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All Employers Have Six Areas of Concern

1. Presentation

- *Is the Candidate's overall "look" and behavior professional?*
- *Will he or she represent the Company well?*

2. Ability

- *Does the Candidate's training, experience, and education indicate that she or he will be able to do the job?*
- *Do his or her references support the claims made by the Candidate on Resume and Application?*

3. Dependability

- *Will the Candidate be present when required to be?*
- *Is she or he stable, honest, and mature?*

4. Motivation

- *Does the Candidate have a genuine interest in helping the Company to prosper?*
- *Are the Candidate's personal values and goals consistent with the Company's values and goals?*

5. Attitude

- *Does the Candidate display knowledge of the Company's culture?*
- *Will she or he project the Company's public image?*

6. Network

- *Will the Candidate attract repeat customer business?*
- *Will the Candidate attract the "target" customer?*

Who gets “screened out” in the job search process?

Those who:

1. Are late in applying Dependability, Motivation
2. Do not submit all materials required
3. Submit incomplete, illegible, misspelled, or sloppy material
4. Do not sign the application
5. Know nothing about the company
6. Have an inappropriate voice mail message
7. Have an inappropriate email address
8. Are unqualified
9. Are overqualified
10. Do not fit the organization
11. Have a criminal background
12. Live in a “bad neighborhood”
13. Are handicapped in some way
14. Have been fired of laid off
15. Have small children
16. Have a chronic health problem
17. Are caring for elderly parents
18. Have filed a worker’s comp claim
19. Have a poor credit history
20. Are disfigured in some way

Take the Bull by the Horns

Sometimes there is something about us that raises concerns and/or doubts in the interviewer's mind about our suitability for the job, or our ability to do the job. For various reasons, though, that doubt or concern may not be discussed in the interview. It may be that the interviewer's doubt is around something that is illegal for them to ask. But illegal or not, the hiring decision may be driven by this concern.

Examples:

- A person with a great deal of grey hair applies for a position in an agency or company that caters to customers between the ages of 20 and 35.
- A very large person applies for a position that will demand that she/he be on her/his feet all day.
- A person who uses a wheelchair applies for a position in a company that sells athletic gear.
- A person with a number of visible tattoos applies for a position in a bridal shop or upscale clothing store.

In each case, the candidate may be qualified, indeed may be the best person for the job, yet the person's age, size, apparent ability, or appearance may count against them. And worse, the very deciding factor may not even be mentioned! If the candidate waits for the interviewer to bring up these concerns, he or she may lose the chance to dispel the interviewer's concern!

In situations like this, the candidate must possess *awareness, courage, and confidence*.

- **Awareness** – The candidate must be able to see him/herself objectively through the eyes of the employer.
- **Courage** – The candidate must be able to speak directly, and without either embarrassment or attitude, about his or her difference.
- **Confidence** - The candidate must have good examples of his or her skill that either turn the perceived concern into an asset, or turn the perceived concern into a very minor matter.

The candidate must have thought carefully – *before the interview* – about ways to bring up his or her difference - ways that will reduce the interviewer's concern. It is, after all, the candidate's responsibility to show the interviewer that he or she can meet the requirements and expectations presented by the job.

There are a couple of logical places to address this:

- 1. At the beginning of the interview** – Frequently the first thing an interviewer says is: “Tell us a little bit about yourself.”

While most of the time a candidate uses this opening to say something about themselves as a professional, a person can also use it to bring up the issue that no one will ask about, yet that may cost them the job. They then combine this with an example that will reduce the interviewer’s concern. For example:

“As you can see, I have more than a few grey hairs. I’ve earned them, and I’m proud of them. I understand however, that you could wonder about whether I can relate to the youthful clientele that you serve. I’ve always worked with young people – ever since I was a youngster myself! I look for novel approaches to old problems while recognizing that ‘new for new’s sake’ can be counterproductive. In fact in my last job, I ...”

- 2. At the end of the interview when the interviewer says something like:** “Is there anything you’d like to add?” or “Do you have any questions for us?” A candidate might say something like,

“Yes, I do have a couple of questions, but I also want to say a little about my size. I assume you’ve noticed that I’m a large person. And I know that sometimes employers are concerned about the health or energy of big people. I haven’t needed to take a sick day in four years. I have energy and enthusiasm to burn. I prioritize tasks very well, I have the skills and abilities that you’re looking for, and by this time next week, I hope that I’ll be the person to whom you offer the job.”

Take the bull by the horns! Let the employer know that you understand that they might have a concern. And then, with confidence, tell the interviewer/employer what you have done, can do, will do, to make that concern disappear. You may even get ‘extra credit’ for your courage and initiative.

Please look at yourself through the employer’s eyes. Is there anything about you that could raise the employer’s concerns to the level where he or she would not consider hiring you? How can you address this concern in a way that will reduce the employer’s anxiety to the point where he or she can concentrate upon your qualifications?

Prepare your statements carefully. Make no excuses. Simply state the obvious, and then give the employer examples of how your skills are either enhanced by your difference, or at the least, are not adversely affected by it.