Getting Yourself Hired
Lesson 2: A Game of Inches

BY DALTON HOOPER

As much as we would like to believe we are hired based strictly on our skills and experience relevant to the position, it is almost never the case. It is more often the accumulation of many "little" things, not directly related to the content of our resume that puts us out in front of the other candidate.

Life isn't fair -- and neither is the hiring process

There are plenty of things that are absolutely beyond your control during the hiring process, such as:

- the quality of the other candidates.

- the quantity of other candidates.

- the competency of the interviewer.

- the quality of the job ad.

Although these things can affect whether you will be the successful candidate, don't waste valuable time and energy obsessing over them. Although extremely unfair, just move on to the things over which you *can* exert influence -- which is not to say that the things over which you *do* have influence are fair, either. They are simply things over which you have influence.

Fair and unfair advantages

Obviously, there are many things that can figure into the hiring manager's decision over which you have direct control. Some are fair advantages; some are not. For the sake of this discussion, I define a "fair" advantage as being an

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aspect of the hiring process which should rightfully enter into the hiring manager's decision about you. I define an "unfair" advantage as being an aspect of the hiring process that, in an *ideal* world, would not affect the outcome, but in the *real* world does anyway.

Some "fair" advantages may include:

- the GPA you earned in college.

- the amount of your relevant job experience.

- the quality of your writing samples.

- active membership(s) in relevant professional organizations.

Some "unfair" advantages may include:

- the way you dress for the interview.

- whether or not you are on time for the interview.

- your demeanor throughout the interview:

- whether or not you smile.

- if you appear more interested in what you can do for the prospective company or what it can do for you

- if you appear to be specifically interested in acquiring this particular job or if you appear to just be looking for a job — any job

- if you appear over or under-confident

- if you are rude to the receptionist

- a friend or relative, who works for the company, put in a "good word" for you.

- a common interest you share with the interviewer (golf, children of the same age, etc.) that you exploited.

- if you sent a thank you message after the interview

While you may or may not agree that these "unfair" advantages should enter into the final hiring decision, the fact is that they nearly always do! In fact, it is quite possible that you may actually have a lesser list of "fair" advantages than a competing candidate, but end up being the one selected, based on your accumulation of "unfair" advantages!

Yes, it is true that it may actually be illegal to hire a lesser qualified candidate for certain positions, but rarely is a hiring manager going to admit, or even believe, that they should have selected someone else. It is perfectly acceptable, in most

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otherwise would never have been able to experience.

Plus it's actually pretty cool working for a mouse!

So as I sat at my desk flipping through the latest issue of *Memo to Members*, a light bulb went off in my head. Sometimes we take things for granted and because of the nature of business, appreciation is often overlooked. But as soft spoken as I may be, I never forget those who have helped me along the way. As I continue to gain experience and move up the perennial corporate ladder, I'm always reminded of where my professional career started. As the late Walt Disney used to say, "It all started with a mouse."

For me, it all started with a mouse and a great person who took a chance on a young student looking for a job.

So on behalf of myself and every other UCF grad who got a break in the technical writing industry through Walt Disney World, we say thank you Dalton!

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cases, for a hiring manager to take into consideration factors beyond the strictest evaluation of relevant skills and experience. The hiring manager is allowed to evaluate how they perceive you will fit into the work group or team by determining whether you are a creative, "out of the box" thinker or a traditionalist (either may be optimal for their environment).

As the time-worn analogy goes, "If two people applied for the same job, each having equal skills, knowledge, and experience, and each performing equally well in the interview with the only difference being that one dressed better than the other, who would get the job?"

The hiring process is a game of inches. Gather all you can.

DALTON HOOPER WORKS FOR *WALT DISNEY PARKS AND RESORTS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY*. UNTIL RECENTLY, DALTON WAS THE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT MANAGER, DIRECTING A TEAM OF TECHNICAL WRITERS. HE CAN BE REACHED AT *DALTON.HOOPER@DISNEY.COM*.

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NEWS FROM STC

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5 new Certificate Programs

evaluation workshops

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2 keynote speakers (Simon Singh and Ze Frank)

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Hotel reservations must be made by **April 13**. Book for your stay at http://www.stc.org/54thConf/lodging/index.asp.

See you in Minneapolis!

—MtM