Are You Hiring Stepford Candidates?

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Stop Hiring for Culture Fit

Hiring for culture fit is important. Almost all HR experts (and "experts") with a bunch of letters following their name will tell you that. The notion has been touted so often as a best practice that we've come to take it for granted. There's just one problem: It's bad advice. Your culture isn't just fundamental to who you are as a company – it *is* who you are. So it's understandable that you'd want to make hiring choices that strengthen it. Ironically, though, basing talent decisions on culture fit can end up weakening your business.

The Problem With Fit

When hiring for culture fit, you probably tend to look for candidates who ... fit in. That is, you want people who share your values and seem aligned with your mission and vision. That makes sense, but

culture fit also tends to mean something more nebulous. Often, it entails bringing in people who might look and act and think like you. As a result, consciously or otherwise, you end up hiring Stepford Candidates, much like the robot wives who couldn't think for themselves in the 1975 classic movie *The Stepford Wives.* The reasons why are likely obvious: Because it's easy. Because it's comfortable. Because it feels natural to prefer people with whom you can envision grabbing a drink. But just because you and your colleagues are amazing people (obviously!) doesn't mean hiring clones would be amazing. Sure, individuals with similar backgrounds and personalities may initially be able to collaborate better, but the results may not be better. Hiring for culture fit can negatively impact diversity and inclusion and foster groupthink. Think about it: If you're bringing in person after person who has a lot in common with you – individuals who see the world similarly – then you're not creating an environment conducive to the kinds of healthy dissent and debate that may lead to enhanced innovation and better results. This is especially important to keep in mind given that about a third of hires stem from referrals, who are apt to recommend friends and like-minded colleagues. Now, of course, you want your employees to be active talent ambassadors – but at the same time, you need to mentally check yourself to ensure that you aren't hiring the same people in different bodies.

Values Fit

Perhaps you're thinking, "Yeah, OK, but still – values are important. I want to make sure we hire candidates who share my company's values." I want you to hire those candidates, too! So hire for *values fit* – which is different from screening for personality or thought process. Or worse – unconsciously gravitating toward people of the same race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc. Not only might you run into legal problems, but it's also just bad business. As Aubrey Blanche, global head of diversity and inclusion for software provider Atlassian told *Forbes* : "Focusing on ' values fit' ensures we hire people who share our sense of purpose and guiding principles, while a ctively looking for those with diverse viewpoints, backgrounds, and skillsets. We're trying to build a h ealthy and balanced culture, not a cult."

You're Not Part of a Cult

Ultimately, it's not culture *fit* but culture *add* that counts most. Hiring for the latter asks not whether someone will fit into your culture, but what that person can add to it. It also forces you to think about what might be absent from your culture puzzle – and then to select candidates who can serve as those missing pieces. For example, let's say your company is teeming with extroverts. What happens when introverts interview for jobs? Well, they're weird. They lack enthusiasm. They're quiet. At least, that's what you might (perhaps wrongly) assume about them because they aren't like your current employees. So you reject them. Now imagine you're hiring for culture adds. You might view these candidates in a new light, as individuals who can potentially contribute fresh perspectives and bring new experiences to the table. Or for instance, let's say your company suffers from a hesitancy to give critical feedback (which probably describes almost every workplace). Your reflex may be to reject a candidate who comes off as overly direct, but perhaps that person is exactly who you need to evolve

your culture. Here's one more example. Suppose you're looking to develop new product lines to reach different customers. Rather than hire someone who's worked in your industry, you might benefit from an outsider who can bring a novel viewpoint. That's what culture add is all about. It's making a very deliberate choice to reduce unconscious (or even conscious) bias. *So you've hired the candidates - now how do you make sure to extend their great experience through onboarding? Check out our blog for 3 great tips!*

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