



Hiring Leaders: **Principles Endure, Attributes Change...**

Jeff Hedquist, Hedquist International Inc.

Over the past two decades we have executed several hundred searches for our business clients, and with each placement, we never stop learning about client organizational priorities as well as expectations for candidates. Throughout searches and selection, we guide a well tested, stepped process that enables companies to save critical time and zero-in on the top available candidates for key leadership roles.

Expectations for these candidates who are today's leaders include a combination of proven fundamentals - what's timeless, *and* what's new in management, leadership and communication in the digital age.

The best placements occur when our clients have had sufficient dialogue internally and with our team at Hedquist about the role including the business needs. This dialogue will obviously define the essential qualifications and skills the job requires, and should also include some of the unique attributes of your company's culture, value system and other critical success factors that might not be readily apparent.

While the tried and true elements of good leadership are still highly relevant, there are ongoing lessons to be learned within the unique, fast-moving business environment of the 21st century.

So what are the important nuances, potential deal breakers or makers, and some times subtle differentiators in today's candidates for leadership roles?

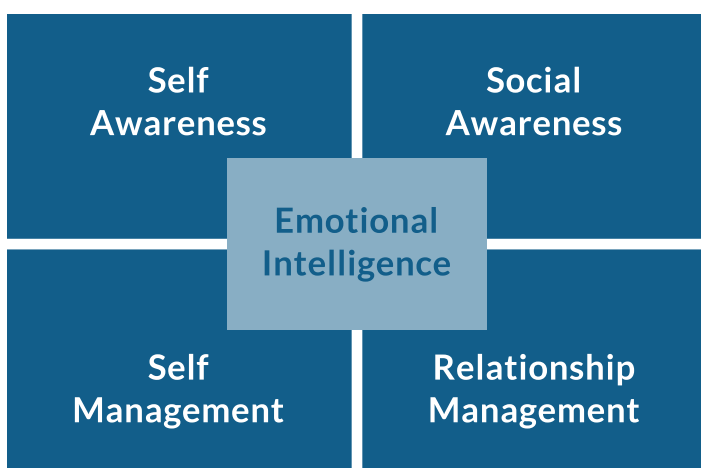
Emotional Intelligence

While emotional intelligence (EI) was defined over 20 years ago, it is an increasingly recognized asset for any professional. EI is simply the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and do the same for others. Understanding what EI is about can often be better understood by seeing what it is not.

Certain "red flag", low EI attributes sometimes less detectable in the search and selection process include some of the following:

- **Insensitivity:** Being perceived as uncaring
- **Arrogance:** Knowing it all, setting yourself apart
- **Volatility:** Lack of impulse control when angry
- **Rigidity:** Inflexible in thinking or approach
- **Selfishness:** Your own agenda matters most

The positive attributes of EI are not well measured by most personality tests, 360-degree instruments or self-report. So how do you determine if a candidate possesses these favorable traits that include a high level of self-awareness, the ability to self-regulate, a positive outlook, an achievement orientation, the capacity for empathic connection, and a leadership style that inspires – all critical components of emotional intelligence?



John Wright, a Chicago area executive coach shares “the hard assets of leadership such as strategy, financial acuity and vision remain critically important, however, today research tells us that emotional intelligence, the “heart assets” such as engagement, empathy and connection, play a significant role in higher level of retention, engagement and positive outcomes in organizations. Most leaders were not trained in these “soft skills” and may see them as weaknesses or even unnecessary. The research affirms that EI is both important, and able to be developed - assuming the individual is willing”

We all have a tendency to select and interview for pedigree – we talk with senior leaders about their capacities demonstrated by their previous roles,

however, conversations can be steered to reveal more about the candidate’s EI by asking them to describe “how”. Both how they succeeded, and how they may have failed or been faced with the need for a turn-around. Engaging the individual in conversations that enable them to tell a story, the “how” of real business events provides a better window into EI.

Today, every business is a relationship business. The value of EI including empathy, self-awareness, the ability to self-regulate and form working relationships that are productive and inspiring is a proven, yet still under estimated concept.

INTERVIEW CONCEPTS

How do you perceive the value of emotional intelligence?

Tell the story of how you accomplished....
(An achievement stated in their resume or professional profile)

Cross Generational Leadership

Today’s leaders are managing three and in some cases four generations including the Silents, the Boomers, the X’s and the Y’s (Millennials). Astute leaders have an understanding of the key attributes and values, albeit generalizations, for these differing generations, and maybe most importantly, have a grasp on the optimal methods to communicate with them.

Innovative means to recruit and retain talent in an age-diverse workplace are necessary and it is important to not make assumptions about what was traditionally prized by employees, because each generation has their own value system – some in great contrast to others. Some companies are experiencing “generational tensions” across age groups, and understanding the detailed demographic makeup of your workforce is key.



Developing mixed-age work teams and not focusing on differences too heavily enable more co-workers to collaborate and will facilitate understanding between them. With this spread of age groups working together in organizations, less traditional career paths are more common, and staying close to the needs of the workforce by providing an effective communication channel is critical.

INTERVIEW CONCEPTS

What workforce strategies are most impactful when dealing with the challenges age-diverse employees?

How can an organization best prepare for the next generation of leaders?

Influence and Persuasion

In James Strock's book *Serve to Lead, Your Transformational 21st Century Leadership System* he outlines 25 essential leadership skills for this century including an updated take on influence. In mastering the art and science of influence, internal and external stakeholders have greater leverage than ever before. *The age of the boss is over.* "The power to persuade" is now as necessary a skillset for corporate CEOs as politicians.

Robert Cialdini (*Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade*, January 2017) is one of the world's leading experts on the

science of influence. Thirty years after defining the fundamental principles, he announces that, according to recent advances in neuroscience, psychology, and marketing research, the moments before you make an appeal matter enormously to your persuasive success. Whether online or off, to increase your influence with customers, teammates, and bosses – and also to become better equipped overall – *learn how to craft the kind of openers shown to get more people to get on board and say "yes," more often.*

As it turns out, timing is most important for effective persuasion. For a leader to generate a desired action, or behavior it's not necessary to completely alter a person's beliefs or attitudes. It's not necessary to alter anything at all except what's prominent in that person's mind at the moment of decision – therefore the setup or opener that channels the receiver's attention is a winning formula for effective influence.

INTERVIEW CONCEPTS

Define two scenarios that challenged your ability to persuade – one where you were successful and one where you were not.

Share an experience about how you coached a direct report on how to be more influential or persuasive.

Time Tells...

The tried and true principles of good leadership including vision, strategic thinking, an enthusiastic drive, and ability to form high functioning teams remain important to the process of evaluating successful leaders. Taking the candidate evaluation process to the next level to consider some of these more nuanced attributes simply *takes time.*

Allocating time sounds obvious, however managing the sense of urgency when a void exists

for a critical position is challenging for most of our clients. Still, assembling the right team for both structured and more casual interviews as well as *taking adequate time* for dialogue pays off significantly.

A former CEO for a national health insurance company shares “it is critical to invest the time needed to get to know the candidate. Given the candidate’s deep experience and a solid business

performance track record, I am looking for three things; integrity, values and morals. Discerning these, and other character traits requires several, substantive conversations where you are able to get a true sense of the person. Valuable conversations with candidates evolve with time spent and enable the individual to move from a “performance” mode to a more relaxed exchange where authentic dialogue happens.”



Founder and President of Hedquist International, Jeff Hedquist provides oversight for business development, establishing search project teams, execution of domestic and international executive search, and cultivating relationships with premier candidates. Prior to Hedquist International, Mr. Hedquist was the Vice President of Managed Healthcare for The McHenry Co.
