



An Interview with Dale E. Jones on Leadership & Character

Dale, what did you find applicable about David Brooks' book, "The Road to Character," to the executive search work of Diversified Search?

DEJ: The crux of David Brook's book and his TED talk is about enduring values that are important for people to live by. When our consultants work with clients on a search, we look at the leadership competencies that are important to the specific position as well as the client organization. Many of these are technical competencies. But increasingly, clients are talking with us about another level of attributes. They are appreciating the importance of finding leaders who fit in with their value system and have leadership qualities such as integrity, collaboration, strong work ethic and humility. In short, an enhanced or more thorough assessment of character and values are playing a more important role than ever in our industry.

Does this suggest a change in the search industry?

DEJ: The qualities I just mentioned, which have historically been thought of as "soft" issues, have become the "hard" issues. In our industry, we have been trained in the importance of getting the right fit in the candidate's technical competencies. Yet, as important as that knowledge is, it is often the other leadership attributes that keep individuals from moving forward. If a candidate has the IQ but not the EQ, he or she will often fail. The whole package is critical to success. We have to be sure we are assessing leaders in a holistic manner, and that we understand the indicators of how people will lead in an organization.

What kind of process does it take to make holistic assessments for your clients?

DEJ: It means going beyond traditional tools we use such as the Hogan Assessment, and going to a deeper level. We are looking to provide insights into the cultural fit, leadership attributes and leadership maturity. These personal values have become recognized as key predictors for success. So at Diversified, our professional development training includes how to become better at asking the right questions and understanding the candidate's chemistry.

Any final thoughts to share?

DEJ: Today, more than ever, we need leaders with a strong core. Individuals who can inspire others, have integrity and self-awareness. Over and over again, I have seen people fail – not because of their technical competence – but due to flawed judgement, not being truthful, or a lack of leadership maturity. So here at Diversified, we will be continually discussing the importance of this issue with our consultants, and adding professional development components and tools to assist them in their search assignments.

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