

# PHL|HP CONSULTING GROUP

Building and Sustaining High Performing Companies



A Message from  
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## How To Best Assess The Quality of a Candidate

There is no more important decision that a leader makes than whom s/he surrounds him/herself with. Of course, the vision that is articulated and the culture that is created are critical, but the people fuel the engine of the company.

I constantly hear: "How can I tell until the person works with us for a few months?" "The candidate was terrific during the interview process. What happened?" That's because most interviewers are not great at assessing candidates as people and how they will "fit" within their team and company.

### Here are some tips for successfully assessing people:

- Ask open-ended questions that encourage candidates to speak more and you to speak less.
- Listen carefully to what the person is saying and at their non-verbal messaging.
- Create a job description that reflects the input of someone doing that job and others who work with that position.
- Determine what is most important to you in a candidate for that job. Include values, traits, and skills. Write them down and measure how the candidate rates in each of those areas.
- When the candidate arrives, have a peer meet with them for 15 minutes and explain the job and answer any questions that they might have. When the candidate comes in to meet you, after the pleasantries, ask the candidate what they learned about the staff member, including their name, position, and responsibilities, what they learned about the job from the discussion, and what they thought of the staff member. It's not the information as much as how they handle the situation. Later, ask your staff member what they thought of the candidate and see how it aligns with your views.
- Provide the candidate with case studies that come from specific situations that occurred at your firm and see how they analyze and address the situation. Are they creative thinkers and problem solvers who are outcome oriented?
- Look for positive people. Listen for any evidence of negativity. Avoid people who criticize others from their past.
- If you want team oriented people, be aware of people who brag, who only credit themselves. Ask them for specific examples of projects that they worked on with others and what the challenges were, the advantages, and what they learned from the situation. Do they credit others?
- Does the candidate show interest in you and what you are saying? If you want empathy in team members, then avoid highly egocentric people. Do they speak about others or just themselves?
- Ask them what they liked best about a prior job and what they disliked. They will often tell on themselves if you let them.
- After asking a question, be willing to tolerate silence. Let the candidate struggle and speak. Don't save them.
- How does the candidate make you feel during the interview? If they make you comfortable and they engage you, they will be more likely to do that with peers.
- Look at the person's work history. How long have they been at prior positions? Ask them why they left and what they learned from each position? Are they introspective? Do they demonstrate self-awareness?

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- How do they negotiate regarding compensation?
- How do they respond to unexpected situations that go astray? A client of mine told me a story of taking a potential senior hire to a ball game and having the bartender spill some of a drink on him and seeing his reaction. Of course there are more subtle ways of making the assessment.

**At the end of the interview, ask some of these questions:**

- What is the most important thing you learned today?
- What question would you like to ask me?
- What question that I didn't ask you would you like me to ask?
- What did you learn about me today?
- How do you think you presented today?
- What is your level of interest in the job? Why?
- What is most important to you in a job?
- If you realized that you made a mistake in taking this job, what would you do?
- If you accepted this job and the day before you were to start, you received a better offer, what would you do?
- What would it take for you to accept this position?

Now that you've assessed the candidate, it's time for you to decide if you are interested in them. If so, it's time for you to sell them on the job.

If you are both interested, tell them that it's very important to you that people be happy in their work, so you'd like to invite them to complete a mini project that will take two hours maximum, for which you will pay them a stipend. Ask them what they think of this idea?

Finding and assessing the right candidates is very challenging. Most employers underestimate the complexity and don't invest adequate time. Obviously, a process like this is only for candidates that you've already established as having basic qualifications, have expressed an interest, and who are at a senior enough level to warrant the expenditure of time and resources to complete a comprehensive process described herein.

**Is it worth all of this? Consider the cost of a bad hire!**

*To provide feedback or share a question, please contact:*

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