



A WEEK IN *Learning*

ARTICLE

THE BUSINESS CASE AGAINST HIRING FOR CULTURE FIT

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When it comes to hiring new employees, many organizations believe that prioritizing "culture fit" will create a more cohesive, productive, and happy workplace. However, research suggests that this approach may actually be harmful to both the organization and its employees. Hiring for culture fit can lead to a lack of diversity in the workplace, perpetuate unconscious bias and discrimination, and stifle innovation and creativity.

Lack of Diversity in the Workplace

One of the biggest problems with hiring for culture fit is that it can lead to a lack of diversity in the workplace. When organizations prioritize hiring people who fit into the existing culture, they often end up hiring individuals who share similar backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives. This can lead to a lack of diversity in the workplace, which has been shown to have a negative impact on innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. In addition, it can perpetuate unconscious bias and discrimination, as hiring managers may be more likely to select candidates who share similar characteristics to themselves or their existing employees.

Stifling Innovation and Creativity

Diversity is not just about demographics, but also about diversity of thought, experience, and perspective. When organizations prioritize hiring for culture fit, they may be missing out on talented candidates from diverse backgrounds who could bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the organization. This leads to another problem of hiring for culture fit: it can lead to a lack of innovation and creativity. When organizations prioritize hiring people who fit into the existing culture, they often end up hiring individuals who share the same values, beliefs, and ways of thinking as their current employees. While this may create a harmonious workplace, it can also stifle innovation and creativity. Research has shown that diverse teams are more likely to generate innovative ideas and solutions. Therefore, by hiring for culture fit, organizations may be limiting their potential for the growth and innovation that drives competition and success.

Decreased Employee Engagement and Retention

Lastly, hiring for culture fit can lead to a lack of employee engagement and retention. When organizations prioritize culture fit over skills and experience, they may end up hiring employees who are a good fit for the



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organization's culture but are not necessarily the best skill fit for the job. This can lead to frustration and burnout for employees who are not able to perform their job to the best of their abilities. In addition, it can lead to a lack of employee engagement and retention, as employees who feel undervalued or underutilized are more likely to leave the organization.

Alternatives: Culture Add and Values-Based Hiring

So, what can organizations do instead of hiring for culture fit? One alternative is to focus on "culture add" rather than culture fit. This means hiring people who add new dimensions of perspective to the organization so culture can grow, not maintain. For example, an organization might prioritize hiring someone who has experience working in a different industry, or has a different skill set than their existing employees, but shares the same values and work ethic.

Another alternative is to focus on values-based hiring. This means hiring people who share the organization's core values, regardless of background or other commonalities. For example, an organization might prioritize hiring someone who is passionate about sustainability or social justice, even if they have a different educational background or work experience than their existing employees.

Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

While hiring for culture fit may seem like a good idea, it can actually be detrimental to the organization and its employees. By focusing too heavily on hiring people who fit into the existing culture, organizations may be limiting their potential for growth and innovation, reinforcing unconscious bias and discrimination, and risking employee engagement and retention. Instead, organizations should consider alternative approaches such as culture add or values-based hiring to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace that values innovation and creativity.

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