



I wish I had created a folder and saved the many many rejections I have received over the years as a job candidate.

Because now that I'm on the other side helping leaders and organizations hire effectively, these rejections provide good insight into how organizations operate.

That first-hand experience as the candidate on what was helpful and what wasn't helpful. I tended to receive two types of reasons for these rejections. One was that my qualifications weren't the best fit and the second was that I wasn't the best cultural fit.

Now neither of these provided a lot of insight or feedback. They were so broad and there really wasn't much I could do about it.

Years later when I was on the hiring side, I realized how frequently job postings are more of a formality where you already know who you're hiring, but you have to post for various legal reasons.

I've also learned that the reason some people are chosen over others is not something that an organization would want to post publicly.

There is a lot that goes into hiring processes and what's effective and what's not.

We know both for the candidate and for the organization, that a good cultural fit is really at the core of a good positive work experience.

It's helpful to hire someone who is a good cultural fit, but how do you assess that?

How do you show what your culture is?

As a candidate, I learned after my first couple of jobs that it's not just the job description and it's not just the tasks that you'll be doing. It's really that culture that's going to make or break your work experience. But as a candidate, what kind of questions can you ask in an interview to assess that culture?

I tried to ask things like, 'what's the culture of your organization?' or 'what's it like to work here?'

Most likely, you're only going to get a certain generic type of answer.

I am challenging you as the leader to put that responsibility on yourself to do everything you can to show these candidates what it's like to work for you so they can decide if they might be a good cultural fit.

From how you post and where you post and what questions you ask and what your process is like from beginning to end to show them as best you what the culture of your team is.



So, what is it like to work for you?

This is a really interesting and important question for you to consider.

When we've framed growth in terms of that balance between self-awareness and external feedback, this is one of those areas where it's going to tip the scales.

In this case, in favor of external feedback because it's really hard for you or anyone to know what it's like to work for you but you can get great feedback from the people who work for you.

How can you get that feedback from them?

You want to think about things like,

*Is the culture of your team laid back or intense?*

*Is it top down or is it inclusive?*

*Are you driven by mission or are you driven by money?*

*Do you promote a strong work-life balance or is someone always on call?*

You can say these things and you can explain them to the job candidates.

They're also going to be paying attention to what they see. For example, if you say that you are an inclusive team, but during the job hiring process, you're the only one present in the interviews and you're the one who makes the final decision, that's not putting your money where your mouth is. That is showing them that it's not really the inclusive culture you're saying it is. It's you making the decisions.

A word of caution as we talk about cultural fit. Many times organizations use that term when that thinking is to hire based on a literal cultural fit. Affinity bias is a bias where people like people they have something in common with.

What happens a lot in organizations is they assess cultural fit by literal culture- who looks like me, who shares my background, who comes from where I come from, They do so under the goal of a cultural fit, but this is not the cultural fit we're talking about.

When we limit the groups of people that we hire or even consider interviewing, we're really limiting our talent pool and the gifts that people are able to offer to our organization and the clients we serve.

We are also limiting the perspective and understanding we can have by broadening who is on our team and what they are able to offer. Don't use this as an excuse to keep hiring the same kind of person because that doesn't benefit anybody.



To create the culture you want it to scream loud and proud, whatever it may be. I'm not here to tell you what culture you should have on your team because lots of cultures can work well depending on the work you're doing and your personal style. But pay attention to how your actions are matching your words.

Think about your values. What are the team values? What are your organizational values and are they showing up?

If you say your value is being organized, but you keep responding late to everything and doing things at the last minute when you're trying to schedule interviews, you're candidates. That's not matching your actions with your words.

If you say that you are inclusive, but they only ever talk to you as the boss, that's not putting your money where your mouth is. If you say that you have a really laid-back atmosphere and everybody that they see is in a three-piece suit, that's not matching.

Or you say that you have a really collaborative, open environment and when they come to visit your office, everybody is sitting in their own cubicles or their own offices with the door shut not talking to anybody.

You really want to make sure what you're saying is matching with what your candidates are seeing.

Check in, check-in, check-in with your team mostly about how you're doing and what the culture of the team is. Are you living up to those values that you say that you have?

Another area where very few organizations take advantage of and I'd like you to think about is how can you use the experience of your job candidates to better your hiring process particularly when it comes to culture?

Did you present a good picture of who you really were?

A great place to start is with the people you actually hire. They just went through your process. They decided to accept your offer. Capturing that moment, what made them apply in the first place? What words did they use to get to your job description? Think like a marketer in this sense. What made them come back for the second interview? What made them actually sign and then check in with them? Did the job really match what was advertised?

As a presenter, I've been told when I seek feedback, the number one question I need to ask is, 'did you receive what you thought you were going to receive?'

That's the best indication that you are marketing effectively.

Also, there's a missed opportunity that I want you to think about how to capture which is- asking the candidates that have been through your process but didn't end up getting hired what their process was like as a job candidate.



We're coached to ask after we get rejected from a job, 'is there any feedback you have for me? Is there anything I could have done differently?'

You're in a great position to ask your candidates this as well. Maybe especially in cases where you make an offer and they reject that offer. Did they look at your job description and decide not to apply? Why not? Or did they apply and then when you went to set up the first round interview, they declined? At what point did they drop out of the process and why?

Try to start capturing that information and try to look for patterns of who ends up thriving at your organization. Is there a way to see in terms of cultural fit?

How do you capture that and how can you make that happen more frequently?

Your team culture, your organizational culture is going to be there. Here, there, and everywhere from the moment you post a job through somebody's work experience until the day they leave your organization for whatever reason.

Think about what culture you are trying to create on your team.

Are you creating the culture you think you are?

How do you know?

How can you do that more effectively?

So, the most important question for you is, what kind of culture do you want to create?