



Want Exceptional Employees?
Hire for Attitude

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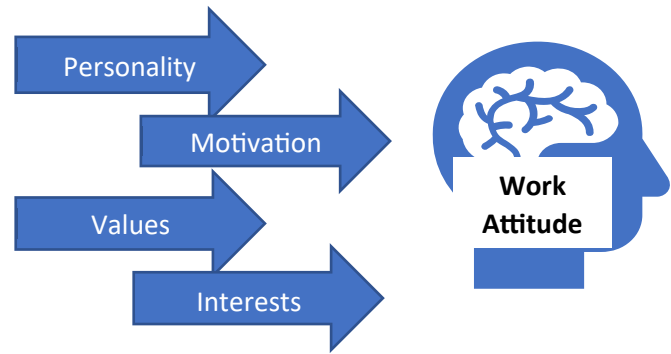
The famous and oft-quoted wisdom, “Hire for attitude, train for skills,” was borne in the late 90s from the book *Nuts!*, which chronicled Southwest Airlines’ formula for success under CEO Herb Kelleher.

Years later, that statement is still more than just sound advice – it speaks to the requisite behavior for finding exceptional employees, and it’s an approach to pre-employment assessment I have emphasized throughout my career.

The assessment for work attitude was a key metric in our battery of pre-employment testing during my tenure as lead assessment psychologist at Anheuser-Busch (A-B). In fact, August Busch III, the CEO during the height of A-B’s heyday, took this advice to heart. He insisted that a pre-employment test for work attitude be part of the hiring process for all plant start-ups, as well as hiring replacements at existing plants. The result was a workforce that drew the envy of competitors.

What is work attitude, exactly?

There are many theories about how work attitude is acquired. They include antecedents, such as personality, motivation, values and interests.



(Hogan, Hogan & Roberts, 1996; McClelland, 1987; Skinner, 1969; Strong, Campbell & Hansen, 1985).

Exploring those theories further is beyond the scope of this article but simply put, work attitude is something we all have and it’s something that differs among each of us.

But the common denominator is that exceptional employees have the “right” work attitude for the job – a quality they have to *want* to do whatever it takes and *want* to go that extra mile whenever needed.

Here are a few *specific* examples:

For **manufacturing workers**, it may be...

- **Quality orientation** – showing the effort to maintain and improve quality
- **Safety initiative** – exhibiting a willingness to follow safety procedures
- **Productivity drive** – taking the initiative to reach and exceed production levels

For **customer-facing workers**, it may include...

- **Customer-centric** – making an effort to provide customer service beyond the customer's expectations

For medical personnel, it may include...

- **Patient focus** – seeking a way to provide exceptional patient care

What about skills?

Of course, job skills are important, but let's take a look at the breakdown of job behavior. In their simplest form, skills are the tools employees use to get the job done. It's the vehicle of work. But something needs to get the engine moving. A person's attitude provides the energy.

We either teach new employees the necessary skills for the job or we look for those skills in their past experiences. Did they learn the skills through a training/educational program or by direct experience? Skills are what you see listed out on resumes, and this is where too many recruiters get hung up and go wrong – they focus *only* on skills.

I'm not suggesting that recruiters and hiring managers should disregard skills. ***If you're fortunate enough to find a skilled candidate with the right work attitude, you will have an exceptional employee.*** But which of the two is more critical in the selection/hiring process? One of those you can teach, and the other is pretty much established in people and difficult

to change. I've always said, "Skills get you hired, attitude gets you fired."

We assess for work attitude at E·A·S·I-Consult®

Following the success I witnessed with the introduction of a work attitude assessment at A-B – and into my next career – my assessment team at E·A·S·I-Consult created similar tests for our customers.

We began with the retail industry and quickly moved to the manufacturing arena. Customers rapidly approached us from many industries and various parts of the world. We aptly named our work attitude assessment tool the ***Work Styles Predictor®***, or ***WSP®*** for short.

The *WSP* was and continues to be customized and validated for each new customer. The results customers have had after introducing the *WSP* into their hiring processes include increases in productivity, customer service and work quality, and reductions in absenteeism, turnover and safety incidents.

The *WSP* typically requires 20 minutes of a candidate's time, is completed online and delivers a clear and simple report to recruiters and hiring managers for screening purposes.

The complete picture

I'm certainly not suggesting that you throw the baby out with the bath water when it comes to job-skills assessment.

There is a place for everything in the hiring process. But a critical piece of the puzzle when deciding to hire someone is a strong measure of work attitude that matches the demands of the job.

Combining interviews with valid pre-employment tests will provide a comprehensive selection process. Focusing on work attitude, followed by skills assessment, will provide you with an exceptional hiring plan to get you *exceptional employees*.

**For more information on the Work Styles Predictor®,
email valerie@relateucation.com,
visit <https://www.relateucation.com/wsp>
or call (+61) 1300 883 652.**



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