

REALISTIC, RESPONSIBLE EXPECTATIONS

PREPARATION AND INTEREST

STRONG WORK ETHIC

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

PROMOTABILITY

PRESENTATION

# COMMON SENSE HIRING IN AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMY

by Heather Gray, CPA

When I proudly walked the Baylor graduation stage in 1993, I never dreamed that I would one day have a career, much less a business, as a headhunter. I didn't even know what a headhunter was. At the time, I had plans to be an audit partner at Price Waterhouse. I had my life all planned out. Life doesn't always work out the way we plan it; sometimes, it's better!

In 1995, I decided to completely change my career from the audit path at Price Waterhouse to the world of recruiting. Accounting recruiting sounded like a risk-free career choice: if I didn't love it, I would just place myself since I would hear about the best jobs first.

**THANKFULLY, I FOUND A CAREER PATH I NEVER EXPECTED. I HAVE BEEN BLESSED TO HAVE A 17-YEAR CAREER IN RECRUITING FOR ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE PROFESSIONALS IN HOUSTON.**

In 2000, I recruited my husband Tony, who had been part of several successful startups, and we started Search Services. We have been fortunate to grow and thrive during good and bad markets. We owe part of our success to a partnership with Baylor alumnus, David Young (BBA '92), with whom we established Search Technology in 2003. Today, we have three divisions which place professionals in accounting and finance, information technology and support roles.

I am grateful to have a long-term impact on people and their careers and to help my clients solve hiring dilemmas. BEING A BUSINESS OWNER IS NOT EASY, AND IT'S NOT ALWAYS FUN. YOU HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT IMPACT THE LIVES OF MANY PEOPLE, AND THOSE DECISIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS POPULAR OR SUPPORTED. **HOWEVER, THE REWARDS ARE GREAT AS WELL, AND IT HAS GIVEN ME A UNIQUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE STRESS AND FRUSTRATIONS OF MY CLIENTS WHO ARE LOOKING TO HIRE DEGREEED PROFESSIONALS.**

CORRECT TECHNICAL SKILLSET  
CHEMISTRY AND PERSONALITY FIT



# WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR?

There is no **PERFECT** employer.

There is no **PERFECT** candidate.

**BUT MOST EMPLOYERS WANT AS CLOSE TO PERFECTION**

**AS THEY CAN GET.**

Every employee hired is a bit of a gamble. You can check a hundred references, interview someone a dozen times, and still make a hire that doesn't work out. Even though my job is recruiting people for other companies, our team will still make a bad hire occasionally. You just never know what you are going to get, and sometimes you get fooled during the interview process. Employers compensate for that uncertainty by establishing a list of hiring criteria that will help them to get as close as possible to a sure bet.

**IN HIRING, ALL EMPLOYERS WANT THESE EIGHT TRAITS:**

## 1 THE CORRECT TECHNICAL SKILLSET

The number one prerequisite for any hire is the candidate having the correct, relevant skillset needed for that particular job. Employers always first ask themselves, "Can this person do the job?" before evaluating anything else. Except when hiring new graduates, most employers do not want to spend the time, effort or money training someone who does not have most or all of the technical qualifications for a job.

## 2 CHEMISTRY AND PERSONALITY FIT

Every employer wants to hire people who fit and will contribute positively to the team. They will ask themselves during the interview, "Could I go to lunch with this person and have something to talk about other than work?" They do not want someone who will create or participate in office drama. An outgoing and positive personality is usually more likely to get hired, as long as it fits the team, role and office environment. Employers strive to create a certain office dynamic, and if someone does not fit the workplace culture, it's not worth the headaches of trying to correct those mistakes later.

## 3 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Employers want someone who is able to effectively communicate. They begin to evaluate someone's written communication skills with the initial email and résumé, and if they see overly casual communication or incorrect grammar or spelling, they immediately think less of the candidate. They also evaluate interview thank-you notes for appropriate spelling and grammar. Verbal communication is equally as important. Every employer wants someone with a strong command of the English language and the ability to both understand and follow directions by their supervisor.

## 4 PRESENTATION

Upon first seeing an interviewee, an employer assumes that this is the best that person will ever look. When that impression falls short, the chance of hiring that person drops dramatically. Let's face it, image matters. Employers are not seeking or expecting a supermodel to walk through the door, but they do expect job seekers and employees to care about their appearance and to dress appropriately for that work environment.

## 5 REALISTIC, REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Employers look for people with a realistic understanding of what they have to offer and reasonable expectations for a career path and compensation. I meet many job seekers who have an inflated opinion of the job they are qualified for, irrespective of skills; unreasonable salary expectations; and an overly aggressive view of how quickly they should rise within an organization. Employers want someone who knows his or her current skillset, has salary expectations that fit the role and a realistic timeframe for promotions.

## 6 PREPARATION AND INTEREST

My clients expect people who interview for a job to be both prepared for the interview and interested in the specific role for which they are interviewing. Lack of interview preparation demonstrates a lack of interest in the role. Additionally, this is not a time to hide feelings about a role. It is expected that those who interview will express interest during or quickly after the interview, or employers assume that there is none.

## 7 STRONG WORK ETHIC

When I graduated in 1993, my generation expected to have to work hard in our careers. We expected overtime, and hoped that our hard work and dedication would be recognized and rewarded. My generation, and those preceding, are many of the people in hiring positions today. This dedication to a career is what we expect. That does not mean that employers want or require workaholics, but they all want people who will commit to doing their job and doing it thoroughly, even if that involves working some overtime.

## 8 PROMOTABILITY

In most roles, employers look for people who can progress within their organization. They want people who are upwardly mobile and who will be long-term employees. They look at a job seeker's past performance as a barometer and indicator of future success, and evaluate whether the person will be able to be a long-term contributor, in whatever capacity fits the organization and the job seeker's stage of life.

**THERE IS NO MAGIC FORMULA IN HIRING.**

HOWEVER, EMPLOYERS ARE CONSISTENT REGARDLESS OF INDUSTRY OR SIZE OF COMPANY. They want dedicated employees who treat the company like it is their own and who care about the organization and their coworkers. The best advice to an employer trying to hire is: sell the positive aspects of your company in the interview, and work hard to create an environment where people want to work. Life is just too short to work with the wrong people!

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