

Hiring? Match the candidate to your company's brand

This month I was a guest on a regional call-in radio show. Joining me and the host was a second guest, the head of hiring for GEICO of Western New York. I knew the topic would be employee performance, because that is the specialty the program manager mentioned when inviting me to participate. I had no idea where the dialogue would take me (and the listeners).

We started off with healthy banter about the disconnect between job seekers and employers. Employers want candidates who are focused on what the company is looking for. The host suggested that candidates often wander in generalities when asked to describe what they are looking for in a job and struggle to demonstrate the value they can bring to a company. I added my two cents about the need for companies to find talent that understands their culture and the customer experience they deliver.

Next we examined the role and realities of social media in the workplace. We discussed Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other online resources that can be used to learn about candidates. At Brand Integrity, we check these sources prior to granting an interview and then explore even further if the candidate gets through the initial screening. It is our way to see beyond the facade put up in the interview process. We can get a glimpse into the person's interests and personality attributes that can help guide our interview dialogue and lower the risk of an unfit hire.

My comments spurred the first caller of the day: "I think you are taking it a little too far. By asking to be let into my Facebook or LinkedIn network, it's as if you're inviting yourself into my home. Why do you think you have that right?"

I agreed with the somewhat hostile caller to a point, especially in regard to Twitter and Facebook, which originally were established for social networking among friends and family. My next comment put an end to the argument, or at least kept other upset callers at bay.

Hiring managers didn't make the rules of social media, but they need to know how to play the game. It's a blessing (and some might say a curse) of the 21st century: Not



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only are candidates handing over a resume, but they're also dragging a trail of information readily available with a quick Internet search. Job candidates must recognize that they simply can't live a double life. Experienced hiring managers know how to find a wealth of information that candidates make readily available—information the candidate may not even realize is so easy to find.

The discussion also covered the concept of "hire for personality, train for skill." I suggested the "51 percent factor" as a benchmark. When evaluating candidates for hire, and later in performance evaluations, 51 percent of the assessment should be based on the employees' ability to demonstrate the behaviors that strengthen the company work culture and enable the delivery of a consistently good customer experience. No more than 49 percent of the evaluation should be tied to the skills to perform the job. You can train the skills. It's much more difficult to change someone's personality.

The host brought the show to a close by emphasizing the point that candidates are "brands" just like companies. She could not be more right. So I got up on my soapbox with commentary on what it takes to create the "Brand Match" necessary to maximize company growth. A match helps uncover a candidate's ability to deliver the behaviors and experiences of a company—his brand potential. Our job as business leaders and managers is to find the best possible employee candidates who will fit nicely within our work culture and increase customer loyalty, ultimately helping us reach growth goals.

Still on my soapbox, I shared the remarkable results that business owners and

managers should expect when they find the right match between company and individual brand:

- **Passion and sponsorship:** The right employees, motivated by the same desired outcomes, willingly head in the same direction as the company and as one another.

- **A positive work culture:** Internal excitement is focused on embracing change, not fighting it.

- **Employee commitment:** Employees understand how they fit into and have an impact on the company.

- **Customer loyalty:** Experiences are meaningful and stimulate incredible loyalty. This happens only when employees understand the benefits customers are looking for and the uniqueness with which their company can deliver those benefits. This allows employees to connect emotionally with the company brand, optimizing their ability to delight customers.

One way business owners and managers can better their chance for success in hiring is to use a Brand Match hiring scorecard customized with behavior-based questions specific to the company brand and culture. Doing so will position the interviewer to ask the right questions, which will help determine the best people with the right personality for the culture as well as the technical skills for the job. To see a sample hiring scorecard and get tips on how to create one, visit www.brandintegrity.com/truth7 and download the Hiring Scorecard Guide.

Anyone who has heard me speak or has read my articles before knows one of my key messages: If you're not managing behaviors, you're not managing your brand. Well, managing behaviors starts at the hire. It's vital to a company's success that new employees are able to think, speak, and behave the company brand. A Brand Match can help an organization choose candidates who not only have the skills to do the job but have the right personality that will fit in with the work force culture—candidates who are equipped to deliver the employee and customer experiences that drive business results.

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