

Skills-based recruiting - old wine in new skins?

I remember this feeling from my school days, which always appeared when the chapter I hadn't prepared was tested in an exam. It hit me again the other day when a recruiter told me that they were now fully focussing on skill-based recruiting in their company. And I asked myself: «What on earth have I missed?»

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The episode reminded me of an experience as a young personnel consultant: I met the employee of a competitor company for lunch. She was all fired up because she had completed a recruitment mandate that morning and she put the success down to the «multi-channel approach» they had been using in their company for some time. In my defence, it should be noted that 25 years ago «multi-channel» was not a widely used term.

I was devastated, as we were doing old-fashioned recruitment in our company and seemed to have missed the boat on modernity.

«Bullshiting» in business

Back in the office, I called up our competitor's homepage with shaky fingers. An impressive graphic illustrated the «multi-channel» approach, which meant that they used their own network and internal database for a recruitment mandate, they placed adverts in print and online and, if necessary, worked with direct search. Aha - they called it «multi-channel», which of course we did every day. Is skills-based recruiting also a familiar concept with a new twist? After doing a little research, I suspect so.

It is undisputed that employees need the right skills to complete tasks, and word has probably

got around that training certificates are no guarantee of professional success.

In his career classic «What Colour Is Your Parachute», Richard Bolles described the fact that applicants from other domains can bring relevant experience with them as transferable skills back in the 1970s; the term is probably even a lot older. And finally, experienced recruiters have long been familiar with the term «critical incident interview», a method of asking applicants about success-critical skills based on specific success stories. The prerequisite for this is that recruiters analyse the job requirements and derive the necessary skills from them.

Recruitment as a supreme discipline in HR

The only thing that might be new is that, due to the shortage of skilled labour, even leading large companies can no longer pick their dream candidates like low-hanging fruit. They are forced to do what small and medium-sized companies are probably familiar with: Find applicants who have relevant professional experience that is not immediately apparent and develop them on the job.

Perhaps skills-based hiring will at least manage to give recruitment the importance it deserves. It would be desirable for recruitment to attract more experienced HR professionals in future instead of serving as an entry point into HR for young employees, as has been the case all too often in the past.

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