

Headhunter Insights

- skills alone won't secure that job -

One of the tricky issues Madge Gibson dealt with during her years in Executive Search was the disbelief felt by experienced candidates who failed to secure sought after positions.

Their confusion was understandable. These were executives with multiple years of experience relevant to the role and who were well educated.

And yet they were passed over.

Similarly, experienced executives who assumed they would be in line for promotion due to their status and tenure were also passed over.

The fact is skills and experience alone won't necessarily get you the job. In order to compete effectively in this highly competitive market, people need to adapt themselves to changing needs and criteria.

Skills, education and experience are of course crucial, but today's hiring managers review these proficiencies in conjunction with softer skills to ensure a more successful fit.

These are the most regularly requested non-functional competencies:

- High energy
- Confidence
- Assertiveness
- Persuasiveness
- Leadership ability
- Business driver
- Strong communicator
- Attention to detail
- Corporate Fit – this is the toughest one. No matter how good you are, if you aren't perceived as a cohesive fit for the company or team, there's no point in talking further.

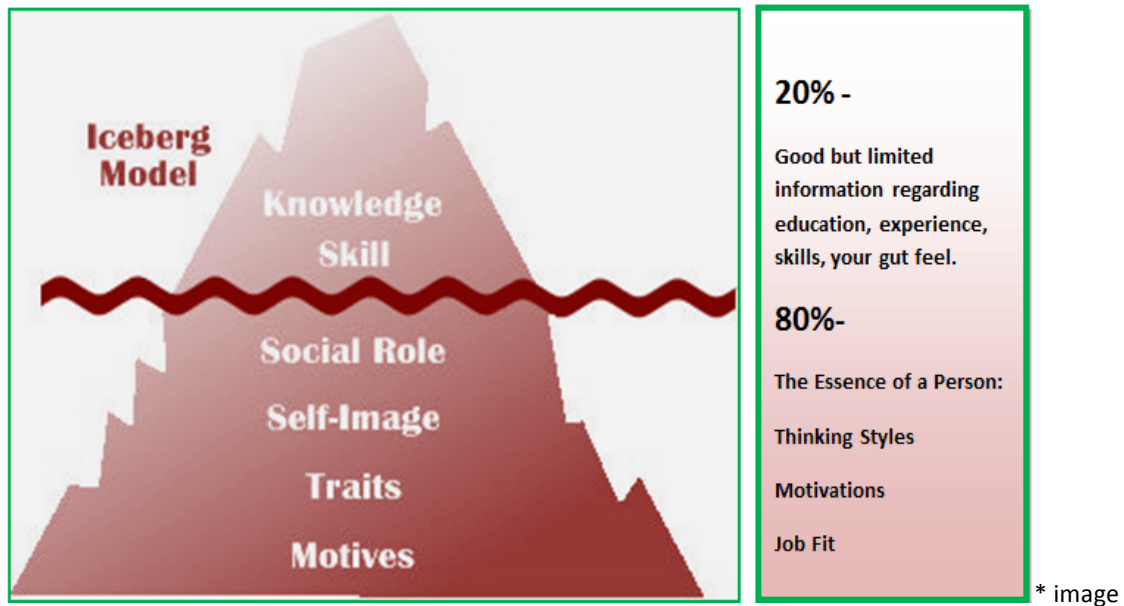
'Fit' can include aspects such as managerial or leadership style, personality, behaviours, mind-set, personal presentation, ethics, worldview and adaptability.

The reasons behind this preference are solid. Poor hiring decisions are costly in more ways than one. Hiring someone with a weak cultural fit can create internal polarisation, work force disruption, loss of key staff and revenue.

According to a 2012 *CareerBuilder* poll, 69% of companies surveyed experienced a bad hire that year. Of those companies, 41% said that the bad hire cost them US\$25k and 24% said it cost them over US\$50k.

According to a *7 Geese* post, the Competency Iceberg model shows 20% of an individual (above the surface of an iceberg) is made up of technical competency,

whereas 80% (hidden below the surface of the iceberg) is all about the essence of the person, such as values and beliefs.



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Technical skills can be trained, but not cultural fit.

So what can be done to increase a person's chances of being a good fit? Most people are held back in their personal development by a lack of self-awareness. People know what-they-know and don't know what-they-don't-know, until someone points it out.

It's difficult to be objective about ourselves, and in reality, how others experience us is quite often different from what we think.

Gaining self-awareness enables people to lift their rose-tinted glasses and break self-limiting traits and reshape their communication and behavioural styles. And just as important, it helps us recognise the impact we have on others. Someone who is aware of his or her blind spots is much more valuable than one who isn't.

Time spent with an experienced career coach can help highlight areas of development. The most successful individuals are those who embrace change and nurture a desire to learn, grow and adapt. It's never too late to enhance your personal offering and become more competitive in the market place.

About the Author

After several years in corporate finance and a decade in c-suite executive search, Madge Gibson now heads up The CHANGE Initiative (Pty) Ltd – an Outplacement company based in South Africa.

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