

Seven Dirty HR Tricks That IT Professionals Hate In The Recruitment Process

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[Blog entry](#)

Being the head of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Shirish Chotalia was supposed to be a people person.

But instead, she was a petty tyrant, a belligerent bully and a malevolent monster who humiliated her employees in a broad range of innovative ways¹.

As a high-ranking government thug with a human rights lawyer background, she knew she could get away with murder, so she was pretty liberal at taking her frustration out on her people.

She even put her staff's lives in danger when she disallowed them to leave the building during an earthquake.

And when the bubble burst and her abusive behaviour was made public, she started blaming the unions and playing the race card...

"I was chosen by the Conservative government; I am a brown woman from Alberta and the unions want to remove me."

At the end of the investigation, she left government services and went into private practice to do some private human rights lawyering... and maybe some more staff intimidating.

It seems to me she had no more people skills than a great white shark: Human beings are good for one thing: Ripping them to pieces.

I reckon the only difference is that she means it figuratively, while, based on my readings, the great white means it literally, which clearly shows the literary sophistication of the great white... for some teeth-chattering and bloodcurdling bedtime stories.

I've mentioned this story because many HR department heads and even whole HR departments of IT companies are very similar to Chotalia's people skills standards.

When you read some career ads of IT companies, this pervert behaviour comes across even from the wording of the ads.

It happens even in career ads that have been placed on paid platforms. And when you look at unpaid or low-budget advertising junk channels, like Craigslist, what you are witnessing is a field day of morons.

What most of those ads ask for is specific schooling, and the number of years of using specific tools and/or methodologies.

What they say is...

"At minimum, you must have a master's degree in journalism or corporate communication, coupled with minimum five years of experience at Fortune 500 corporations. Further, you must be a proficient user of ABC and XYZ [some morbidly obscure or specific software]."

These ads are usually written by HR people.

What they don't say is...

¹ [Reference #1](#), [Reference #2](#)

"Historically, we've had a 17% annual growth. Now we'd like to crank it up to 21% in the next year and even higher then. To do that, we're looking for a full-time tech-savvy copywriter who can help us to boost response rate to our lead generation efforts and improve conversion rate."

These ads are usually written by business owners or other boardroom dwellers. However, this hardly ever happens because HR often intervenes and re-writes the ad and turns the business owner version into the HR version.

There are only very few business owners who know the importance of a copywriter, and they insist on doing the recruitment themselves without HR's involvement.

Then after they hire people, HR can help them to settle in and take care of the required paperwork. But recruitment is definitely not HR's business.

They took to heart what Peter Drucker wrote in *A Functioning Society: Selections From 65 Years of Writing on Community, Society and Polity, 2003...*

"The management of knowledge workers should be based on the assumption that the corporation needs them more than they need the corporation. They know they can leave. They have both mobility and self-confidence. This means they have to be treated and managed as volunteers, in the same way as volunteers who work for not-for-profit organizations."

And this statement grossly violates what HR experts are trained in: Micromanage people, keep them in the dark, share with them as little as possible, initiate and maintain internal competition among workers.

The HR profession hasn't fully embraced the knowledge work/knowledge worker concept and still desperately tries to manage people with the "slaves at the conveyor belt" mantra in mind.

Just think about Yahoo big boss, Marissa Mayer.

Shortly after taking the reins, she scrapped Yahoo's long-established work from home policy and ordered everyone to get their butts back to the office. Some of the best talents, both techies and managers, packed up and quit.

When Executive Vice President, Hilary Schneider, left, almost all of the VPs reporting to her left too.

And this was just one leak on the gigantic Yahoo bucket.

So, How To Patch The Hole And Stop The Leak?

Most IT managers want the best for their companies and want to contribute to increasing their successes, knowing that their personal successes depend on their companies' success.

And one element of success is to attract and retain top-drawer talents.

And this is where the difference lies.

Are you looking for top-drawer talents or jobseekers (some are unemployed)?

I'm asking you because the acquisition processes are drastically different.

Acquisition stages	Jobseeker	Talent
The acquisition process	Hiring: A short-term, quick-fix "retail operation" process of accepting and reviewing job applications from the unwashed masses to perform preset tasks in a preset order.	Recruiting: A long-term, permanent-fix "direct marketing" process of finding the very best persons to help to achieve certain company goals.
Basic dynamic	The jobseeker, often unemployed, needs a new job.	The company needs new talent(s) to help the company to achieve bigger goals.
Basic problem	Those who want the job the most are not the best people for the job.	Top-talents are already engaged in great gigs and are reluctant to change.
Tone of job ad	Demands and expectations Applicant-based: You must have... ABC years of schooling Knowledge of XYZ methodology.	Excitement and enticement Company-based: You will work with other top-talents to help company with ABC affliction and XYZ aspiration.
Application	Cover letter + Resume	Sales letter
Reviewed by	Software looking for pre-programmed keywords Junior HR people	Business owner or senior exec(s).
Meeting with	Very junior HR staff or HR intern	Business owner and senior execs.
Meeting's atmosphere	Job interview: Master/superior (HR) interrogates future slave/subordinate (applicant).	Sales meeting: Buyer (exec.) and seller (talent) compare notes about the company's afflictions and aspirations. Meeting between peers.
Decision criteria	How the applicant looks on paper. Must be politically correct and protect HR person from future repercussions.	How the applicant can help to advance the company's success. Must be economically and psychologically correct. Execs are aware of the innate risk of recruiting.
Final decision made by	HR people	Business owner or senior exec(s).

And this leads me to a short conclusion: Most IT companies' job openings are good enough for jobseekers but pitifully pathetic for top-talents.

So, if you're looking for good talents, not merely average jobseekers, you have to change your process.

In this article we look at what IT companies had better change in the talent acquisition and

recession processes in order to attract better people.

Here are five things that can prevent IT companies from turning hiring jobseekers into recruiting talents.

1. Mentally Already Filled The Position

Companies want highly qualified candidates for the job openings, yet they play dumb mind games that even a demented bee would recognise without seriously overtaxing his infinitesimal brain.

One of these games is when IT companies interview people for positions that have already been filled.

Anyone can see that interviewers, usually low-level HR flunkies, just want to go through the motions, but they are about as engaged in the task as a fox is engaged in guarding the henhouse.

Many companies have retarded policies that require to interview candidates for positions that are already filled. It's just policy.

I've also come across IT companies where department heads are required to open up filled positions for replacement even if they are euphorically delighted with the incumbents' performance.

And if the HR people decide that the new candidate is "more qualified", whatever that means, managers are required to lay off their peak performers and hire these new candidates who look better on paper than the incumbents.

But whether or not they can perform is irrelevant. After all, this must be a politically correct decision even if it is financially prohibitive.

While this is a typical problem that plagues large corporations, many smaller companies suffer from it too.

If you want serious(ly talented) people to apply for your opportunities, then get rid of the mental game part.

Talented people want to be treated as peers not as children in a kindergarten.

Remember smart people can play mental games on you and your people.

To their amazement, every piece of mental game your people deliver to smart candidates would come right back at them with enough spin to keep them incapacitated with nausea, dizziness and recurring nightmares for weeks to come.

Talented people have options and these options don't include taking shit from obnoxious HR goons.

2. Keeping Candidates In The Dark

Here is something interesting.

HR folks usually run job descriptions through the company lawyers to make sure there are enough gotcha type legalese in them to make sure candidates can be kept in the dark and uninformed.

Can you imagine what would happen if candidates wanted to show these documents to their lawyers just to make sure they are not about to be deceived?

They would be kicked out of the application process.

Keeping candidates in the dark is one effective way of making candidates feel that they are indentured servants, and the company has the right to do with them as it pleases.

Well, desperate jobseekers may fall for this trick, but talents don't.

Hence, companies with these practices end up with people from the very bottom of the unemployment scum barrel.

3. Waiting Too Long To Let Job Candidates Know Something

This problem is rooted in the fact that people in certain key positions can't make decisions. They don't want to communicate their choices because they can't change them later.

If they tell job candidates what their job descriptions are, they can't later add phrases like...

"And anything else your supervisor/manager requires you to perform."

A good few years ago I worked with a software developer firm where the sales and marketing people also doubled up as janitors.

Interestingly, the tech people didn't have to participate in the extra work. The owner (a lawyer) said that the tech people were the heart and the soul of the firm, and they must focus on writing code, whereas sales and marketing people have plenty of idle time on their hands, so they could do the cleaning work.

This went on for about two months and then the sales and marketing folks (all 11 of them) quit at once. They also took the clientele and database that they'd built and started a new firm next door.

They partnered up with one of their former company's competitors and started marketing and selling their software.

Within six months, their former employer collapsed and died once and for all. The aspiring business owner became a legal aid lawyer for a tiny fraction of the money and satisfaction that he could have got from a good company.

Oh, well.

Stay in synch with candidates and if you want to know something about them, reveal the same thing about your company.

I find it strange that, especially on Craigslist, advertisers expect candidates to send in their samples of work and references, but companies keep even their names and addresses secret.

Now we know that most of these ads harvest email addresses for future spamming and aren't

legitimate employers.

Among others what differentiates jobseekers from talents is that talents understand decision-making, practise it on a daily basis and expect it from others.

It means hesitating, wishy-washy companies can't hire real talents.

While most jobseekers are mere org chart fillers and seat warmers who don't care much about performance, talents are all about action, knowing that that leads to performance.

4. Failing To Notify Unsuccessful Candidates

When I was living in the UK (1988-1998) it was common courtesy of most companies to notify job candidates who didn't get the jobs they had applied for. It was almost always a card or letter in the mail. Many of them were hand-written.

So, I was pretty surprised when, after arriving in Canada, I found out that over here unsuccessful job applicants are treated like shit and no one bothers to notify them that they didn't get the jobs they'd applied for.

The main reason for that...

"We're getting hundreds of applications and don't have the capacity no notify them."

Well, if you're getting more than 15-25 applications for a position, then job ad and position description are far too general for which the whole HR goon squad should be fired.

My remedy to this problem is to set up a temporary blog, or you can use the company's main blog, and direct applicants to the blog, so they can monitor the progress of the recruitment process. You can make announcements on that blog as to which stage of the recruitment process you are.

Alternatively you can use the company's email marketing system and stay in touch with candidates that way.

Then finally, you can make an announcement that you've selected the successful candidate and best of luck to the others.

Yes, it's disappointing not to get the gig, but at least candidates know the wait is over and they can move on.

5. Deceiving Or Conflicting Job Descriptions

Look at many job ads and you see screwed up they are.

Some are just conflicting...

"Candidate must be proficient in Quickbooks and world-class in Photoshop."

Now, are you looking for a bookkeeper (left brain) or graphics artist (right brain)? Make up your mind!

Some are plain deceiving...

"As the VP of business development, you're expected to make a minimum of 150 cold calls and three "coffee and doughnuts" prospect visits per day."

Is this company looking for a business development VP or a common street peddler?

And when you start working at the company, you get told you have to use your own car for the on-site visits and that the coffee and the doughnuts are on you, and if you make the sale, you can claim it on the top of your commission.

Amazing.

6. Long And Convoluted Interview Process

Experts recommend hiring slowly and firing quickly.

That may well be true, but there is also a limit to how slowly a company can recruit.

When candidates get dragged across town the fifth time to meet yet another HR flunky, they rightfully think whether or not it's worth the effort.

Yes, finding the right person is important, but all you achieve with the long and complicated process is that many IT companies end up hiring the person who is the best at performing at interviews, but may well be utterly useless at doing the work.

Just think about why those people have so much interview experience. Maybe it's high rejection rate. Hm. Just thinking out loud.

And let's stop for a moment.

The people who are worth recruiting are likely to have several offers, some of them from top-drawer companies. So, they have places to go to.

They don't have to put up with a long recruitment process.

And who tolerates that painfully overcomplicated recruitment process?

Those people who have nowhere to go.

And those are certainly not the best people for the advertised positions.

Yes, even top-notch people can tolerate the long process if the recruiting company is IBM, Apple, Microsoft or some other big players.

But they have no reason to go through the same painful process to get a job with a startup or a barely going concern calibre company.

7. Putting Candidates On The Spot Why They Want To Work At The Hiring Company

Here we have questions like...

"Tell me why we should even talk to you? What makes you the

perfect person for this position and for this company?"

This question usually comes up in the job ad, so at that point the candidate doesn't even know the company's name and the exact job description. See many of the douchey job ads on free job boards, like Craigslist.

If nothing else, this question certainly reveals that the company is a third-rate punk that puts up a facade of faux success, but realistically it's a house of cards ready to collapse at any time.

Self-respecting companies respect talents and don't ask them idiotic questions.

Besides, at this stage they talents and companies are just comparing notes, and checking each other to see whether or not it's worth working together.

The problem is that most HR people regard talents as desperate jobseekers on the brink of destitute to whom they think they do a favour by hiring them...

"Well, I take pity on you, and give you a paycheque, you poor sod, so you can pay your rent and feed yourself."

Let's remember that talented people have very little interview experience, hence they can look pretty awkward during interviews.

That's understandable because they've spent most of their careers working as opposed to looking for work.

They've hitched up to some great companies, and until and unless something earth-shattering happens, they stay with their companies.

Of course, the only thing most of them know about resumes and cover letters is how to spell them. And they have almost zero interview experience since they've either never done it or did in millennia ago. So, their inexperience is understandable.

Summary

IT talents and IT companies are seeking the same things from each other: Hefty psychological and financial return.

Talents are looking for companies with sexy and exciting project opportunities and good pay.

IT companies are looking for talents that can make those companies more profitable through their unique expertise and are enjoyable to work with.

And contrary to the TV series *Dr. House*, most jerk geniuses are unemployed.

The only place where the obnoxious prima donna Dr. House can have a job is a TV show, but not in real life.

Yes, good companies appreciate talent, but good talents appreciate great companies, but there is a limit to what they tolerate from each other.

And this leads us to the distinction of...

Being In Charge Vs. Being In Control

When you're in charge, using your exemplar behaviour, you lead the way in a manner that is worth following. You're pulling people forward.

You and your people are on a quest to explore and discover something together. You're in charge of moving in the same direction to achieve a goal.

But when you're in control, you have the attitude of ruling over people. You're pushing them forward from a safe distance to make sure when the shit hits the fan, you're shielded from blame.

Just see most politicians.

The basic difference is that being in charge is all about leadership. It's all about setting a direction and leading people in that direction.

An orchestra conductor is in charge of the orchestra during performance to make sure the "project" is completed as requested by the people who've paid for it (the audience).

But the conductor isn't in control of the orchestra's members.

Being in control is all about managing. Or rather, micromanaging.

That happens when the orchestra conductor walks off his pulpit, walks over to the triangle player and tells her how to play the triangle better than she is playing it now.

That also happens when the captain walks off the bridge, goes down to the row deck and instructs the slaves how to row more effectively.

The problem is that when that happens, both the orchestra and the ship lose direction and start floating whenever the musicians' fancy and the currents of the sea take them.

Talented people, having worked with many managers and supervisors, both good and bad, can easily spot entitlement- and power-hungry arseholes who don't know how to lead but are desperate to micromanage (well, domineer over) others.

Many of these perverts are also hiding in "professional" associations. They aren't good enough to actually practise their professions, but think they have the right and the smarts to regulate them.

Well, the lesson is that the better you get at treating new candidates as peers and the better you communicate to them "what we want to achieve together", instead of the typical "what can you do FOR us?", the better quality candidates you will end up with.

In the meantime, don't sell harder. Market smarter and your business will be better off for it.

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