

3 GAMES MANAGERS PLAY – THAT RESULT IN HIRING LOSERS

by

Michael Mercer, Ph.D.

DID YOU EVER HIRE A “SQUARE PEG FOR A ROUND HOLE?”

You can use pre-employment tests, certain astute insights, less laziness plus a shocking realization about betting to help you avoid a huge hiring mistake – avoid hiring ‘a square peg for a round hole.’

I’VE RECEIVED A “DEJA VU” PHONE CALL HUNDREDS OF TIMES

You will benefit from hearing a phone call I received hundreds of times from managers at a big variety of companies. I call it a deja vu phone call, because I have gotten the same phone call so many times that, as Yogi Berra quipped, “It’s like déjà vu all over again.”

In this phone call I receive, a manager who uses my pre-employment tests calls me, and says, “I want to hire an applicant, but the applicant got horrible scores on your pre-employment tests. But, I loved the applicant in the interview. What should I do?”

I always respond, “Well, that’s up to you.”

To which the manager always asks me, “O.K. but, Dr. Mercer, what should I do?”

Invariably, the problem boils down to this: A company using the pre-employment tests has customized “Benchmark Scores.” Those are scores its superstars or best employees typically earn on the tests. To help hire the best, the company obviously should prefer applicants who get pre-employment test scores similar to its best employees’ “Benchmark” test scores.

However, the manager making the “Deja Vu” phone call has an applicant who scored very different than the company’s superstars’ “Benchmark” test scores.

So, I explain, “The pre-employment test and its benchmark scores are the only customized and accurate prediction method you use. In contrast, interviews and reference checks are subjective, and typically rather inaccurate. The benchmark scores on the pre-employment tests are customized to tell you if an applicant has key qualities similar to your company’s best employees in each job.”

Then, I continue, “So, you want to hire applicants who get test scores similar to your superstar employees, plus also do well in all other prediction methods, such as interviews, reference and background checks, and realistic job observations.”

Suddenly, the truth comes out. The manager played hiring ‘games’ could have resulted in a whopper mistake: Hiring a ‘square peg for a round hole,’ specifically, hiring a lousy applicant.

Here are three games managers play – that can result is the blunder of ‘hiring a square peg for a round hole.’

GAME #1 = SEMI-PSEUDO-RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

The manager hopes – or hallucinates – the applicant’s seemingly relevant work experience is transferable to success in the manager’s company. This often is an incorrect assumption. Just because an applicant did similar work does not mean the applicant will be productive in the new job.

GAME #2 = FALLING IN LOVE – WITH THE APPLICANT

This is a shockingly common mistake managers make. Why? First, research proves most managers do not know how to interview applicants nor make correct judgments based on interviews. Second, job hunters know interviewing tricks that knock-your-socks-off.

Here are three actions a well-rehearsed applicant uses to make a manager ‘fall in love’ with him or her. The applicant uses charm tricks of

1. entering room with big smile, looks manager in eye, and gives nice handshake
2. complimenting the manager’s office or a photo or memento in the manager’s office
3. making the manager laugh or smile in the first 120 seconds

After ‘falling in love’ with and hiring the super-charmer, a manager frequently feels foolish, like lyrics of Dierk Smedley’s song: “I knew what I was feeling. But, what was I thinking?”

GAME #3 = TOO LAZY – TO FIND A BETTER APPLICANT

After a manager admits to being seduced by semi-pseudo-relevant work experience and ‘falling in love’ with a charming applicant, then the truth comes out: The manager feels too lazy to find more applicants.

But here is the bottom line: A manager will spend less time finding a superb applicant than the manager wastes while managing an average or below-average applicant – and applicant who never should have been hired. Plus, a productive employee proves vastly more profitable.

So, I always assure the manager by saying, “I know it’s a hassle to find more applicants, but I’m sure you can find applicants who will turn into top-notch employees.”

SHOCKING REALIZATION = EACH TIME YOU HIRE SOMEONE, YOU ARE BETTING YOUR JOB & COMPANY

After discussing Games 1, 2 and 3, I say this to the hiring manager to convince them it is worthwhile to find better applicants: “Hiring is like betting. Every time you hire a person you are betting your job, career, and company. Do you feel confident betting on an applicant whose pre-employment test scores were different than benchmark test scores of your best employees?”

There always is silence on the phone. Then, the manager slowly speaks up and says, “You’re right – I am betting my career and the company each time I hire someone. Now, I realize I need to find a better applicant. It’s worth my time and energy.”

8 LESSONS from DEJA VU PHONE CALLS

1. Pre-employment tests – customized for jobs in your company – are the most accurate way to predict if an applicant may succeed in your company.
2. Don't bet against test results comparing applicant to your company's customized benchmarks.
3. Don't hallucinate past work experience translates into productivity at your company.
4. Never "fall in love" – with a charming or well-rehearsed job applicant.
5. Laziness in hiring squanders money and time – when you fail to hire the best.
6. Prefer applicants who get high ratings on all prediction methods – tests, interviews, and more.
7. Hiring is betting.
8. Ask yourself, "Is this applicant worth betting my job, career, and company?"

RECOMMENDATION

Bet on job applicants who (a) get scores like your best employees' scores on pre-employment tests, and also (b) rate well on all other prediction methods you use. That makes a good bet for your job, career, and company.

**COPYRIGHT 2008 MICHAEL MERCER, PH.D.
All rights reserved.**

Michael Mercer, Ph.D., is a nationally-recognized expert on pre-employment tests and hiring the best. Dr. Mercer created the widely used "FORECASTER TESTS." His 5 books include "Hire the Best -- & Avoid the Rest." You can get – at no charge – 14-page report on "How to Hire Winners" – plus subscribe to "Dr. Mercer's Management Newsletter" at www.MercerSystems.com or phone = 847-382-0690