

SpongeBob or Squidward: Which would you hire?



Quick! Which would you hire: SpongeBob or Squidward?

Well, maybe not so quick.

Perhaps you should take your time on this one.

These lovable cartoon characters have two opposing personalities, and their boss, Mr. Krabs, the miserly proprietor of the sometimes-busy, most-times-not fast-food joint, the Krusty Krab, hired them both. (Who knows? Maybe they were the only applicants.)

OK. I'm not suggesting that your job candidates are as wacky, outlandish and exasperating as these guys, but each has recognizable work ethics—as exaggerated as they are—that are inherent in a lot of the folks who answer your employment ads, or who are on your payroll right now.

Let's take a look at those qualities.

SpongeBob Squarepants is an eternally bubbly, eager-to-please and mistake-prone fry cook. On the downside, he's dangerously intuitive, or humorously serendipitous. Either way, he gets the job done. You know the type. These employees are usually dedicated workers who need your guidance, a bit of mentoring and just a little time. Give them room to stretch their talents and spread some harmless nonsense.

Often, the SpongeBobs are relatively new to the work world and come to you if not with a can-do spirit, then an "I'm-willing-to-learn-it" mindset.

They are generally extroverted and make great team players. You can count on them to form or join committees and aggressively participate in your organization's morale-boosting activities.

Now, over to Squidward Tentacles. Squidward, the jaded, non-smiling cashier at the Krusty Krab, slogs through his job like—well, look around—about half of your workforce. Like a lot of folks, Squidward, an aspiring clarinet player, longs to be something better, grander than a rank-and-file worker who just tolerates his lot in life and a job he'll probably hang onto for a long while.

Squidward types, in their quiet contemplation, often make good employees. Introverted and strangely focused, they shun the workplace giddiness, seeing it as nonessential frivolity. Although they rarely clamor for promotions, they'll put in a good day's work, grumpiness aside.

And unless your workplace becomes entirely intolerable for them, your Squidwards will stick it out, giving you a certain steadiness in productivity and some sanity to your turnover rate. Since most only dream of a loftier life and seldom take action to make it happen, they are full of thoughts, ideas and skills that they'll apply to their tasks only. Sharing is optional.

Which would you hire?

Take your pick. You need both to round out and balance your workplace. A good workforce will keep itself in check.

It could be Mr. Krabs is on to something and knows a little more about hiring than just giving the job to whoever comes the cheapest.

Now, as for Patrick Star's résumé ...

Cal Butera is the editor of Business Management Daily's *Office Manager Today*, *Manager's Legal Bulletin*, *Managing People at Work* and *Communication Briefings* newsletters. He has been with Business Management Daily since 2007 and worked 22 years for midsize daily newspapers as sports writer, news reporter, layout and design editor, copy editor and city editor.
