

What the Interview Didn't Tell You



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Every hiring manager has had this experience. Someone gets hired, and within a few months, something that seemed settled during the interview turns out not to be.

Maybe the travel requirements were fine on paper, but three trips in, it's clear they're not willing to keep that pace. Maybe the role requires being onsite several days a week, and the commute that seemed manageable in theory becomes something they're no longer willing to do. Or sometimes it's not about willingness at all. The skills discussed in the interview don't quite show up in the work, and it becomes clear the fit wasn't as strong as it sounded.

When that happens, the instinct is usually to look at the interview process. Did we ask the right questions? Did we miss something? Most of the time, the process wasn't the problem. The candidate was answering honestly, based on what they believed about themselves and the role, in the moment they were being asked.

Here's what I mean. Once someone is excited about a specific opportunity, it's natural to downplay the things that don't quite fit, or to genuinely believe they can handle something they haven't actually tested yet. None of that is dishonest. It's just what happens when a real opportunity is in front of someone and they want to make it work.

The problem is that those things don't disappear once someone accepts the job. They resurface. Sometimes it's the travel or the commute. Sometimes it's a skill gap that only shows up under real conditions. Either way, the company ends up back where it started, except now with a hire, a ramp-up period, and a re-opened search all behind it.

I've learned that the most reliable way to see this coming is to have the conversation before a specific role is ever on the table, and to ask more specific questions than most interviews allow for. When someone is talking about their career in general, not about whether they're a fit for the job in front of them, the answers change. There's nothing to perform for. That's usually when you get to the root of what someone actually wants and what they can genuinely deliver, not what they think will get them the next offer.

It works the other way too. Most job postings describe responsibilities. They rarely describe what someone will actually be judged on six months into the role, or what the real day-to-day pressure looks like underneath the listed duties. Asking specific enough questions on the company side often reveals that what they think they need and what they actually need aren't quite the same thing either.

That's the real value of getting the full picture on both sides before a role is discussed. It protects the company from discovering a mismatch after the hire is already made. It protects the candidate from accepting a role that was never going to ask what they thought it would. Neither side finds out the hard way, after the offer's been made and accepted.

Good hiring decisions rarely fail because someone was underqualified in an obvious way. They fail because nobody asked specific enough questions, on either side, until it was too late to do anything about it.