



Which Candidate Would You Hire? A or B?

By Nick Kossovan

Speaking from personal experience, a bad hire isn't a good look. The last thing you want is to hear, "Who the hell hired Bob?" and have your hiring judgment questioned.

The job seeker who's empathetic to the employer's side of the hiring desk, which controls the hiring process, is rare.

One of the best things you can do to enhance your job search is to practice perspective-taking, which involves seeing things from a different perspective.

It's natural for employers to find candidates who have empathy and an understanding of their challenges and pain points more attractive. Candidates like these are seen as potential allies rather than individuals only looking out for themselves. Since most job seekers approach employers with a 'what's in it for me' mindset, practicing perspective-taking sets you apart.

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own." - Henry Ford.

Perspective-taking makes you realize that from an employer's POV hiring is fraught with risks employers want to avoid; thus, you consider what most job seekers don't: How can I present myself as the least risky hiring option?

Here's an exercise that'll help you visualize the employer's side of the hiring process.

Candidate A or B?

Imagine you're the Director of Customer Service for a regional bank with 85 branches. You're hiring a call centre manager who'll work onsite at the bank's head office, overseeing the bank's 50-seat call centre. In addition to working with the call centre agents, the successful candidate will also interact with other departments, your boss, and members of the C-suite leadership team; in other words, they'll be visible throughout the bank.

The job posting resulted in over 400 applications. The bank's ATS and HR (phone interview vetting, skill assessment testing) selected five candidates, plus an employee referral, for you to interview. You aim to shortlist the six candidates to three, whom you'll interview a second time, and then make a hiring decision. Before scheduling the interviews, which'll take place between all your other ongoing responsibilities, you spend 5 - 10 minutes with each candidate's resume and review their respective digital footprint and LinkedIn activity.

In your opinion, which candidate deserves a second interview?

Candidate A: Their resume provides quantitative numbers—evidence—of the results they've achieved. (Through enhanced agent training, reduced average handle time from 4:32 mins. to 2:43 minutes, which decreased the abandon rate from 4.6% to 2.2%.)

Candidate B: Their resume offers only opinions. ("I'm detail-oriented," "I learn fast.")

Candidate A: Looks you in the eye, has a firm handshake, smiles, and exudes confidence.

Candidate B: Doesn't look you in the eye, has a weak handshake.

Candidate A: Referred by Ariya, who's been with the bank for over 15 years and has a stellar record, having moved up from teller to credit analyst and is tracking to become a Managing Director.

Candidate B: Applied online. Based on your knowledge, they did nothing else to make their application more visible. (e.g., reached out to you or other bank employees)

Candidate A: Well educated, grew up as a digital native, eager and energetic. Currently manages a 35-seat call center for a mid-size credit union. They mention they called the bank's call centre several times and suggest ways to improve the caller experience.

Candidate B: Has been working in banking for over 25 years, managing the call center at their last bank for 17 years before being laid off eight months ago. They definitely have the experience to run a call centre. However, you have a nagging gut feeling that they're just looking for a place to park themselves until they can afford to retire.

Candidate A: Has a fully completed LinkedIn profile (picture, eye-catching banner) packed with quantifying numbers. It's evident how they were of value to their employers. Recently, they engaged constructively with posts and comments and published a LinkedIn article on managing Generations Y and Z call centre agents. Their Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter/X accounts aren't controversial, sharing between 'Happy Birthday' and 'Congratulations' messages, their love of fine dining, baseball, and gardening.

Candidate B: Their LinkedIn profile is incomplete. The last time they posted on LinkedIn was seven months ago, ranting about how the government's latest interest rate hike will plunge the country into a deep recession. Conspiracy theories abound on their Facebook page.

Candidate A: Notices the golf calendar on your desk, the putter and golf balls in the corner, and a photograph of Phil Mickelson putting on the green jacket at the 2010 Masters hanging on your wall. While nodding towards the picture, they say, "Evidently, you golf. Not being a golfer myself, what made you take up golf, which I understand is a frustrating sport?"

Candidate B: Doesn't proactively engage in small talk. Waits for you to start the interview.

Which of the above candidates presents the least hiring risk? Will likely succeed (read: achieve the results the employer needs)? Will show your boss, upper management, and employees you know how to hire for competence and fit?

Nick Kossovan, a well-seasoned veteran of the corporate landscape, offers advice on searching for a job. You can send him your questions at artoffindingwork@gmail.com



Canada's Ever Challenged Parliamentary Democracy

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It is becoming increasingly clear that the political system in Canada has degenerated in a worrisome way. More and more power is concentrated in the Prime Minister Office and the Office of the Loyal Opposition, where the staff set the rules, blessed by their respective leaders. I would say without remorse that this is an affront to the spirit of democracy, and borders on being a parallel structure.

The role of the elected Members of Parliament is drastically reduced and their freedom of speech in expressing their opinions is limited to the point of being muzzled, all in the name of maintaining party discipline.

This does not serve the nation, which is then led by the staff of the elected people for all intents and purposes. It is very sad indeed, that we have arrived at this stage. Staff of the members are literally spying on them and reporting any moves to the staff in the leader's office, which in turn can reward them or punish them.

Moreover, the quality of the staff and their life experience is questionable and we have often seen former staff running for elected office. It seems to me that we are reenacting the medieval dark ages, when the inner intrigues for gaining power were the basis for decisions and rules, not the interest of the people.

The United States, at least at the presidential level, seems to be changing this trend. The re-elected President does not come from the political establishment, but has a lifetime of business experience to draw on. We will see how this works out, but it is certainly a novelty.

Perhaps it is time for us in Canada to have a leader with a broader view and experience, one who is not limited to a political science or law background, without any real life experience. Certainly, this new type of leader might have some interesting and out of the box ideas on how to rule in the people's interest.

Returning to how things are run in Canada today; party staffers monitor caucus for signs of message indiscipline and fraternization with other MPs. MPs say, and I can confirm from my own experience in the House of Commons, that there is less and less freedom of action with an increasingly tight control from the leader's office.

MPs are watched by party staffers both inside and outside Parliament. Elected representatives are publicly called to order for deviating from the so-called party line. Words and actions are closely scrutinized by the leader's office. Partisanship is encouraged. Fraternizing with elected officials from other parties is a no-no.

Those who follow blindly without deviating from the sometimes very narrow party lines are rewarded. Those who don't follow blindly and might have some good ideas which might benefit the party, often have to suffer consequences.

There are always multiple people in the penalty box; there is always someone in trouble for having a slightly better idea than the party line, but not understood by the controlling staff who reports them to the leader.

Some elected officials feel they come to caucus to be told what to do and what to think. Unfortunately, this is very true. The caucus meeting is not a constructive way to listen to members' ideas. One minute for making your point is not enough, mostly when the leader is not listening while you speak. Often, his mind is already made up, and you find yourself conducting a one-way conversation.

If the leader invents a new slogan, it is understood that the respective MPs will have to use it. Catchphrases deployed by leaders (axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget, stop the crime) and terms of derision like "wacko," "radical," are often picked up and repeated by MPs. The Question Period becomes a circus with questions going unanswered, as empty wording is tossed about. It is sad to watch.

MPs who repeat the slogans are usually rewarded and celebrated in front of the entire caucus for being a good cheerleader. Such MPs get more speaking time in the House and during question period. Those MPs who refuse to parrot the lines lose their speaking time, in direct proportion to their 'offense'.

Lately it has been reported that a press secretary for the leader of the Conservative opposition has been seen on multiple occasions, signalling MPs not to stop in front of the cameras. Like a policeman directing traffic, he seemed to be beckoning them to enter the room without responding to reporters. This is nothing new. It was thus when the Conservatives were in power; I experienced it personally.

More recently, it seems that press secretaries from the Conservative leader's office have been supervising the entrances to Parliament and monitoring journalists' scrums with MPs, with the goal of recording the exchanges. The Conservative Party seems to be the only federal party that currently does this, so old habits are not dying. This is not surprising, considering that the majority of the current senior staff come from the Harper era and seem frozen in time, without any new ideas.

Therefore, we have arrived in a situation where everybody is being watched. What the MPs say, what they do, who they talk to. The MPs are told not to fraternize with MPs from the other parties. This isolationist attitude is far from normal and it certainly does not help to resolve the country's problems.

In my humble opinion, to be a good MP, it is important to build relationships with colleagues from other parties. That is how Parliament is supposed to work best for Canadians. The leader's office is against this because it wants to control everything.

Staffers, especially Conservative staffers, have developed and perfected a culture of monitoring MPs' interactions not only in the Commons chamber but also in the corridors of Parliament and at social events.

As this evidence shows, political employees who were not elected by the people act as if they were. This is a deplorable situation, and if I were a Member of Parliament again, I'd go to the leader to denounce the situation and say I'm not going to stand for this.

In conclusion, party discipline is needed, but Orwellian exaggerations have no place in it.

The question remains: when will the political establishment abandon theatrics and start to work for the people who elected them?

What are your thoughts?



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