



Caswell **CORPORATE COACHING** Company
Making companies better places to work - worldwide

NEWSLETTER
May 2012
Volume 11, Issue 5



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Bill Caswell is an experienced coach of CEOs and senior executives world-wide. He is the author of 14 books including the 12-book series *The Respect Revolution* written, by a CEO for CEOs, as a guide to getting your company to *Excellence*.

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Why we Lose at Interviews

Although many executives think they have a nose for talent, or good intuition about a new person's character, the sad fact is that 47% of job interviews result in mistaken choices – a world-wide statistic for a very expensive error of judgment.

Often, such mistakes are one-sided; the interviewers think they have hit the nail on the head whereas the potential employee makes very little judgment at all¹ about the good or bad of the employment opportunity.

Here is what is often going wrong. Firstly, no effort is made by the employer to describe the job in terms of the temperament required. Although the skill may be present in the applicant, rarely is the person screened for temperament and just as rarely is the temperament of the job or the work environment defined. Yet it is temperament that will determine if the person fits the job. Of course the individual must have the required skills, but when people apply for jobs, in most cases 90% of applicants have the required skills. Since there are 4 temperaments, simple arithmetic says that the chance of getting the right person is about 25%. However to some extent people with more or less the right temperament will be naturally driven to apply for the job. For example a sales job will often appeal to a person with an outgoing, risk-taking temperament; the sales ad will attract more outgoing risk-takers rather than introverted risk-averse individuals. But not always. Thus our 25% figure gets boosted up somewhat because of that – getting us closer to the near 50% statistic that opened this paper.

Since skills are a given, most employers conduct job interviews that focus on the character of the individual. Rarely is a person tested for skills at the interview. The employers seek answers to: Will this person fit in with our other workers? Is this the kind of personality we value in this company?

But let us explain where things go wrong. When we interview a person, two errors occur. First, we tend to hire people in our own image whether that character-set is required for the job or not. We think the way we are is pretty sound, whereas people who are very different from us are not as appealing. Thus we tend to hire more 'just like us'. The reality is that we need a balance of characters², not to have everyone cast from the same mold.

¹ *The potential employees' failure to correctly judge the employment opportunity is a separate subject altogether and has allowed CCCC to develop a successful business that helps people select or reject employment opportunities for the right reason.*

² *Past papers in this series, illustrate how a company needs all of four temperaments, PAVF, in varying ratios, ratios that depend upon the stage of life of the company.*

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The second error is more insidious. We judge a person based on a few character traits that we spot in the course of an hour-long interview. What we learn in an hour or two is but an ounce of a person's character. Yet, our intuitive brain quickly associates what we see with what we know. So if we see a good characteristic that we know in someone else, we assume the stranger being interviewed has all the good (or bad) characteristics of the associated person.

As experience has taught many of us, the short sample is rarely representative of the long sample (such as we discover about a person on the job after six months). As common sense tells us, a few associations cannot reveal the full character. YET AT THAT TIME WE BELIEVE IT DOES. We are strongly convinced that we are right. So we make a commitment based on the very limited information about the individual and project the good characteristics onto that person – all the things we want to see in the candidate about to be hired.

Whether or not you follow or believe the logic of the above paragraph, its practicality has been proven by psychological testing and experimentation over the long term – leading to a Nobel Prize for Dr. Daniel Kahneman, one of the proponents of such human behavior.

The fact that we are so convinced we are right is a result of evolutionary development wherein the brain's two amygalas force us to make hasty decisions on limited information and compel us to believe we are right. For, in the ever-present survival game, if we were to take time to question the amygala, we may end up dead, if the choice is between the caveman fleeing the sabre-toothed tiger or waiting to establish if it really is such a beast. And today, we are just a few geological seconds from the primordial human³.

This quick responding amygala influences decisions about almost everything we do today including the decisions based on the interview of a new prospect for a job. Obviously, if quick decisions are made on bits of information, the chance of it being 'right' is very limited. We are lucky that it seems to rest at near 50%⁴.

What can you do about this fallibility? Put less weight on the interview. Put more weight on other factors such as having the person respond in writing to some questions as to why they want this job or want to work for you. As much as possible, avoid meeting the person so as to not give your amygalas a chance to make an intuitive decision for you. Lastly, and more importantly, conduct a one or two-day test for the candidates on the work site that measures their ability to do the job expected, and let the winning candidate be the one you hire.

Good luck

Bill

³The so-called caveman lived 30,000 or so years ago, but our evolution as a break-off from apes has a 3,000,000-year history.

⁴Ask for CCI (a sister company to CCCC) paper that expands on the 47% job unhappiness ratio.