



Use Your Gut to Hire Database Marketers

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Aptitude tests, personality profiles, reference checks and other accoutrements all have their place in the human resources toolbox when assessing the qualifications of a database marketing candidate.

In the final analysis, however, it's not the hammer but how you swing it that determines whether you hit the nail on the head.

Hiring still comes down to gut feelings. Studies show that hiring decisions are 60 percent what you know about an applicant and 40 percent what you think you know. You need to ask the right questions to reveal the characteristics that you must know to form those all-important gut feelings that will help you separate the losing database marketers from the winners.

Here are my top five:

1. If there are better candidates for this position than you, what qualities do they possess that you lack? Most candidates are thrown by this question, but it is not intended to be a brain teaser. What you are trying to measure is their bandwidth how deeply does the candidate feel he is the best person for the job.

Database marketing managers play a very important role in contributing to the marketing success of an organization. They must be strategic and customer-centric. They must be a leader, they must be willing to get their hands dirty and, in many situations, they must be an agent for change.

The purpose of this question is not to elicit a specific answer, but rather to hear the candidate say that they unequivocally believe he has all of these key attributes.

2. What is it that people don't like about you? Once again, there is no specific right or wrong answer to this question. It is aimed primarily at managers, and it is designed to determine how well a manager handles being put on the spot. It's not a question of toughness, but rather a question of honesty.

Good managers are honest about their assessment of people. Sooner or later, a manager has to be frank about employee's shortcomings. And if that gets him disliked, so be it.

One of the toughest challenges database marketers sometimes face is gaining the respect and cooperation of IS. That may not happen if their main concern is whether they are universally liked by every programmer or technical supervisor in the IS department. At the end of the day, they have a mission to accomplish and that must be their driving focus.

3. What books have you read lately that you enjoyed? The answer can be useful to help you learn how a candidate might fit in with your corporate culture. He may have all the skills and accomplishments you are looking for but, as we all know, a major portion of success or failure depends on how the candidate fits in with the organization.

To help with your gut feeling on this all-important issue, find out what types of books the candidate reads. Think about your company's culture and how it relates to the kinds of books the candidate reads. Is your company sales driven?

Are you selling products that invoke passion automobiles for example? Is it entrepreneurial? This question can also reveal a candidate's thirst for new ideas.

Is the candidate reading books that propose new ways to think about a particular subject? People who read biographies, for example, enjoy learning about the successes and failures of those who became top achievers. This type of candidate might thrive in an open door environment. An opposite environment could be a setup for frustration.

4. What type of causes or community service are you involved in? Implementing a database marketing strategy takes tremendous dedication.

There is no time for someone in that position to support a half-dozen outside causes. You can admire them, but don't hire them.

5. What mistakes have you made? This is another one of those how honest are you questions. If you can't admit to mistakes, you are either being dishonest or you have stopped learning.

Also, there are good ways to fail ideas that backfire, choosing the wrong vendor, letting great hires get away, allowing poor hires to linger longer than they should. Presumably, by making these mistakes, lessons have been learned.

By using these questions you can eliminate some of the guesswork and allow your gut feelings to help guide you toward making the proper hiring decision.