

Slow Down, Clarify, Turn It Off and Turn It On  
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So, you have to interview someone for a job opening in your department, but you are not HR. You don't have much interview training or experience in interviewing, except for the times that openings show up and of course you are worried about making the right, or wrong decision.

Do you know what gets in the way of a good interview? Do you know why so many new hires fail? It's due to seeing what you want to see and hearing what you want to hear. There is such a push to get the job done that all too often, carefully listening, seeing and learning about who the candidate is can often be lost.

Yes, your hopes cloud your views. Your schedules jam your ears. You multitask and are continually demanded upon. Here's the truth. You are so busy that in order to see what is in front of you and hear what is actually being said, or demonstrated, you have to do more than just ask questions and listen for responses.

You need to slow down, clarify, turn it off and turn it on.

Slow down, get it straight and give yourself enough time to think about what you want to achieve in the interview.

When you are interviewing someone, you had best know what precisely you are looking for insofar as skills and styles. Teams, the best ones, are made up of top skills but different styles. If you are looking for someone with the skills, that's easier. But what about the introvert who is quiet and reflective or the extrovert who thinks out loud? Which style will fit best and what would the best benchmark balance be if you had to hire one more on the team?

Turn it off. The noises in your head. Turn them off. Instead, listen carefully to what is being said. Listen to what the candidate is actually saying. If you hear a lot of "I did this" and "I did that," while never hearing "We accomplished this," or "We struggled with that," you should be forming a sense that this person may not be the team player you need. But if there are other things that you are captured by, "nice woman," or "he's got a strong background in marketing," be sure that you hear it all and not just the press in your head, or from a search person.

Turn it on. Key up your listening. Augment your questions that include both situational and behavioral questions that will help you determine both the hard skills and the business savvy the candidate possesses. Learn how to ask questions that put the candidate at ease and to keep answers as open and rich as possible.

New hires often don't make it in the first 90 days. You can change that if you know what you want, see what you see, hear what you hear and let any urgency or pressure dissolve during the interview. If you can learn to be fully present in conversation with the candidate, and not filter or impose your hopes on them, more than likely you will be seeing and hearing clearly and might make a really good hiring decision.

