



## The Card Club *Poker Anyone?*

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As a Hiring Manager, don't be labeled a "gambler" when it comes to selecting people for your group.

Imagine that you and a small group of friends meet regularly for a friendly game of poker. You all know and agree to all the "rules" of this fun, family-friendly game, which ensures that each time you meet it is a positive experience that leaves you looking forward to the next time. These "rules" may include things such as:

- Everyone takes turns donating the house to hold the game
- Each week another member of the card club brings the chips and drinks
- No foul language or off color jokes will be tolerated
- Keep the stakes small, after all this is just a friendly game
- No fighting and arguing. Instead, one person per week acts as the "judge" and rules against all disagreements
- NO CHEATING!!
- HAVE FUN!

OK, you get my point. These rules can be considered the "culture" of the club. The rules that govern how each member of the card club will act toward each other, and serves as a common set of objectives that will ensure everyone has a good time and keeps coming back.

Now imagine that on one particular night, one of the card club members brings a friend to the game. No big deal, right? After all we trust each other, and any friend of one of our club members is a friend to all of us. But let's say this "friend" was really just a casual acquaintance to our club member, someone they really didn't know as good as they had originally thought? What if that new player came to the game, and acted a bit different than the rest of the players? They had a very serious demeanor, didn't seem to be having fun? The



new player seems to take poker a bit too seriously and wanted to win, above all else. In addition, they drank the drinks, ate the snacks but never pitched in anything in return. They even told a couple of odd jokes, or made a few references to material that the rest of the players did not welcome, at least not since they established the “rules”. And, what is worse, the new player is always coming up short in pitching in his fair share. They just seemed a bit shady to you.

Still with me? OK, now the next time the card club met, that “new” player invited a couple of new friends of his own. These guys were very different and seemed to be governed by a different set of “rules.” For example, they came with high stakes poker on their mind, didn’t want anything to do with the social aspects of the get together and made no attempt to learn or adhere to the existing rules of the game. They were very serious, they used foul language, argued with each other and anyone else that disagreed with them about the game, they ridiculed other players who made mistakes or bad plays, and generally spoiled the mood of the game. Not to mention, they ate ALL the food and drinks and NEVER pitched in any money. Worse of all, you suspect one of them of CHEATING!

By this time, the original players are so negatively affected that the card club “culture” has changed that they begin to act on it. There are three primary ways that they will act, and it is highly dependent on the make up of the group as to how they will react.

#### **Reaction #1 - FIGHT**

The true leaders of the group may step up and, politely and professionally, fight back against the changes that are disrupting their good thing. They may confront the new players, and maybe even the original member that referred the new players, about how the rules matter and that if anyone is to be involved any further, they **MUST** adhere to the rules. If not, they will be asked



to leave. The regular weekly get together is so important to these members, that they are willing to fight for it to stay the way it was intended.

### **Reaction #2 - FLIGHT**

Some of the members may feel that, because of all the changes and the new members not adhering to the rules, that it is no longer worth it to them to show up, and they end up leaving the group. They probably move on to find another friendly game that is more like it was when times were good in their original group. The get together is important to them, but not important enough to confront the new players or fight for the game to return to its original culture.

### **Reaction #3 - FREEZE**

This may be the worse case of all. These members are negatively affected by the changes in the culture, or adherence to the set of rules of the game. But they do absolutely nothing about it. These people take up a precious seat at the card table, but they add nothing to the game as they drone on, quietly playing out their hands while watching the culture of the “good old days” slip away as each new player joins the club. While they show up each week, they are merely going through the motions and are a shell of the energized, fun and value adding contributor to the game as they used to be.

Whether or not your culture remains true to its original goal (ensuring that the game is a fun, family-friendly game at which each time you meet there is a positive experience that leaves you looking forward to the next time) is almost completely dependent on how many FIGHTERS you have in your group. Sometimes, it only takes a couple leaders to display Reaction #1 (FIGHT) within the group to insight the others and make leaders out of them. The more members that choose to take flight or simply freeze and do nothing, the higher the odds the culture will change.

While the above scenario is simply a game, you can find real life examples of this happening in the business world. In any size company, in almost any



industry, in any location, culture plays a significant role in both attracting and keeping great talent. Hiring managers have a major responsibility to ensure that each person they “invite to the card game” and introduce into their group, has been effectively screened for both their ability to perform their job, as well as their cultural fit within the organization.

### **BEST PRACTICE**

Make sure your recruiting and hiring process uses both skill-based and culture fit as the basis for selection.

Consider breaking your hiring criteria down into a two-part equation - using both a numerator (the X factor) and a denominator to determine the value of the potential new hire to the overall organization.

#### **The X Factor**

These are the job-related skills that are determined to be vital to the job and/or are skills needed to be acquired into the group.

#### **The Y Factor**

These are the culture attributes that were carefully selected to ensure that the candidate will thrive in and contribute to the culture of the organization and adhere to the set of rules of the game. These are cultural attributes such as ability to thrive in a team environment while respecting individuality, commitment to excellence, strong work ethic, integrity and trust, etc. Organizations that embrace this often put the weight of the Y factor higher than the weight of the X factor. This is true due to the belief that you can provide skill-based training, but you cannot change behavior.

#### **Consider selection criteria such as:**

Candidates will get a double ranking - one for the X Factor and one for the Y Factor. Each candidate will get ranked, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being best, for both the X and Y, based on a standardized ranking methodology. Then, set



guidelines as to how to select based on these rankings. An example of a guideline is to say that no candidate would get considered if the culture fit was ranked a 6 or below.

**A great hire** would be an “8/8” ranking. This candidate has significant job-related skills to offer and still has room to grow, and is seemingly aligned with the cultural attributes of the organization.

**A good hire** would be a 7/7 ranking. This candidate has the majority of job-related skills to offer to the organization and meets the minimum standards of culture fit.

**A marginal hire** would be a 5/7 ranking. This candidate has the essential job-related skills but will need some training and support to get them to peak performance. The culture fit criteria rank suggests that they will make it in your environment.

A bad hire would be a 7/6 ranking. This candidate has the essential job-related skills but will need some training and support to get them to peak performance, but the culture fit ranking suggests that they may not make it in your environment. That, on top of the need for job-related skills training and support, increases the chances of this employee failing on the job (or quitting).

A terrible hire would be a 9/5 ranking. This candidate has superior job-related skills and can seemingly add tremendous value to the organization by acquiring their talent into the collective. However, the cultural ranking suggests that they would actually disrupt your existing culture, let alone thrive in it. These are the “prima donna” employees that were selected purely on their X Factor. Once they were hired, their dissonance and contempt for the cultural “rules” begin to break it down, causing the same effect on the other members in the group as the Card Club Group.



FIGHTERS will confront the new employee, and if not handled properly, can lead to a rift in the team and a weak team spirit. FLIGHTERS will resign, and you will lose some good employees that have been valuable contributors for a long time. Now they are valuable contributors for someone else. FREEZERS will do nothing at all about the culture changes, but they will withdraw from the mission, droning in to work every day wishing it were like the good ole times. They loose their edge and the organization does, as well.

As you can see, the stakes are much higher in the work world than in our friendly game of poker example. This is why you can find the X Factor within any recruiting and hiring process that serves business leaders that want to build great companies. Everybody wins and the organization prospers when the culture is healthy and vibrant. Skills can be trained, but behavior usually stays the same.

Once the word gets out that an organization puts this much emphasis on culture fit, you will begin to attract talent to your organization with a shared vision of your cultural environment, which continues to fuel the organization well into the future of workforce planning.

As a hiring manager, you are the key to ensuring that the next “player” you invite to your card club thrives and survives within the culture, and has a positive, value-adding effect on your existing members. Don’t gamble! Use the X/Y Factors to win each hand!