

# *Myron Doc Downing PhD, LMFT*

2560 W. Shaw Suite 105 Fresno, CA 03711  
Phone: (559) 436-0428 [DocDowning@att.net](mailto:DocDowning@att.net)

## **JOB SENSE**

In this economy, where job are few and applicants are plentiful, any edge that you can get can help you get and keep a job is worth considering. Have you ever considered what made the difference between you and the guy who got the job? Was it just bad luck? Or, did that person have something you did not have, like personal connections, skills, good looks, or personality?

Having run a company of more than fifty people, I know some of the problems from the other side of finding and keeping the right employee. For me, it how do I find and promote the right people. Hiring the right person is not a matter of just finding a good person and putting them to work.

In a sense every person is a good person, but what I need is a certain skill set to make my company run smoothly. What I'm looking for is someone with the skills that I need to compliment the skilled people that I have already working for me. You may have years of experience, you may have a college degree but you may not have the job and people skills that I need for my company.

First and foremost, I need someone who will make money for the company. The person I would lay off last first is the person who makes the most money for the company. If you want job security show up, be dependable and more money than body else, including the boss. His job is not to make money but to see that the company makes money. This is true of all companies, both for profit and non-profits (unfortunately it is not true of government or union jobs).

Next, I want someone with the skills that I need and that I can rent. I recognize I do not own the person who works for me; I am simply renting their skills for a set period of time each day. Finding someone with the job skills or knowledge I need is usually the easiest part of the job. The hard part is finding someone with the people skills.

I used to think I could train anyone who want to be a therapist, to be a therapist. It only took a few years before I saw the folly of this belief. A person can understand all the theory and have a firm grasps of the concepts and fail in relating to people. This is true no matter what your specific skill

is, whether it is answering the phone, doing the bookkeeping, selling, working with your fellow employees or doing therapy.

## **People skills**

The Department of Labor says that 80% of the people who get fired from their job have the job skills to do their job, what they don't have are the people skills. A training program or a college degree can be the key to opening the door of opportunity for you, but it is your people skills that will determine if you keep the job!

Resumes can sometimes help me screen out someone *does not* have the necessary *people skills*. Gaps in employment history and frequent job turnovers in short time spans are both red flags that are worth checking into with previous employers, but resumes do not tell me *what to look for* in seeking a candidate with *people skills*. However, the following has helped me determine if a person has the *people skills* to build relationships with my customers as well as their fellow employees.

The first people skill that an employee needs to have is **communication skills**.

- Is this prospective employee able to listen to the question and stay focused on what is asked of him/her?
- Do they run off on a tangent when they speak?
- Is the person able to pick up on inferences and is he/she willing and able to paraphrase as a way of clarifying what is being said?

There are two parts to communication, *talking* and *listening*. By far, the most important part is the ability to listen and reflect back what they have heard. Paraphrasing is the most effective way of reflecting back; word-swapping is the least effective. Just because you can repeat back word for word what you just heard, does not mean you heard what the person was telling you.

Words do not have meanings, they have definitions. Just knowing the definitions of a series of words does not tell you what the person meant by what they said. Understanding that *words have no meaning* (only people have meaning) opens the mind to listen to more of what is said.

Every statement has three levels that you are communicating on, even though you may have only verbalized only one of the levels, the other person often hears the unspoken and will react to it. An example is: "The dishes are in the sink!" Will the person this is said to react to what is said or what they believe is meant by what is said?

When you communicate you are communicating on these three levels:

1. The Content, or Facts, “The dishes are in the sink.” If you were responding to just the facts or content, then you would have said, “Yes they are.”
2. The Meaning(s), what it meaning or what is the intent of what is being said. “The dishes are in the sink.” Does the person mean that you were falling down on your job, that you are being lazy and irresponsible? Or, did they mean that they were concerned about your work load and is offering to help?
3. The Feelings, how is the person feeling who told you that the dishes are in the sink? Are they feeling angry and disappointed or are they feeling concerned and caring? Or, are they feeling confused, “Are you OK? You never get this far behind.”

When you are really listening, you need to be paraphrasing on all three levels. This means you will be guessing at the levels that were not said out loud. Yes, it is OK to guess at what is not said. In fact, if you could paraphrase all three levels and get them absolutely correct, you would be doing it wrong!

If you could get the paraphrase “right” on all three levels, what the person talking would hear would be either, 1) This guy is reading my mind, this is spooky and he/she would quit talking, or 2) Oh, this guy already knows what I mean and then he/she will quit talking and you would lose out on what is really important.

Asking questions is not listening. Asking questions may give you the information you want, BUT will not necessarily give you the information that the boss wants you to get and asking me a lot of questions sure would not get a job from me. Every question is based on an assumption(s) that can be made into a statement. Try taking your assumptions and making it into a statement.

Here is an opportunity to do a little practicing.

***Question #1 to ask prospective employee: The boss says to you, “There is a huge overstock in the warehouse.”***

- What do you hear being asked of you?
- How would you respond to that statement?
- If you are given a job to do and the directions were unclear, what are the steps you would go through to get the job done?

***Question #2 to prospective employee: The boss says to you, “The weekly reports from your department are not being turned in promptly.”***

- What do you hear being asked of you?
- How would you respond to that statement?
- If you are given a job to do and the directions were unclear, what are the steps you would go through to get the job done?

How many of you would have asked a bunch of question? How many of you would have become defensive? How many of you would have said, “You’re right, I will take care of it?”

The second skill set that I am looking for is someone who is **Helpful and Kind**. I want someone, who when they finish their job, will look around for what else needs to be done. People who are negative thinkers are not seen as kind and are seldom helpful. I will always ask “So, what did you do on your last job when you ran out of things to do?” Job descriptions are important to give the employee a sense of purpose and expectations, but the employee as an excuse not to be helpful can also use it. “It is not in my job description.”

Helpful, kind employees make the workplace somewhere you want to be and want to spend time. The “everyone for himself or herself” attitude is like a cold bath that you are reluctant to get into and you rush to get out of. With helpful, kind employees, it is easy to encourage your employees to work as a team and promotes the overall company productivity.

The very definition of a *team* is, “a group of people who are kind, helpful and caring towards each other” with one additional attribute, *problem solving skills*,

The third spoke. The anti-matter to a *problem solver* is the *negative thinker*. This type of person can tell you all of the reasons that a project will not work, but is clueless when it comes to finding a solution.

The third spoke that I want in my employee wheel needs to be someone who can facilitate the **problem solving process**. There are a number of problem solving approaches and different situations and different companies require different approaches. There is the *authoritarian approach*, “You do it because I said so and because I am bigger, stronger and meaner than you.” This method works best in the military, prisons and law enforcement. If this is what you are hiring for, then be sure your prospective employee feels comfortable with using force and isn’t a bleeding heart. This form of management is often referred to as X management.

The *benevolent dictator approach* is sometimes called Y management. This is where the boss or supervisor plays the loving parent who knows what is

best for you. The power behind this approach is usually guilt trip, manipulation and/or their personal power of relationship.

In the *team effort approach*, problem solving and team efforts are fundamental, also known as Z management. This requires a group of people who trust and respect each other and who have strong and close relationships with each other. The communication skill of listening without judging and accepting without corrosion is essential if this approach is to be successful. The correct problem solving method for you depends on the type of organization that you are involved in.

Sometimes it is easier to rule out the qualities that you do not want than it is to find that quality during the interview. The opposite of a problem solver is a *negative thinker*. Identifying and getting rid of negative thinkers should be one of your high priorities. True, a negative thinker is able to see every flaw in the company (and in you) and is usually very willing to share with all of his/her fellow employees. Negative thinkers can help you identify many of the areas that need to be changed in your organization, but at a very high price to the company's productivity and morale.

***Questions to ask:***

- “In your last job what did you see that could be changed to improve the working environment?”
- “What did you do to improve your company?” (Besides leaving)
- “How did the company handle your suggestions?”

Negative thinkers seldom have practical solutions for the myriad of problems that they see. They spend most of their time complaining and blaming others. They see themselves as powerless victims, where everybody else and everything else is causing the problems.

The fourth spoke is **dependability**. An employee you can count on is worth their weight in gold. Dependability has many aspects, the most important is that you can trust what they say. If they say that the report will be done at a certain time, you don't think about it again, because you know he/she is as good as their word. You never worry about them being late, it just doesn't happen.

***Questions to ask:***

- “Give some examples of what kind of supervision you prefer.”

- “What were the major problems that made you miss work in your last job?”
- “When it looks like you can’t get a job done on time, what do you do?”

A lot of managers say they want their employees to be dependable, but they never recognize them for being dependable. These managers seem to be saying, “You will know you are doing good if you don’t hear me yelling at you.” That is a prescription for turning a good employee into, at best, a mediocre employee. In education there is a rule that says, “Reward behaviors you want repeated, ignore positive behaviors and they will disappear.”

The fifth spoke that I would be looking for in an employee is someone who is **enthusiastic and energetic**. The enthusiastic and *energetic person* is also the exact opposite of the *negative thinker*. The enthusiastic person makes going to work something to look forward to. These people tend to lift everyone up to their level of excitement. Their “can do” attitude increases productivity and innovation. These people do not experience a lot of fear, it is not part of their everyday work setting. Their managers do not run their departments with threats or negative compliments or sarcastic criticism, “Good going, you were only two days late this time.” “This is nice, how about getting it done on time next time.” Negative management styles destroy enthusiasm and drain energy from the work place.

#### ***Questions to ask:***

- “What was the most exciting thing about where you last worked?”
- “What kinds of work experiences do you get most enthusiastic about?”
- “What about you says that you are a self-starter?”
- “What was your biggest accomplishment in your last job?”

Enthusiasm and energy can usually be heard in a person’s voice. Depressed people are not enthusiastic or energetic. You can often hear depression in the flattened affect (lack of music in the voice) in the way the person talks. A hundred years ago we learned that “depression is anger turned inward.” The anger can be anger at themselves (the “I Should” people) and/or at other people (the “You Should” people, negative thinkers) and/or their situation (the “It Should”). A common theme for all these people is that anger is bad, anger causes problems and will cause people to reject you if expressed so,

they keep it inside and it turns into depression. Enthusiastic people don't carry grudges. They see the positive possibilities in every situation. Negative people see them as Pollyanna and a threat, because they refuse to see all the terrible things that could go wrong.

The sixth spoke: **Enjoyable to be around.**

I don't know about you, but I enjoy working around people who enjoy their work. These people don't take things personally and they don't blame others. There is a difference in job satisfaction between people who are working for a check and someone who is doing their chosen profession. For thirteen years I worked as a grocery clerk, for 6 of those years I worked for the paycheck. For the next seven years I worked to achieve my goal of going to school and becoming a therapist. The company saw a marked change in my performance when I started working for my profession even though I was still at the store.

People who are enjoyable to be around do not hold back; they have a passion for living. They have set their goals and are going for them or their short-term goal is to discover what their long-term goal will be. They do not feel stuck; they do not procrastinate, miss deadlines or get by with the least possible effort.

People who enjoy their jobs see themselves as not working *for* the company (paycheck) but rather working *with* the company. They see themselves as an important asset, performing an important function. They see the company's success as their success.

Do these six characteristics of a worker sound like someone you would like to hire?

1. communication skills
2. helpful and kind
3. problem solver
4. dependability
5. enthusiastic and energetic
6. enjoyable to be around

Well, here is the big question, would you hire yourself? Do you have the people skills to attract and keep employees? This might be time to take a personal inventory.

✓ What are your goals?

- ✓ Are you working at a job you enjoy and have enthusiasm for?
- ✓ Are you dependable?
- ✓ Do you have problem solving skills?
- ✓ Are you helpful, going the extra mile?
- ✓ Are you a good communicator as a listener and as a talker?
- ✓ Do you have the people skills to create and maintain strong relationships?

Let me make this an even more personal inventory. So often I see people marrying someone they would not hire on a bet! These same characteristics apply in all relationships whether you are selling yourself or a product.