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I was working on a search for a smaller, growing company that needed to add an RA Sr Specialist to their team. I found a few strong candidates, and the team decided to bring two of them in to meet everyone.

The interview team was eight people. Most of them would work closely with this person day to day. One of them was the VP of R&D, who wouldn't interact with the role much at all.

The first candidate went through all eight interviews. Seven people came back enthusiastic and ready to move to the final stage. The VP of R&D said no. He didn't have specific feedback, no particular concern he could point to, just a feeling that this wasn't the right fit.

One no outweighed seven yeses. Not because his objection carried more insight into the role. Because he was the highest ranking person in the room.

I asked the hiring manager why that one vote decided the outcome. The answer was simple. He was the VP. Nobody wanted to overrule him, even though he was arguably the person least qualified to judge fit for a role he'd barely interact with.

The position stayed open for several more months. The workload didn't stay open with it. The existing team kept absorbing the gap while the search started over.

Nothing about that process was designed to fail. Eight smart people gave their

honest input. But nobody had asked, ahead of time, whose input should actually carry the most weight for this particular role, and whose shouldn't.

The strongest hiring processes I've seen don't start with the interview list. They start with a few questions, asked before anyone gets scheduled.

"What problem is this role actually solving?"

"Who will this person work with closely enough to judge fit?"

"What does success in this role look like six months in?"

Those questions would have changed the outcome here. If the hiring manager had asked who this Sr Specialist would actually work with closely, the answer wouldn't have included an R&D VP who rarely crossed paths with RA at that level. And if the interview team had agreed up front on what success looked like for this specific role, a vague feeling wouldn't have been enough to override seven people who'd actually be doing the work alongside this person.

The strongest hiring processes I've seen aren't the ones with the most people in the room. They're the ones where someone decided, before the interviews started, who belonged there and what they were actually being asked to evaluate.