

SUICIDAL CANDIDATE

By James Collins.

As director of manufacturing engineering, I was responsible for several hundred people. Supporting numerous factories required highly technical engineers and scientists to control the various processes and to incorporate new methods. Interviewing these people was a multifaceted activity and required the assistance of personnel from various manufacturing environments. Since I was ultimately responsible, I made it a point to be the final arbiter in the interview process with every viable candidate. To prevent the number of candidates from overwhelming me, I instituted a process using three specialists for the technical interview of any individual. These specialists were the technical gurus for the discipline. We interviewed candidates in depth by a triumvirate and two of the three had to agree that the technical skills were sufficient to be considered for hiring. If two out of three agreed, then I interviewed the candidate for the final decision. If we considered a PhD candidate, I employed three teams of three. Two technical specialists in each team must concur and two out of the three teams must concur, before I would interview the candidate.

Personnel had collected resumes for five candidates but a new human resources individual arrived to support my department. The day the first of the five candidates was scheduled to meet with my teams, I brought the young woman in to familiarize her with the process we used. I emphasized it was a little unusual, and because we often had rejections, she was not to tell the candidates under any conditions, that they would see me. She said this would not be a problem.

My secretary informed me that the candidate had arrived and was processing through the first of the three teams. The morning was quite busy. There were several meetings and a lot of paperwork to be processed.

Just before lunch, my secretary came in and said we have a problem. Immediately behind her came all nine members of the interview teams. John the principal engineer and one of the team leaders was the spokesperson and held a pre-typed memo with a number of signatures on it.

John said, "We all agree the person in the conference room is not competent, and we should not hire him. We have a document to that effect signed by all nine of us, and we want to give that to you."

"What's going on? This never happened before. Why are all nine of you here, and why have you generated a memo?"

"The candidate locked himself in the conference room and is threatening suicide!"

"What happened?"

"That PhD is totally incompetent. Nobody on the first two teams voted to accept him and normally we would have ended there, but HR told him he would meet with three teams so we completed the

interview process. Nobody on the third team would vote for him either. Therefore, we notified HR that he was done and the HR person came down to take him back to personnel. However, earlier she had told him that he would meet with you, after he was done with us, and he knew he was finished so he locked himself in the conference room and threatened to commit suicide. “

"Get security! Tell them to get him out of there and throw him out the front door. I do not care if he commits suicide out on the street as long as I do not have to handle the paperwork. Then get the HR person in here, I want to find out what went wrong because this was not supposed to happen."

In the conference room, the three teams, myself, and the HR person debriefed on this event. The candidate had acquired a PhD more than ten years previously but was unable to hold a job at a number of firms. His father ran an international organization, family-owned, with operations in America and France. He hired his son as a translator to convert technical documents coming from France to English and vice versa. About a year earlier, there was a falling out and his father fired him. He went through a number of interviews with other companies. Nobody hired him. Apparently, we were his last hope. Unfortunately, the HR person had not listened to her instructions. She told him he would meet with Mr. Collins after the technical interviews and Mr. Collins would be the final determination of whether he would be hired or not. After he had all the technical interviews and realized he failed, he got desperate and decided to get dramatic

I had a major discussion with the VP of Personnel about how his HR individual caused a dramatic problem. We incorporated corrective action in the process and never encountered a similar event.

THE END