belief: the sense of sportsman spirit and teamwork is markedly stronger in such candidates.

But not all companies look into the after hours activities of a candidate. "The kind of companies that look into hobbies are typically MNCs from the new economy sector. For an older manufacturing company, hobbies are usually not of interest, so long as they do not clash with work," says J K Agrawal, consulting director and head of BTI Consult-

ants, the executive hiring arm of Kelly Services. For instance, if a company is rather conservative, they're unlikely to hire a candidate who's a Page 3 party animal.

Then there are some hobbies that serve more as networking platforms. Topping this list is golf, followed by equestrian sports like horse-riding or polo. Luxury gyms and wine tasting clubs are rising in popularity and if you're in the retail or fashion business, then fashion weeks are important too.

"There is a growing tendency to look for someone with a well-rounded, holistic personality. In such scenarios, what you do outside of work and how passionately you pursue it, becomes exceedingly relevant to a decision to hire," says Priya Chetty-Rajagopal, vice-president at Stanton Chase, an executive hiring firm. "A company that is looking to hire a CEO certainly looks into aspects like whether the person is a member of any groups or associations, whether they have been featured in the media, and their networking skills. Hobbies and interests play a significant role too."