A Formula for Picking the Best, Most Well-Rounded Candidate for a Health Care Administrative Office

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No matter what the job, all managers want employees that will mesh with others. What is the key to picking the Best candidate for the job if all things are equal between two candidates skill-wise, education-wise, and intelligence-wise?

I have identified several “soft” skills that can pinpoint candidates that have the most potential to be compatible and cause the least amount of friction with other employees.

Soft skills are emotional and social competencies. The emotional skills I have identified are:

1. Impulse Control
2. Delay of Immediate Gratification
3. Mood regulation and preservation of motivation in frustrating situations
4. Empathy for Others
5. Promote trust in employees and patients
6. Ability to Manage One’s Surroundings

The social skills I have identified are:

1. Ability to Exercise Complex Social Skills such as Teamwork, Communication, Conflict resolution, Harmony, Consensus, Multiculturalism, etc.
2. Expression of Oneself During Social Situations, Reading, and Comprehension of Different Types of social situations
3. Interpersonal Problem solving Skills and Social Role Playing
4. Understanding of Accepted Social Norms, Roles, and Scripts
5. Skills Necessary for Task Completion
6. Management of One’s Behaviors that Positively Influence Group Member Perceptions
7. Projecting Self-Confidence

Now, does Everybody have to embody ALL of the skills listed? I don’t even know if that’s possible! But, a manger should be able to pick the person who shows the most potential in these areas, thus eliminating the candidates that may be potential disruptions to the work place.

Eliminating candidates that are not a “good fit” can be hard to do in one or two interviews! How can the manager really get to know someone’s true sense of compassion or ability to create harmony in such a short period of time? In my experience, most people can mask their weaknesses for a short period—until they get hired!
I have been an administrator for many years and even did my dissertation on leadership in hospital administration. I’ve made some good choices and I’ve made some bad choices when hiring employees. I KNOW how important picking the right man or woman for the job is!

There are hundreds of books and classes dedicated to the candidate looking for a job that teach the candidate how to dress, how to be engaging, and how to answer questions. But there is very little literature on how administrators pick good candidates according to the soft skills mentioned above.

The trouble is that soft skills are so hard to measure! Here is the formula I’ve come up with for hiring the Best candidate for the job.

1. **Impulse Control** - Use this scenario-
   “You are on the game show, Let’s Make a Deal. You are asked to pick Door 1, Door 2, or a box. Which do you pick?”
   (No matter which item the candidate picks go on to say) “You win $500 dollars. Then you are asked if you want to trade or keep the money for what’s in an envelope in my pocket.”
   
   a. If the candidate takes the trade, he/she has a more risky tendency.
   b. If the candidate does not trade, it shows risk averseness and impulse control.

2. **Delay of Immediate Gratification** - Use this scenario-
   “You go to the library to pick out a book. You have plenty of time. You pick out a book with an interesting title and cover. To see if you will enjoy it, do you:
   
   a. Read the last page?
   b. Read the first page?
   c. Take the book home without reading any part of it?”
   
   If the candidate chooses:
   
   a. To read the last page, they show tendencies toward need for immediate gratification.
   b. To read the first page, he/she may be risk averse and want to make sure there is an acceptable formula to the author’s writing.
   c. To wait until he/she gets home to see if the book is enjoyable, the candidate is more likely to be able to delay rewards.
3. **Mood regulation and preservation of motivation in frustrating situations** - Use this scenario-

You’ve been working on a grant proposal for 2 months. The researcher comes in and says the study has been canceled. All your effort for 2 months has been wasted!

What do you do?
- a. Go home, eat a bowl of ice cream, and think about what you could have done.
- b. Tell the researcher how much you’ve invested in this project.
- c. Ask, “What’s the next project?”

If the candidate chooses to:
- a. Go home, he or she may have tendencies toward isolation and depression.
- b. Complain about wasted effort, she or he may not adjust well to frustrating moments.
- c. Focuses on future projects, she/he may be able to accept change even if it is not always for the better.

4. **Empathy for Others** - Use this scenario-

“Someone is sitting in your assigned seat. Do you:
- a. Ask them politely to move
- b. Let them stay and go find another seat.
- c. Help them move to another seat and sit in the assigned seat.”

If the candidate chooses to:
- a. Ask the person to move, they are probably not empathetic.
- b. Let the person stay in his/her chair, she could still not be empathetic.
- c. Help the person find another chair in order to sit in his own, he is showing caring for others AND the ability to follow directions.

5. **Promote trust in employees and patients** - Use this scenario-

“You are a patient advocate meeting with a patient. The patient asks a financial question that you do not know the answer to. You tell the patient you will email her the answer before the next meeting. But, you forget to follow up on the question before the next meeting. What would you do?
- a. Tell the patient you tried but could not find the answer?
- b. Tell the patient you forgot and you will get the answer before the NEXT meeting?
- c. Apologizes and call immediately for the answer.”

If the candidate Chooses:
- a. They’re irresponsible.
- b. He/she appears to be trying, but still has tendencies toward irresponsibility and lack of follow-through.
c. Admits failure, he/or she is taking responsibility. In addition, by calling immediately, he/she is correcting the error in order to maintain trust in the relationship.

6. **Ability to Manage One’s Surroundings** - Use this scenario -
   “How would you decorate your office space?
   a. No decorations
   b. Stuffed animals and candy
   c. Pictures of family and friends

   If the candidate chooses:
   a. Not to decorate at all, it may be a sign that they are inflexible AND are not committed to the job.
   b. Decorates with too much stuff that doesn’t have anything to do with work, they may be ‘too’ outgoing and a distraction in the workplace.
   c. Decorates with a few tasteful pictures, they are promoting trust and a commitment to the workplace.

7. **Ability to Exercise Complex Social Skills such as Teamwork, Communication, Conflict resolution, Harmony, Consensus, Multiculturalism, etc.**

   Use this scenario -
   There’s a dogsled team. One of the dogs is smaller and not as strong as the other dogs. The little dog is picked on. What would you do?

   a. Discipline the dogs until they work together as a team.
   b. Add another dog to the team.
   c. Remove the little dog from the team.

   If the candidate chooses:
   a. They show rigidness to conformity: probably not the most effect conflict resolution or harmonious style.
   b. They show a tendency toward issue avoidance. Adding another dog to the team doesn’t mean that the real problem has been addressed.
   c. They show a willingness to take the harder stance. Admittedly, in a human team, you could TRY other conflict resolution methods, but in the end, the person who does not show a commitment to the job has to go.

8. **Expression of Oneself During Social Situations, Reading, and Comprehension of Different Types of social situations**

   Use this scenario -
   “You are driving to the beach and get lost. You end up on a nudist beach, but you didn’t realize it until you had already set up the umbrella and chair. You are mortified! What are you going to do?
   a. Pack up and leave.
b. Ignore the naked people.
c. Make new friends even though slightly embarrassed.

If the candidate chooses:
a. She is showing an unwillingness to compromise her standards.
b. She is showing avoidance.
c. She is showing a willingness to accept people for who they are and an understanding of how to blend in to a social situation. She is also exhibiting follower-type behavior. Admittedly this is a kind of extreme scenario.

9. **Interpersonal Problem solving Skills and Social Role Playing**- Use this scenario-
You go to a restaurant and order a steak cooked to medium. After waiting more than 30 minutes, the waitress brings out a well-done, almost burnt piece of meat. What do you do?
   a. Refuse the meal and leave the restaurant?
   b. Eat the steak given to you?
   c. Send the steak back?

If the candidate chooses:
   a. They have not faced the problem- an issue of avoidance.
   b. He/ she has not solved the problem. By accepting the steak he has internalized the problem-not a good sign.
   c. By sending the steak back, the candidate is showing a willingness to give the restaurant another chance and flexibility when things don’t go his/her way.

10. **Understanding of Accepted Social Norms, Roles, and Scripts**- Use this scenario-
You have had a terrible allergy attack and after being out a week, you go back to work. You go to the cafeteria and see an acquaintance from another department. In passing, she asks, “How are you?” What do you say?
   a. Fine.
   b. I have been REALLY sick. I was out all week!
   c. Thanks for asking. I was sick but I’m feeling much better. How are you?

If the candidate chooses:
   a. He is showing that he understands the scripted response. But by giving this rote answer he is not telling the truth.
   b. He’s too engaging and talkative. This is a signal that work is not a priority.
   c. He’s being honest, understand social etiquette, and shows concern for others.

11. **Skills Necessary for Task Completion**- Use this scenario-
Suzie is always running late and can’t finish a task on time. What should she do?
a. Apologize for being late.
b. Take the work home she doesn’t finish in the office.
c. Promise to stay late.
d. None of the above.

If the candidate chooses:
   a. This is not a solution.
   b. This is not a feasible solution.
   c. Not a long-term solution.
   d. The supervisor needs to help her device time-management techniques. A time limit needs to be established in which to show mastery of the skill.

12. Management of One’s Behaviors that Positively Influence Group Member Perceptions - Use this scenario-

Several people in are in a play. They have a disappointing dress rehearsal the night before opening day. The director should:
   a. Tell everyone they must go home and continue working on their lines until they get it right.
   b. Tell everyone to go home and cancel the event.
   c. Assure the cast that tomorrow will be better.

IF the candidate chooses:
   a. He has very high standards. This could mean that he won’t be able to complete tasks because he’s too much of a perfectionist. He may be too much of a controller to be an inspirational leader.
   b. Risk-averse. Not a solution and does not inspire confidence.
   c. Possibly not a realist. OR-possibly a realist who does not want to scare the cast or make them feel any worse. Whether tomorrow’s performance is better or not is not as important to this type of leader as the people on the team.

13. Projecting Self-Confidence - Use this scenario-

Your dog is afraid of thunder. You are out for a walk on a cloudy day and thunder booms in the distance. Your dog starts lunging at the leash. What do you do?

   a. Jerk on the leash and give the dog commands to calm down.
   b. Run the dog back to the house.
   c. Bend down and pull the dog to you using a reassuring tone.

If the candidate chooses:
   a. This is kind of commanding. Or is it out of control?
   b. Panic is never commanding confidence.
   c. Understanding others fears and finding calming solutions is the embodiment of self-control.
Although not a scientific study, I have done enough research and talked with enough administrators to isolate emotional and social skills important to a smooth-running office environment. These questions target pertinent soft skills and correspond to different scenarios I have seen reflected in the workplace.

My diagnosis-

If the candidate honestly answers and does not give the answer he/she thinks the administrator wants to hear, you should be able to identify the type of person you’re interviewing.

If you run a disciplined, unyielding workplace, those that answer mostly ‘A’s’ are the right candidates for you.

Those who answer mostly ‘B’s” are probably followers that don’t have much leadership potential, but take direction well.

The candidates that answer the most ‘C’s’ are the most social that probably work well with others.

Thus ends my formula for picking the best, most well-rounded candidate for the job.