

Unprofessional employees? Re-evaluate your hiring process

by Dave Porter



When one of our marketing directors went down to the lobby to greet a young woman who was interviewing for an entry-level position, she found the candidate engrossed in the screen of her BlackBerry. “Just a sec,” the candidate told her would-be boss. “I’m in the middle of a message.”

The marketing director interviewed the young woman, but did not hire her. Another company might have, but not Baystate Financial.

We operate under four principles: integrity, competence, professionalism and work ethic. When the firm’s recruiters interview job applicants, they look for candidates with those four qualities.

It’s your hire, so you’re accountable

Baystate won’t hire someone who shows up for the interview dressed like it’s Saturday. Or chewing gum. Or late.

Any manager who ignores blatant symptoms of an unprofessional attitude is accountable for that new hire’s predictably *laissez-faire* behavior on the job.

If you expect associates to put business first while at work—respecting the presence of others in the room and engaging with them, dressing with care, showing up on time and ready to work—then hire people who declare those intentions with their actions and demeanor during the job interview.

The choice you make the day you hire someone can translate into profits or problems. Your hiring choice makes you accountable for whichever one results.

Here are two questions whose answers can reveal a candidate’s level of integrity:

- When in your life have you made a decision that you’re proud of—when nobody was looking?
- Which five adjectives best describe your character?

A decision to be proud of

One job candidate we interviewed, Leonard, replied to the first question by recounting the time he found a

camera on the back seat of a taxi cab in Boston. He showed it to the driver, who said he was going to keep the camera. Leonard refused to give it to him, but not because he wanted it himself. Instead, he turned it in to the cab company's lost and found, which returned the camera to its owner.

That's the kind of story I like to hear during job interviews. It's the kind of story that reveals the level of a job candidate's integrity.

If it's important to you to hire associates with integrity, ask them about it during the job interview. Integrity can be learned, or it can be innate. Either way, you can find out if it's part of an applicant's nature before you offer a job.

If Leonard had answered that question by saying, "I'm not sure; I've got to think about it," he probably would not be working for my company right now.

People with integrity can point to any number of experiences that reveal their true characters. Someone might recall not cheating on a test in college, even though it would have been easy to get away with it. Another might tell about returning an overpayment to a customer who never would have known she had paid the wrong amount.

It's a question that calls for a thoughtful answer. It's a question someone with integrity can answer with ease.

5 telling adjectives

When you ask for adjectives, listen for clues about how much the candidate cares about others and about doing the right thing. The kinds of words I like to hear: honest, respectful, punctual, curious, accountable.

Beware of adjectives that indicate an "all-about-me" mindset: carefree, fun, laid back. Those qualities are great, but only when they are balanced by responsible and professional behaviors. Quiz your candidate to find out if they are.

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