

# The Fundamentals of “Fit”

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Finding the right job can be a bit of a puzzle for most of us. The reality is, finding a good fit is exactly like a puzzle involving two pieces that need to be analyzed for fit. We all know what happens when two pieces of a puzzle are matched that don't belong, the puzzle won't work. I suggest that a common reason for a bad fit is that either the employer or the job seeker fails to consider their mutual responsibility as the key to completing the puzzle. Fool proofing the process would be impossible, but mitigating missteps is well within our reach. Below are a few remarks about the employer and employee's role.

## The Employer's Role

After more than 15 years in the recruiting industry and being involved in thousands of searches leading to many thousands of job seeker discussions, I have learned that the employer is equally (if not more) responsible for ensuring long-term fit. Of the thousands of job seeker discussions I've been a part of I have witnessed employees who have been placed by recruiters or hired directly by an employer who quickly learned that the job they excitedly accepted isn't what was expected. When asking about the cause for the lack of fit I learned that many of the issues were related to ineffective and labor intensive processes, poor systems, and mostly poor leadership. These issues lead to turnover and impede the organizations ability to attract and retain top talent, thus perpetuating the cycle of mediocrity and/or leading to their eventual expiration.

Contrary to the aforementioned, there have been many opportunities for me to engage in discussions with job seekers and leadership at organizations who are excited about and have great pride in their job and their employer. These are organizations that have a strong position in the market, good margins, and a healthy bottom line all as a result of alignment and accountability to the vision, mission, and values. These organizations attract and retain the best talent. They offer work environments and jobs where employees feel like they are making a difference and are then recognized for their contribution. The prospect of more money and a better title can't even entice them away. Could one infer, then, that well aligned organizations accountable to their vision, mission, and values create meaningful work and a perpetuating culture of performance and results?

While corporate culture is definitely an employer's responsibility, the question of 'fit' does not fully rest on the shoulders of the employer.

## The Job Seeker's Role

In the thousands of job seeker interviews I've conducted throughout my career I have learned that the job seekers are cause for their own employment issues. In many cases job seekers are simply applying for jobs that they have always done without consideration of the work they enjoy, or which truly excites them. In essence, they suffer from their own misalignment. Savvy job seekers understand the importance of conducting research on industries, markets, employers, and job types. Effective research can help identify the health of an industry or market. It can also help identify top employers in key industries or markets, as well as the current and historical financial performance. Even those job seekers who fail to conduct research prior to engaging in an interview process can increase their chance of finding a good 'fit' by preparing for and asking questions in the interview process. They can open discussions with former and active employees at the employer of interest. Much can be learned from these discussions, like aspects of work-life balance, the effectiveness of leadership, concerns and/or struggles, attrition rates, business challenges, their perception of key stakeholders involved in the position of interest, and details pertaining to the interview process just to name a few. If a job seeker doesn't have contacts, then the internet can be very helpful in shedding some light.

While interview preparation, industry and company research, etc. are all extremely helpful, it can be the basic things that make a difference. I find that many job seekers lack core competencies like self-awareness, business acumen, interpersonal savvy, and other qualities related to emotional quotient, or EQ. The idea that technical skills are sufficient for landing a job is a failed assumption. While these traits come more natural to some than others, there is much that a job seeker can do to improve in these areas.

In the final analysis, career management, identifying 'fit', and job searching in general is not for the faint of heart. As with any major decision, you plan for the best and make adjustments as needed. Sometimes a poor career choice is not necessarily a bad thing. It can provide valuable perspective and personal insight that may just lead to a much better result in the end. Needless to say the concept of "fit" is elusive and hard to quantify, making a tough task even more difficult. Be prepared and you'll likely improve your chances of success significantly.

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