

PART 2

SEARCH
FOR A STAR

RICHARD YELLAND continues our series on what you can do to make sure your next hire is the right hire

So far, we've looked at the importance of benchmarking in the recruitment process, first to define the post you want to fill, and second to attract the right person (see *Winning Edge*, September/October). In this, the second part of our series, we look at the remaining six steps to increasing hiring success.

1 SCREENING

You've got people interested in the position, and now you need to choose who to interview by looking at what they've done (see Level 2 in the diagram 'Three levels of appraisal' on page 30). How suitable are they? The CV and covering letter will give you a guide to the individual and their experience, but beware of exaggeration. And it has to be true — use background checking and referencing to help you shortlist candidates based on experience. A telephone interview will also help.

You need to grips with the more qualitative Level 3 characteristics and compare these with the benchmark we mentioned in the first article. By benchmarking you take into account the culture and values of your firm — while a candidate may seem perfect on paper it's important to establish their likelihood of 'fitting in'. How well do their behavioural characteristics fit the job?

2 TESTING

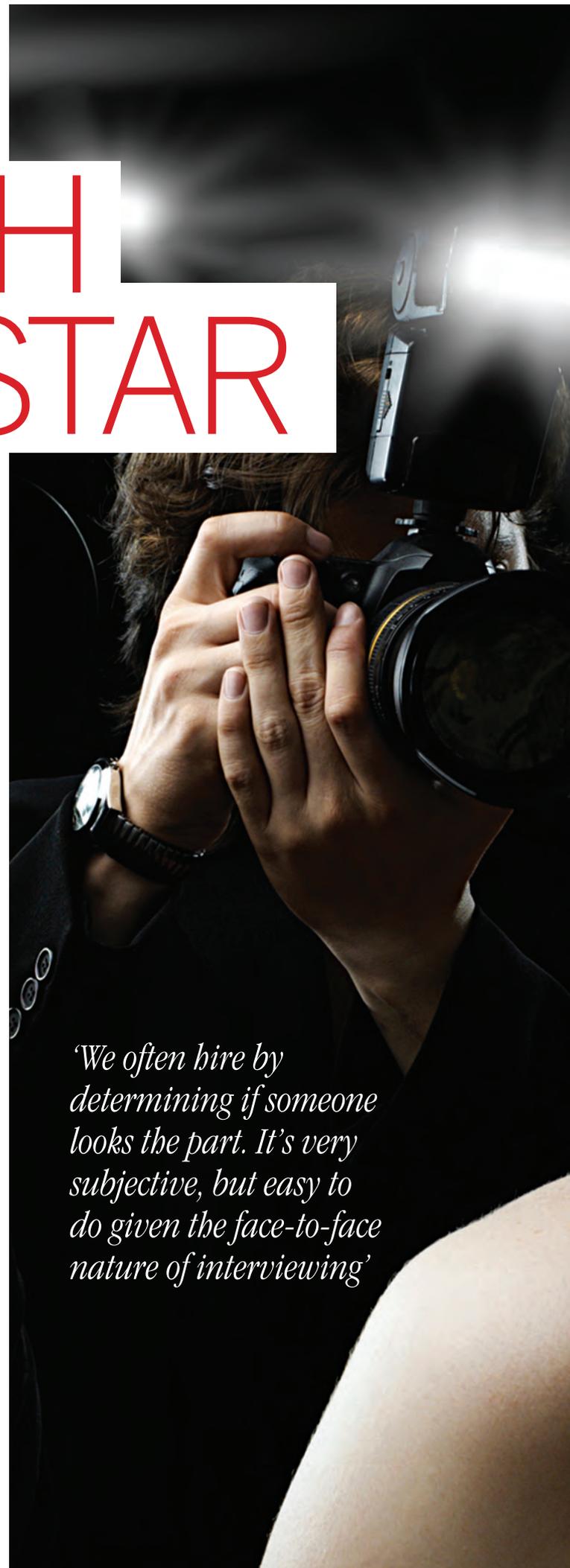
Through appropriate testing or profiling of behavioural characteristics, both those that occur naturally and those that manifest themselves in the workplace, you can build up a picture of the individuals you have shortlisted. Interestingly, the personal traits associated with Level 3 have the highest impact on how well someone will do a job. Let's look at each trait, starting with the most changeable and ending with the least changeable:

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

The beliefs a person has shapes the way they interpret the world around them and, therefore, the way they act.

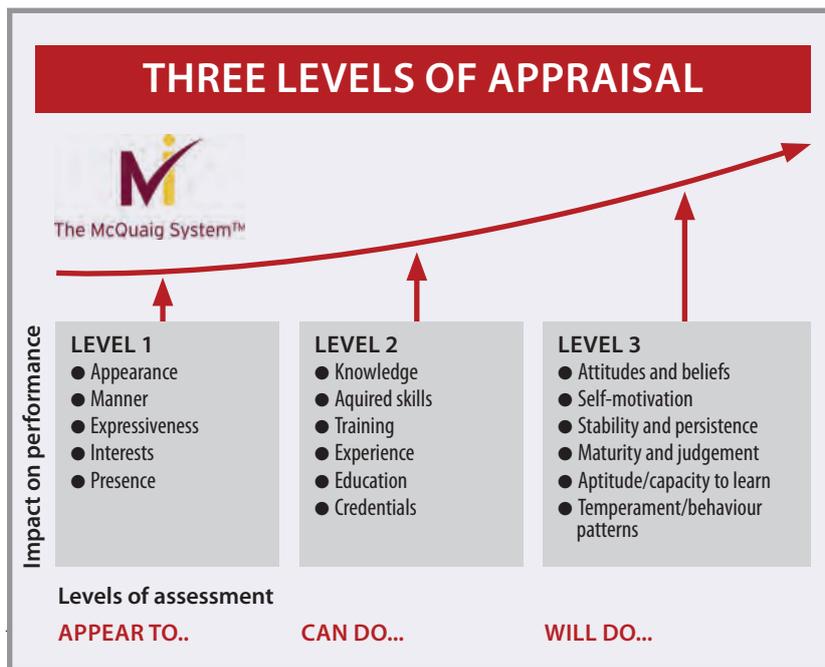
SELF-MOTIVATION

The energy and drive someone brings to a job. ➤



'We often hire by determining if someone looks the part. It's very subjective, but easy to do given the face-to-face nature of interviewing'





STABILITY AND PERSISTENCE

The ability to deal with setbacks and move forward.

MATURITY AND JUDGEMENT

The degree to which a person is responsible and accountable for the jobs they take on.

APTITUDE AND CAPACITY TO LEARN

The ability to solve problems and learn new skills and tasks easily.

TEMPERAMENT AND BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS

These factors explain why people do the things they do, such as dominance (how much they need to be in control); sociability (how much they need to be with others, or alone); relaxation (how patient they are); and so on. They ‘go to the core of the person,’ and are usually deeply rooted. Different jobs call for different temperaments, and the better the match to your benchmark, the more likely the right person will be matched to that job.

Although Level 3 characteristics have the highest impact on their performance, we tend to hire based on Levels 1 and 2 and fire on Level 3. We don’t dismiss because of their work and background, but because we decide the person lacks the maturity, self-motivation or temperament to do the job well.

So we often hire often by determining if someone ‘looks the part’ (Level 1). It’s very subjective, but easy to do given the face-to-face nature of interviewing. Realising

whether someone can do the job (Level 2) is more difficult, but at least there are objective standards by which these skills can be measured. However, deciding if someone has the personal characteristics best suited to the job (Level 3) is neither easy nor objective.

Getting as much information as you can prior to interview about Level 3 characteristics is essential if you want to increase your chances of a successful hire. Get the right people in front of you and the whole interview experience will be more pleasurable and more equitable for all candidates. But get the interview process wrong after all this good work and it may be a waste of time.

3 INTERVIEWING

When it comes to the interview process it is better to do an imperfect job on Level 3 than a perfect job on Levels 1 and 2. That

does not mean that the first two levels have no impact on the hiring decision; they do. But the trick is to ensure that they only get the weighting they deserve.

In finding the right candidate to interview, you will have prepared a benchmark for the behavioural characteristics you expect from an individual performing that role. So now, having narrowed the field down to individuals with a reasonable match to that benchmark, the interview should be carried out in accordance with your findings. You need to test for a working experience that matches the role, asking questions that reveal the real person.

Questions based around behavioural traits will vary from individual to individual but these may be typical examples to appraise Level 3 factors:

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

- Do you consider yourself an enthusiastic person?
- Tell me about an assignment that shows the standards you have set for yourself and your work
- What were the circumstances?
- What was it that captured your enthusiasm?
- What impact did it have on your results?
- How long did it last?
- When have you had to stay positive to get a project completed, despite obstacles?
- What was the situation?
- Why was it so important you stay positive?
- What reaction did you get?
- What impact did this have on you and your team?

SELF-MOTIVATION

- Tell me about a project that you felt passionate about
- What was the situation?

ASPECTS OF INTERVIEWS				
	IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE	HOW EASY TO APPRAISE?	HOW OBJECTIVE IS THE APPRAISAL?	HOW CHANGEABLE?
Level 1	Low	Easy	Highly subjective	Highly changeable
Level 2	Medium	Moderate	Objective	Highly changeable
Level 3	High	Difficult	Subjective	More stable

- What did you find so compelling?
- How long did it last?
- Have you had this experience at other times?
- Tell me about a time when you were really excited by a project
- What was the situation?
- How long did it last?
- What was the outcome?
- When did this happen?

STABILITY AND PERSISTENCE

- Tell me about a time when you really had to be tenacious to get the job done
- What was your goal?
- What roadblocks did you encounter?
- How did you respond?
- What was the outcome?

APTITUDE/CAPACITY TO LEARN

- When you started your last job, what things came to you naturally and what areas did you really have to apply yourself to understand?
- Can you give me an example of a time you had difficulty grasping a new concept?
- What was the situation?
- What was your experience in learning?
- What was the outcome?

MATURITY AND JUDGEMENT

- Describe a difficult decision you've made that required you to exercise judgement or discretion
- What was the situation?
- In what way did it require judgement or discretion?
- How did you go about making your decision?
- What did you ultimately decide?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- Tell me about a time when you received criticism that you felt was unjust
- What was the issue?
- What did you do?
- What was your first reaction?
- Ultimately, how was the situation resolved?

TEMPERAMENT

- Tell me about a time at work where you had to work closely with a team to get the job done
- What was the situation?
- What role did you play?
- Based on your experiences, what have been the pros and cons of working as part of a team?

- What did you do to get people working together?
- Do you consider yourself a risk-taker? Give an example of your willingness to take risks
- What was the situation?
- What did you see as the risk?
- How did you go about deciding to take the risk?
- What did you learn from this experience?

These are only a small sample of the questions you might ask.

In constructing your interview questions, basic guidelines should include trying to focus on the past, not the future, asking for specific examples, giving direction and searching for critical incidents.

When it comes to interpreting the responses of candidates, listen carefully with an open mind and no prejudices or preconceived ideas. Don't expect every candidate to have a lot of activity or experience in every area; don't judge activity and results alone but judge the qualities revealed; remember there are no right or wrong answers; and don't jump to conclusions.

How do you establish rapport during an interview? The sooner the candidate feels comfortable, the better the responses will be in revealing personal characteristics.

Many executives think they are pretty good at establishing rapport. That may well be true, but job interviews are full of barriers.

For example, interviewees are often nervous. They're ready to sell themselves, they may have come prepared with what they want to say, but know they only have a short time to make a good impression.

So how do you develop a relaxed atmosphere to make the interview a positive experience for both parties? Here are some pointers:

- Hold the interview in a non-threatening environment
- Allow adequate time
- Prepare in advance
- Establish rapport quickly
- Set the agenda upfront
- Start off positively
- Let the interview unfold in the expected way
- Let the candidate do most of the talking
- Ask open-ended questions
- Question tactfully
- Demonstrate open-mindedness
- Downplay negative information

- Recognise your own biases
- Affirm and acknowledge strengths
- Take notes discreetly, if at all
- Do not give negative feedback
- Be prepared for the next step.

4 VERIFYING

Verifying covers two areas: first, it requires a clear understanding that the factual information provided on the CV is as accurate as it is meant to be. Second, it means that the behavioural traits revealed during any profile analysis prior to interview are true to the profile testing and that the reason for interviewing the person was correct.

Much of this verification will be uncovered through an effective interview but further research will need to be done either before the interview or after. By all means use references but attempt to make these as independent as possible.

For sales roles, possibly contact customers the candidate has dealt with in the past. Obviously, this must be done with the permission of the candidate but it can be a reassuring way of establishing how the he or she went about their business and the impression they gave.

5 DECIDING

Throughout the interview process, the emphasis should have been on getting the right people in front of you. Through planning, appropriate profiling and comparing against an agreed behavioural benchmark there is a strong chance that you will get the person you want, so that when it comes to making the final decision, it will be an easy one.

6 OFFER

Let the lucky individual know but start planning for their induction into the role.

In the next edition, we will take you through the process of managing and developing your new recruit so that they feel comfortable with their decision and motivated to perform to their maximum potential.

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