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An Intriguing & Bold Case Study:

External Candidate for VP of HR position Screens "Hiring CEO" with Assessments

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According to SIOP*, only about 13% of organizations reap the benefits of using scientifically valid personality and motivational assessment tools as an integral part of their selection screening process.

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However, one of our clients recently turned the normal assessment and screening process on its head.

Tom (not his real name), a Vice President of Organizational Development (OD) of a large retailer, was being interviewed for a global manufacturing and distributing firm

with over 150,000 employees for the position of Sr. Vice President of Human Resources. Tom decided he wasn't going to make the move without having the hiring manager, the CEO of the company and would-be boss, "John," take our battery of assessments, the [CDR 3-D Suite](#). Tom wanted us to compare his own results with John's for a careful review and analysis to see if this would be a complementary match or potentially be the couple from Hell so to speak. Tom asked me if I would be willing to perform the analysis for them.

I was amused and intrigued with his bold idea and explained to him that I had never heard of any external candidate requesting an analysis of the hiring CEO or senior executive. I couldn't resist this and said yes with certain process conditions. At this point, they had already completed a number of interviews and while overall the results were positive, Tom wanted a better idea of what he might be getting himself into.

I spoke with the CEO, John, and my terms were that he take the assessments, have his own confidential coaching feedback session so that he fully understood his personal results first, then I would perform the analysis. We would then review with both of them. John, taking a leap of faith himself as he had never been exposed to our assessments, agreed to the process.

Tom, although aggravated more often than not due to the stifling environment, was in a secure position now as VP of OD. He was in a high command and control organization where senior leadership tended to micro-manage the business and slow down needed changes and innovations that Tom relentlessly pushed. So, he was frustrated to say the least. Tom didn't want to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire. The one positive aspect of his current job was that he worked with people who built and fostered caring relationships – so they all got along quite well. Unfortunately, they just moved at the pace of risk-averse snails as far as Tom was concerned.



John was looking to retire in several years and wanted to bring in a leader who had fresh ideas and could better help position the company competitively for the future. They were a bit old school in their people processes, so hiring someone who could implement changes and updates that made sense. This was particularly important for sustained performance in an industry where the margins were slim.

We went forward – and John participated in his 2+ hour feedback session. The pair’s analysis was then completed. As it turned out, this match was not made in heaven. Tom, a change agent to the extreme, a visionary maverick – was more than John or his organization could have tolerated. While John knew he needed an HR leader who could help transform the organization, Tom would be more radical, intense and urgent than the organization and culture could tolerate. Further, the rest of the executive team was less than ready for the type of nonconformist that Tom’s profile revealed. John’s business really needed someone to implement reasonable changes steadily by balancing and building trust with incremental movements rather than bold, sweeping new designs.

After the coaching and analysis of the data, in the end, both left with a clear understanding that the pairing was not in their own or the hiring organization’s best interests. Yet, they had tremendous respect for each other. Tom had decided not to accept an offer; and, an offer was not made by John.

A year after the decision, both are glad they did not join forces because while Tom has exceptional talent, it wasn’t the right time or right organization for him to move to because he would have overwhelmed them with his vigor and need to change.

In fact, now -- both organizations are our valued clients.

Since the upward screening and analysis, each has made positive strides in achieving their objectives and implementing respective changes in their organizations. Because of numerous competitive and regulatory changes in Tom’s business environment, his senior executives have come to embrace and adopt many of his recommendations. In fact, his role has been expanded. John has recently performed talent capability analysis in key leadership areas and has improved his succession and development processes, building for the future.

* Source: 2009 Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Inc., <http://www.siop.org/Workplace/employment%20testing/usingoftests.aspx>

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