



# 'Simon Says'

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## Did you know...

One of the most costly mistakes a business can make is recruiting the wrong person for the job. Recent research undertaken with human resources managers of the 100 largest organisations worldwide revealed that overall only 20% of the senior positions for which they recruited turned out to be the high performers they wanted and expected. 80% were disappointments. What's more, the cost of adverse hiring is currently estimated at between 5 and 15 times an employees' base salary.<sup>1</sup>

## The psychology of recruiting – do you 'clone' or value the gaps?

**"The ability to make good decisions regarding people is one of the last reliable sources of competitive advantage, since very few companies are good at it."**

Peter Drucker – renowned consultant, educator and author.

All too often when we look to replace a departing employee we are looking for an identical match to the job description; someone with all the necessary industry experience, qualifications and technical skills to hit the ground running and satisfy all the requirements demanded by the position. So what's wrong with that? Surely recruiting an identically qualified individual represents a sound and safe investment? Or does it?

### **My view is that systemic and consistent 'cloning' hurts companies**

When you consistently recruit based on candidates having the same job in the same industry you are guaranteed to create some big problems. Here are two distinct ways that cloning hurts companies:

**1. High Performers don't want exactly the same role.** Professional gaps represent an opportunity for growth, without which the High Performer won't apply. They are attracted to positions that offer new elements and challenges. Adopting a cloning approach to recruitment will guarantee your company swells with, at best, maintainer types and at worst, plodders. Sustaining competitive advantage becomes almost impossible when your workforce is weighted this way.

### **2. Expect to pay top dollar for a candidate who has the job description covered.**

When employees start on the high side of a position's salary band there is often little room for movement in terms of recognising and rewarding strong performance through salary increases. The aspiring High Performer is more likely to accept a lower starting salary, recognising that they are not immediately competent in all aspects of the role.

So why do we allow recruitment 'cloning' to happen in our companies? Here are some common reasons:

- **Lack of role clarity.** The recruiter does not understand the actual business drivers of the role. Without a

detailed understanding of who and what you are looking for, the natural default is to look for a resume that is identical to the current job description; a strategy guaranteed to exclude the High Performer.

- **Short term pain vs long term gain.** Operational Managers are busy, time poor and can apply unrealistic pressure on the internal recruiter to produce candidates who can assimilate seamlessly in the short term, causing minimal disturbance on both a training and orientation level. While the best investment for the organisation in the medium to long term is to seek high potential candidates, they don't fit the 'hit the ground running' profile.
- **Risk aversion.** Often recruiters are not encouraged to look for 'high potentials' in a short list. Presenting left field high potential candidates tends not to be encouraged or rewarded as it has the distinct possibility of leading directly to the recruiter losing credibility and trust with the hiring manager.

### **Identifying and attracting High Performers**

We can't have 100% of our employees in the High Performer bracket and there is certainly a need for steady workhorses. However we should be aiming for upwards of 80% to support a vision for growth, innovation and competitive advantage. In most cases, providing quality training to a driven and ambitious candidate will more than compensate for lack of experience.

If you really want to foster a forward thinking recruitment strategy and avoid mediocrity, start honing in on some of the key qualities and attributes that exist within your current talent pool. Instead of benchmarking candidates against each other (which nearly always produces a stand out), benchmark candidates against a profile of excellence and determine if anyone actually meets that standard.

Edward George provides comprehensive Human Resource Solutions specialising in recruitment and retention strategies, exit interviews, position description upgrades and outplacement services. If you would like further information about any of our services, email us at [perth@edwardgeorge.com.au](mailto:perth@edwardgeorge.com.au) or phone us on **9457 4566**.

Simon Stibbs is the Managing Director of Edward George Pty Ltd.

<sup>1</sup> Dr Brad Smart Topgrading 101: Avoid Costly Mis-Hires  
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