

## **Fit - Do You Have It?**

*Rose Jonas, Ph.D.*

"Fit" is the main reason someone gets the job or doesn't. "Qualifications" is the first half of the hiring equation, but everyone who walks into an interview has those; it's how they got past the initial screen. "Fit" is the second and, I could argue, the most important. You feel at home when you walk in the door. The hiring manager would love to take you out for a beer with the rest of the team. You love what the company is about, and can't wait to get at the projects you would have. You can do the technical as well as the elusive but critical social aspects of the job. You are a fit.

You can get hired if you're not a fit: you're a wickedly shy analyst who flubs presentations but your assessments are brilliant; you're a rogue marketer who never follows the rules but you bring in millions; you're a pediatric neurologist who abuses OR nurses but are a genius at saving lives. You can work there; you may, however, be lonely or loathed. It's the unbeatable superiority of your qualification that keeps you there. It's a fragile existence.

Diversity can be a naive drum beating in the background here, but diversity can "fit", unless the culture is so hidebound AGAINST anything except "like me". . .and that goes for minority organizations that never hire whites as well as radio stations that don't hire over 30 or faith-based companies that keep out "others."

"Fit" means we have roughly the same values and aspirations, and therefore have a basic understanding of each other. We like talking about the same thing, whether sports or mathematical problems or the growth of the Latin American market. We may not have the same native language but we appreciate where the company is headed and how we're going to help take it there.

Before I understood the importance of "fit," I failed in a hiring experiment. I was a corporate recruiting manager during a product expansion, hiring dozens of new sales reps each year. The district managers sent me cookie cutter candidates from campus recruiting: blonde ag econ majors from state schools, and they did fine.

An idealist, I wanted to change the white bread mix and began selecting odd ducks to enrich our agri-business pool: an MBA from Cleveland, a finance major from New York, a secretary who had gotten a management degree. The big city guy was miserable in Louisiana, the secretary hated being the "little gal" in Lubbock. I learned eventually that, man or woman, green or purple, from an alien planet or Austin — you succeeded if you fit the organization. I didn't change back to the cookie cutter, but I definitely went for "fit."

The company may say, "We hired the best qualified interviewee." What they mean is "S/he can do the job and is a good fit."

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