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Hiring Managers Speak Out: 8 Things That Seal the Deal

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One thing about the hiring process is true: It leaves much room for speculation. Whether you got the job -- or you didn't -- most job seekers want to know why. Why were you chosen over the next guy? Or, better yet, why weren't you? Was it your experience, your attitude, your interview answers, your outfit?

We decided to ask hiring managers directly: What seals the deal when you choose to hire a candidate? Why do you choose one person over another? Their answers will give you some insight as to what you should pay attention to the next time you're up for a

job.

Here's what hiring managers had to say:

1. Sincerity

"One of the big things for me is [following] up. If I'm on the fence about a candidate but they take the time to e-mail me and thank me for having them come in, it shows me that they are motivated, tactful and professional. On the other side of the coin, if I interview someone and they are using lots of banal **business** speak and don't give me any impression of what their personality is like, I will usually pass. I hate when I ask a candidate what their favorite thing to work on is and they say 'everything' -- it leaves me with the impression that they either have no personality or won't speak their mind." -- *Keith Baumwald, interactive marketing analyst, Shoplet.com*

2. Preparation

"I know I have a good candidate for hire when they come in prepared with as many questions about the job and company as I have for the candidate -- especially when their questions go beyond just the pay rate and benefits. By showing interest in learning more about what the job opportunity actually involves, it shows that the candidate is just as concerned about this job being the right fit for them as I am." -- *Angie Nelson, marketing coordinator, Les Bois Federal Credit Union*

3. Honesty

"A quick deal-killer for me is people who are trying to answer questions the way they think I want them answered. Honesty in the interview is refreshing. I appreciate applicants who tell the truth without trying to sugarcoat things. I am not as concerned with bad things that have happened in their past as much as how they dealt with those issues. That shows their true character." -- *Phil Wrzesinski, owner, Toy House and Baby Too*

4. Confidence

"Confidence is important, but there is a fine line between that and arrogance. I once had a candidate state numerous times he was the one and that no way anyone else could be better. This is not only arrogant, but demonstrates ignorance on the part of the candidate.

One does not always know who they are competing with or all of their qualifications." -- *Thomasina Tafur, president, Thomasina Tafur Consulting*

5. Positive Attitude

"When interviewing candidates to join our firm, two things can be deal breakers: attitude and core values. You can't teach attitude, but you can teach skill. A positive attitude, strong work ethic and strong values should trump more experience and skill. I also make sure the candidate demonstrates our company's core values. I ask them to tell me their 'story' of their professional journey. Through their story, I get a better understanding of the decisions they made and the values they have (or don't have)." -- *Michelle Roccia, senior vice president of corporate organizational development, Winter, Wyman*

6. Punctuality

"When a candidate is displaying a true desire to come work for your company, they are often the one you want to hire once you are looking at the finalist pool. The fastest way to end up with a short interview and ruling yourself out from being considered is to arrive to an interview to only lack energy, give short answers and show no excitement to be there." -- *James Thompson, vice president of business development, JMJ Phillip*

7. Passion

"When I hire, I hire for 'right fit,' which doesn't necessarily have anything to do with experience or training. A 'right fit' candidate is someone who is aligned philosophically with the company, has a passion for the products or industry, and believes that the kind of work that they do is their mission, not just their livelihood. For example, when I was staffing a green business in Orange County, Calif., I didn't hire the people with the longest résumés and the most degrees, I hired the people who were passionate about the 'green' cause and had demonstrated that in some way in their personal life. What we ended up with were employees who were willing to do whatever it took to make the enterprise successful because they were driven by an inner belief, not by a paycheck. They were engaged at an extremely high level from the first day they walked in the door. I hire for passion, and then train for skills, if necessary." -- *Barbara Farfan, management and retail consultant, Authentic Communications*

"When having difficulty narrowing down a short list of qualified candidates based on their experience, skills, upward potential and education, I tend to put significant weight on the candidate's passion for what we do as a company and how we do it. If the employee can show evidence that they genuinely align with our company values, purpose and mission, the likelihood of success increases tremendously, in my opinion." -- *Matt Arrigale, vice president, human resources, Schott North America*

8. Creativity

"During the interview process we tend to ask oddball questions and gauge [a candidate's] reaction and the actual answers they give. This will give us an idea as how they will fit with our company and everyone else who works with us. For the upcoming semester we chose one intern over the others solely based on her answer to 'If you were a candy bar, what kind would you be?' She sat for about three seconds but didn't think we were crazy for asking it. She smiled and said 'I'd be a Caramello because they're awesome and hard to find, but when you find them you get a happy feeling inside.'" -- *AmyLynn Keimach, Border7 Studios*

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