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This is the No. 1 Thing These CEOs Look For in Job Candidates

By LAURA ENTIS March 26, 2017

We asked the CEOs of the nation's top employers—every company on Fortune's 2017 [100 Best Companies to Work For](#) list—to name the single most important thing they looked for in a potential hire.

Because company culture starts with the people who work there, building a healthy work environment starts with the hiring process. While it's safe to assume most businesses want talented, competent, engaged workers, what this means and how it is applied varies from organization to organization.

But in addition to the technical skills required to do a specific job, these CEOs said they often were looking for the softer, less tangible abilities, such as “culture fit,” “enthusiasm,” and “curiosity.”

Below, 10 CEOs on the list share what makes an ideal candidate.

Danny Wegman, CEO of Wegmans Food Markets (ranked #2): “We look for people who genuinely care about others and are happy to serve in whatever ways are necessary. We can teach just about any other skills they need. We also look for high standards. If we're to sell the best products in the world and have the best service in the world, we need a team committed to high standards. If we can find these two traits, we're off to a pretty good start.”

Bill Anderson, CEO of Genentech (ranked #6): “Curiosity, humility, collaboration, passion for their field, and the desire and drive to accomplish something great.” *[Update: A previous version of this item misattributed the quote.]*

Brad Smith, CEO of Intuit (ranked #13): “People who live our company values, who treat failures as learning opportunities, and who lead with their emotional quotient and their curiosity quotient, rather than their intelligence quotient. In every job interview I ask the candidate what their biggest mistake





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Todd Jones, CEO of Publix Super Markets (ranked #21): “We can teach people the technical skills, but what makes an ideal candidate is someone who is committed to serve others. We look for people who are passionate about connecting with the hearts and minds of their customers and their co-workers.”

Tim Ryan, US Chairman and Senior Partner, PwC (ranked #23): “While we look for people with great technical skills, we want for more. We want people with the emotional intelligence and creativity to be successful in a world that is moving fast. We need people who can lead themselves and others, and who have an open and inclusive mindset so they can bring together diverse teams to get to best solutions to the challenges facing our clients and our world.”

Jerry Stritzke, CEO of REI (ranked #29): “We’re looking for people who love the outdoors and want to align their skills and experience with this purpose. We look for people who connect with customers because, as a co-op, our members play a big role in everything that we do. And we also want people who come to the co-op already living by our core values and beliefs.”

Mark Hoplamazian, CEO of Hyatt Hotels (ranked #32): “We hire more for personality and growth mindset than specific skill set. We believe curiosity, passion and a love of learning together can be greater than a person’s previous experience. Care comes from a place of empathy and understanding—traits you can’t learn from a book but that produce better results.”

Grant F. Reid, CEO of Mars (ranked #50): “We’re looking for people who have an entrepreneurial spirit – people who relish taking on big responsibilities and are agile and bold when tackling challenges.”

Severin Schwan, CEO of Roche Diagnostics (ranked #70): “Today, the ideal candidate has the ambition and ability to demonstrate learning agility every day. No longer do we hire for specific skills, but rather we focus on individuals

who bring a growth mindset, where they embody passion, embrace failure, and create change.”

John H. Noseworthy, CEO of Mayo Clinic (ranked #84): “At Mayo Clinic, we look for people who share our values, who want to do good and who enjoy being part of a team. Mayo’s hiring philosophy is firmly rooted in the core values of the clinic and our founders. With this focus, it is critical that prospective employees have demonstrated qualities including: respect, compassion, integrity, healing, teamwork, excellence, innovation and stewardship. Mayo rigorously screens candidates for these qualities throughout the hiring process as evidenced by low annual turnover rates and offer acceptance rates commonly above 95 percent.”

