"Fit" and "Culture" Questions

DSC 90

Winter 2020

What I look for

SMART

CAN GET THINGS DONE

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But how do you show that in an interview?

Why not just smart?

People who are *Smart* but don't *Get Things Done* often have PhDs and work in big companies where nobody listens to them because they are completely impractical.

- They would rather mull over something academic about a problem rather than ship on time.

- These kind of people can be identified because they love to point out the theoretical similarity between two widely divergent concepts. For example, they will say, "Spreadsheets are really just a special case of programming language," and then go off for a week and write a thrilling, brilliant whitepaper about the theoretical computational linguistic attributes of a spreadsheet as a programming language.

- The other way to identify these people is that they have a tendency to show up at your office, coffee mug in hand, and try to start a long conversation about the relative merits of Java introspection vs. COM type libraries, *on the day you are trying to ship a beta*.

Why not just get things done?

People who *Get Things Done* but are not *Smart* will do stupid things, seemingly without thinking about them, and somebody else will have to come clean up their mess later.

- This makes them net *liabilities* to the company because not only do they fail to contribute, but they soak up good people's time.
- They are the kind of people who decide to refactor your core algorithms to use the Visitor Pattern, which they just read about the night before, and completely misunderstood, and instead of simple loops adding up items in an array you've got an AdderVistior class (yes, it's spelled wrong) and a VisitationArrangingOfficer singleton and none of your code works any more.

What others look for?

How to Differentiate Yourself

1. Elaboration
2. Storytelling
3. Follow-up

How to Differentiate Yourself
Elaboration

Goal: indicate your problem-solving capacity outside the current question

Your answer should include **why** you are choosing a specific approach.

Examples:
- Test computational time of different approaches
- Add context of business problem
- Mention future work, alternative approaches

How to Differentiate Yourself
Follow-up

Goal: Demonstrate solution-oriented mindset (and that you can actually solve problems)

During the interview, ask about particular examples of problems you will face in the role.

After the interview, spend some time outlining a solution

- Not too detailed, just to show you understand the problem

- Send follow-up email "By the way, I thought about <problem> and came up with three solutions that I could implement in the first month"

How to Differentiate Yourself
Storytelling

Use specific past events to highlight skills.

Examples:

• Indicate if you have implemented a similar solution in the past

• Show a tie to the values of the company

STAR format:
1. Situation
2. Task
3. Action
4. Response

Protected categories

In all 50 states, federal law makes it illegal to discriminate based on:
- race
- color
- national origin
- religion
- sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions)
- disability
- age (40 and older)
- citizenship status, and
- genetic information.

In addition, California state law also prohibits discrimination based on:

- marital status
- sexual orientation
- gender identity and gender expression
- AIDS/HIV
- medical condition
- political activities or affiliations
- military or veteran status, and
- status as a victim of domestic violence, assault, or stalking.

Finally, several cities in the U.S. have their own laws protecting additional characteristics or extending protection to more employees. For example, height and weight are protected classes in San Francisco.

The Secret: Networking

Get a referral.

- Four out of nine companies we surveyed had internal referral as the top source of interviews (Google, Uber, Facebook, Airbnb)

- Overall, it was the second largest source of interviews.

- You'll want to get to know people in the company and get them to advocate for you rather than just applying online.