

Hiring tips for headhunters: How to figure out if a candidate suits the company

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We often hear discussions on how to identify high quality and high performing candidates. Is there a clear method to determine that?

So how do we identify high-quality candidates and how do we identify high performing candidates? The second question is more fundamental, let's address that first.

In this rapidly changing world, there is one constant -- the fundamental DNA characteristics determine how we all behave and therefore perform. No matter where we are and what we are doing, we are primarily governed by our DNA.

Every country, every state, every city, every community has a sort of individualized and unique 'DNA' which represents its characteristics much like how a human body DNA is a genetic map to the whole person.

A person's DNA can excel in one environment and fail miserably in another. History is replete with such examples. And this is all the more true in the corporate world.

Take the famous case of a high profile executive who failed miserably after having moved from Apple to JC Penny. Nearer home, we have seen some very high profile exits in some of the largest corporates in the last one year.



We excel in an environment that allows us to excel

We all excel in an environment that allows us to excel, given our DNA. The value systems have to match. Performance is therefore more about fitment than just our talent. There is no one-size -fits -all approach. The hot water that softens a carrot will harden an egg!

It is therefore fundamental, no matter what business we are in, to understand the 'DNA' of the people we are hiring.

Hiring the wrong guy, no matter how functionally strong he/she is, can be tremendously detrimental to the company. **The cost of wrong hiring can be anywhere from 27 times to about 100 times the yearly cost of compensation for such talent!**

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Tips to figure out if the candidate would fit your company

So the question is -- how do we figure out a person's work DNA?

Interviews and meetings are about trying to find out about the candidates' DNA. We spend hours trying to discover the not-so-obvious aspects of people. The non-verbal is more fundamental than the verbal and so, we have to be trained to catch the lies and half-truths.

Questions which are seemingly innocuous such as which movies the candidate watched and about how they decided the names of their kids will reflect a lot on the person's thinking.

Our job is to unravel the pattern which exists in the mind of our candidates. **Hands and body gestures are the key to reading people.**

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Have you ever wondered how chairmen, promoters and CEOs decide on hiring someone in the first two minutes? Why would they risk their organisation by deciding so quickly? What makes them so confident that makes them decide so quickly?

This reminds me of what Malcom Gladwell said in 'Outliers' about the need for 10,000 hours of practise to be really good at anything. **Perhaps the courage of conviction to decide on which talent to hire comes with meeting over 10,000 people!**

As headhunters, we need to be better than our clients in understanding the proposed candidate's DNA.

Also, how can we know about culture and the impact of it on performance, if we have not worked for more than one organisation? How can you know about the role and the value of diversity of experience if you haven't experienced any?

The PIE factor

But how do we identify high-quality talent?

In my mind it's all about the 'PIE' factor:

- P-Passions
- I-Intelligence
- E-Empathy

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People with intelligence will find ways and means out of problems that confront us every day in our work. They are always looking for solutions. People with strong intelligence have good decision-making ability as well, as they consider all aspects before taking the final call.

People with empathy will find solutions that work for all. They think of others and don't bring others down. They are not scared of competition but rather thrive in it. And very importantly, they are positive people. They empathise with their co-workers and organisation goals.

Where we stand in the PIE factor and how ingrained it is in our DNA will be reflected in our actions.

As Yuval Noah Harari says in his book 'Sapiens' - **"The instinct to gorge high-calorie food was hard-wired into our genes. Today we may be staying in high-rise apartments with overstuffed refrigerators but our DNA still thinks we are in the Savannah!"**

- Article by Sunandan Bhanja, Managing Partner, Executive Access (an executive search firm)