

Transcription - What Qualities Do You Look For In Your People?

Today we're going to talk about what qualities we look for in people that we associate with. And I guess for me, the first thing that I look for is that they can communicate.

Communication to me is probably the most important skill that is underrated in the executive world. And generally I think in any sort of work environment, communication is going to be the issue that creates problems and solves problems. And by communication, I don't just mean that they can use email, they can use inter office memos, they know how to talk to one another. It's a combination of all of those things and it's not just the physical activity of communication, it's the thought that goes behind it and it's the words, it's what you are communicating as much as how you are communicating. So number one from me is communications.

I like variety. I like people with different cultures, different beliefs, different backgrounds, I like different age groups because they add another dynamic.

And again, when I reflect on what Kim just said in relation to communication, I think in each one of those they actually communicate differently whether it's a cultural difference, whether it's an accent just like mine. And so if you look at that, I do very much enjoy the difference in other people and that goes to their behavior, their beliefs, their attitudes and their outlook on life. There's also the opportunity that at different points in your career and at different levels within an organization, you're going to communicate in different ways and you are expected to communicate in different ways. So it's an area where you can always be learning and always be taking on new ways, new methods of actual communication as well as the words and message that gets sent.

Other qualities that I look for, apart from communication skills, it's probably passion. I really enjoy being associated with people who have a passion for what they're doing..

And I think when there's a passion that's obvious, it carries on through the organization or through the work associates and you just get caught up in the excitement of what someone's doing, whether or not it's of interest to you. Now, I have to say that my great passion at the present time and for probably the last 10 years has been floral art, art with flowers, it's flower arranging in lots of people's terms. But to me it's looking at nature and seeing the art that is in nature around us and then presenting that in a way that other people can

appreciate.

And I know that my passion for floral art has a flow on effect to those around me, whether it's just that they feel that they have to learn something about it to be able to talk to me or whether in fact, as with this person here, talking to me today, they will travel halfway around the world to be involved, to bask in the glory of my success. It's still a matter of, if you look at it clinically, it's passion for me.

Another thing I really value is attitude. I think attitude is everything. If you have the right attitude, positive, combined with that patience that Kim talked about as well, you can do things, to have the approach where you say nothing is going to stop me. I'm being realistic. I know there are obstacles, I know my limitations, but to still go beyond that and stretch oneself and challenge oneself in doing more. Be excited by the journey, not just the destination. Have the attitude where it says, yes, I tried that and it didn't work, but I did try it and I'm so happy I did. Now I know I have to look at it differently and try again and confront reality head on. So, yes, it didn't work. I did invest in time and energy and money and it didn't work. But so what, now I learned a lot from that and I can share that learning and do something else. I like optimism obviously, which is again part of that attitude.

And I like that people would do it with high integrity. So they're looking at getting the right outcomes, not just for themselves, but for people that are affected by their decisions.

We're sounding very philosophical. And if we looked at it from the outside, it must sound like, where do you find this, when everyone works in a real world, not in this wonderful place where everyone is passionate and loves what they're doing and turn up positive every day without the charge of coffee before they walk through the office door?

We're talking from experience, our work experience and we've combined in work years, well over 50 between us. Well, well over and so we've had situations where it hasn't been easy, it hasn't been pleasant, it hasn't been positive. The whole approach of some organizations is not positive and so you can't expect people within them to be positive. But there are ways of identifying where people have these qualities, even if they're not confident about expressing them or not allowed to express them.

So we're not talking about the ideal situation. We're certainly talking about and thinking about, when we talk about work, situations that we have been in and

what made those situations better or the best situations work wise that we've been in.

So I can tell you now that Fulyana has got a list. So we better work through her list or we'll never get through this session.

I guess if we look at someone's attitude at work and you say, there's a group working on a project and somebody will say, we tried this before and it didn't work and somebody else and no matter what you say, they'll just sit there with their arms crossed and say no, we've tried that. Now we've done that before and the approach to take with a person like that is not to just dismiss them and say, look, you're being negative, but to actually engage them into getting the results.

So you say to them, well, okay then why didn't it work? What were the circumstances at the time? So was it the environment? Was it the systems, was it the money? Was it the location? Whatever it is, and then they're part of the solution.

Now you will get those objections throughout. But I think if we look at those objections as contribution to avoid us making repeat mistakes, it's not a bad thing. Yes, it's frustrating. Do I always handle it like that in real life? No, I get frustrated too. But when I step back and I think about the examples I had over the years, then I think it does work. If you are a bit more patient in that situation too.

Sometimes it's preparation. If you are a person proposing this new activity, this new project, this new procedure, you think about it in terms of what objections will I have, will I encounter to this? And if you think about it, you'll know in an organization what objections are going to be raised. If you can embrace those and when they are raised, say, I'm so glad that you brought that up because I couldn't find any information on what happened last time.

I don't understand why it didn't work last time. Can you tell me why it didn't work last time so that we can include that in our planning of this process, procedure, new project so that we don't make the same mistakes again? You include them and their knowledge and their resources. It gives them power, gives them a feeling that they can contribute rather than fear of treading the same path and making the same mistakes and having the same result as last time.

Another quality that Kim and I discussed is we get very energized by people who are constantly improving themselves. We certainly try to do that ourselves and

constantly improve ourselves a lot because she knows what she's talking about. Yes, because Kim keeps pulling me up on it and making sure I stretch myself, which is great and you need people like that in your life, you need your friends to do that.

You also need people to be able to tell you what you did wrong. Now, that sounds easy, but you've got to have the courage to listen to that feedback, take it seriously, take it constructively and act upon it.

And I think that sometimes it's hard for us to do. We like compliments, but we don't like negative feedback, which is human. But the good thing about that is then you can sit back, reflect on how you came across in that situation to a certain person and go do something about it. To me this is very powerful and even just as powerful or more powerful than just learning through experience in jobs or doing a course at university, that is constantly improving yourself in your style, in your behavior in your interaction with people.

So if we did that at the same time as improving technically and growing our careers and changing career directions and industries, it's wonderful and the people that have, many, many people have done that obviously and in our circles we get lots and lots of hours of very stimulating discussion about those experiences, don't we? Well, it's no different to looking at any process.

Any process needs to be measured and how are you going to measure yourself, your process, if you don't look for feedback? And there's no point looking for feedback if you're only hoping that someone will pat you on the head and say that was really good because that's just not realistic. But what is realistic, is to set yourself a goal. To understand how you will measure for yourself once you've reached that goal, but also incorporating that measurement, how you will have reached that goal in others measurement or in the measurement of others?

I think we also look for people who are ambitious and I think the word ambitious can mean different things to different people. Ambitious for most people, means that you're growing your career upwardly. That's not necessarily what I expect. I think being ambitious could be that if you want to progress and become to the top ceo or whatever it is then, yes, that's ambitious. Ambitious is also beating your personal best at whatever you do and you think, well, I'm able to do this now and I'm going to push myself to the next level and next level, not necessarily career level.

The other one that I think sometimes it's undervalued, those people that want to

be experts in what they love, which is somebody is working with us amongst us, who love doing their job and they want to be the best at it. In comparison to, say, the people within the organization, the people within the industry and internationally that pride themselves on being the best salesperson, the best operations person, the best whatever person they chose to be. And that to me is very ambitious and in some ways harder to maintain as you're doing more of what you've been doing and you're raising the bar on yourself all the time.

So I love that about people who are clear about what they want and the ambition and appetite to meet that. I think ambition is an interesting word because we, in this country, interpret in two ways. If we're talking about a work situation, we would say it would definitely be a negative, it would be he's ambitious, she's too ambitious or she's a bit ambitious meaning over the top ambitious and it's a negative thing.

It's almost understood that you're saying that they're reaching beyond themselves or beyond what you see they could do for themselves. However, if we look at it in terms of sport and any sport that we follow, we would want the proponents of that to be as ambitious as possible. So we see it in sport and see it in that arena as being a positive thing, but in a work area where perhaps we are in competition with someone else, we see it as a negative thing. I just think that's an interesting dichotomy of thought, particularly in this country.

It's a lot to reflect on there, which takes me to the other one at work. I often talk, people talk to me, we talk to each other about politics at work. I hate politics at work. People say, I don't want to be part of the politics at work. I like integrity, honesty, being honorable, et cetera. My answer to that is again, face reality, head on. The truth is, politics does happen at work and in anywhere we go, whether it's in sport, within your social life or in family life.

So the best thing to do is know your own values where you would not compromise your integrity and honesty. But absolutely, you must be politically aware. So shutting your eyes to saying, oh look, I don't want to be part of that, is a mistake. I believe that if you're aware, you can maneuver around it whilst still holding up your own standards and not compromise on them.

Just as an aside, we designed these podcasts so that it would sound like we were just having coffee and having a chat with you. So the noises that you hear in the background are us moving around on the chairs, mine makes a really loud noise and Fulyana's just squeaks, just so you know. It's a special effect in the background. I think we know why mine squeaks but I wouldn't go into that, I'm

sure we're gonna talk about health issues later in the series. Oh yeah.

The people I like to associate with, the ones that are very, very smooth change of topic, they focus on their health and they're very, you know, proud of their appearance and they challenge themselves.

I like them even more when they don't make me do it. I'm just thinking this morning, I must be proud of my appearance because Bill said I could stop traffic with what I'm wearing today. Just as well it's a podcast. I guess, back to the list of qualities, I think we're doing really quite well.

The other one of course is creativity. Now, that's really exciting. I mean when people come up with something new all the time or built on something with a new angle to it. I love being surrounded by creative people. I'm always amazed at how much talent there is sometimes with people that surprised us. I'll give you an example in a work situation where we decided to have a happy hour one Friday, there was no plan other than let's just chill out, have a glass of wine or a beer before we go home and we did that and spontaneously the way people just gel together and some started singing, others talked to us about what activity they're involved outside work.

So creativity can be outside the workplace and brought into work. So by getting to know our people and respecting their different creative abilities, we should really be able to get our projects done, new processes formulated and delivered, new products to market, all of these things. It can be a solution, an innovative solution to a customer's problem, that to me is creative and I think we don't use it enough and don't encourage people enough.

Interesting because when you were talking about that, the first thing that came back to me with memories of our very early days working together, where the organization that we worked with had a concert every week and we used to see people who we saw as senior managers and the most respected of people in the industry, stand up in front of a group of others with a saw and play the musical saw and sing. There were qualities that we would never have known these people had and just that little bit of insight, that little bit of knowledge of the other skills that they're carrying around them that we don't necessarily use every day, gives us some more empathy.

It gives us an idea that there might be something else that we could ask them to do. It gives us another resource that we wouldn't necessarily know about had we not given them the opportunity to show us their creativity in areas other than the

day to day requirements.

We just want to go back to an area that was touched on briefly and that's about confronting reality head on. Increasingly as we work in organizations, we see situations that need to be addressed and sometimes we'd like them to be different. We'd like to be able to work around them and we'll spend too much time trying to find the solution that works around an issue. And I think that these days being responsible managers, we need to confront reality head on, we need to say this is the situation, do the risk filter, what's the worst that can happen, if that happens, what will the result be and then work back from there and there's just no time to waste on trying to work around situation, hoping that some other element will come into being that will change the way things are..

I want to chat a bit about the learning again and growing. One of the most effective ways, that helped me throughout my career is I've been very, very fortunate in having good role models in my career life. I had mentors even before the word was recognized in the sense that you saw someone and that person took a special interest in you purely to help you and purely to make sure that you learn in whichever way they could contribute.

So I had many, many mentors, informal and formal in my life and I continue to seek them even now. In addition to mentors, coaches and yes there is a whole lot of stuff written and approaches about difference between mentors and coaches and I'm actually not going to go into any of that, but I find with the coaching it's more specific. Early in my career, one of my coaches in public speaking is Kim sitting right here next to me and I have her to thank and it was very early in my career and I learned a lot through that and I continue to hear her voice and guidance anytime I'm doing public speaking.

The other one is having cheerleaders. Now that sounds a bit strange. I don't mean pompons and all of that. What I do mean is people around you that are really encouraging, that will say, look, this is really good what you're doing or have you thought about this, other than the feedback, but really be there for you. To say, I encourage you and give you that positive reinforcement. I think those sort of roles that your friends, acquaintances, bosses, people in your business life will make a huge difference to how you respond and then you'll have the pleasure as I have received and improved as well as hopefully helping others as we're trying to share our experience here in these podcasts.

I think that the terms mentor and coach, and cheer leaders is a new one for me, so I'm interested to hear the thoughts behind that, but in terms of mentors and coaches, they're overrated and overused, particularly overused.

We can all think of people who have helped us in our careers, people who have made a difference to how we thought about doing a particular function or task or job and they are mentors without the capital M. And I guess that for the rest of what we do with these podcasts, we'd like you to be thinking that way, that what we're doing is talking about our experiences, our thoughts and we don't want to be capital M mentors or capital C coaches but we're certainly providing the services that would be seen as those services by the podcast that we're doing very briefly. Then in that sense we've talked a little bit about all of the sorts of qualities that we like to see in people that we associate with.

One of the most important ones is giving credit where it's due and giving it immediately and Fulyana is very good at that. So I'm going to let her talk about, how do you do that? Oh, well, there's no real science to it. I think that if you, let's say you worked as a team and or you're leading a team or a member of team and you're putting their work, the results of the work forward. Be sure that the credit has been given to the people that came up with the work and their ideas.

Likewise, when you actually walking through the corridors and somebody says, I like what I saw the other day, such and such area did something and if you know which area that is, just say yes, I know they've been really consistently good. I like what they've done. If you know the names, mention the names because I think people, again, appreciate receiving feedback and the positiveness of the feedback only encourages people to come up with even more ideas and share them. You don't know how much it will mean to someone. I hire a lot of cars for moving around different areas of the countryside, but I always go through one particular point here in Sydney regardless of where I'm going and get them to organize it for me. And this is a fellow who I've had a lot of interaction with, very shy. He's professional in what he does. He's very good at what he does. And he always makes me feel like I'm not a bother when I change the booking at the last minute or have to extend it for weeks and weeks and weeks after I said I'd bring the car back on a particular day. They're always what I would expect and they do special deals for me and they upgrade me without me expecting it, all of which I appreciate.

Reasonably recently I was sent a survey, a customer satisfaction survey from the parent company and I thought yes, I have to fill this in. I have to say that the service that I'm getting there is exactly what I would want. I didn't think in terms of being exceptional though, when you look at it compared to other areas. Sometimes the service that we decide we're going to react to is exceptional because we're not getting it in other areas.

So I filled out the form and I said exactly what I thought. I rated him very highly and then I gave them some words about how it was for me as a customer coming into that environment. The next time I went to hire a car, he didn't say anything. I didn't know the process, their internal process of whether they actually got feedback or not. Right at the end when I'm signing the contract to drive the car away, he said, the parent company sent me a copy of your feedback, very much appreciated and that's all he said. But I could see in his face that this was a huge step forward for him. The next time that I hired a car, which was probably about a month later, he was the chattiest, friendliest, a totally different person. I think that we stepped over a line of communication there and as you know, communication is my quality that I look for.

And he couldn't, in cultural terms and in business terms, he didn't feel comfortable having a conversation with me prior to him knowing how I felt about the level of service he was providing. A very important lesson I learned out of that exercise.

I think that's an excellent example. And when you reflect on that in a business sense as well where you will copy the person's manager or the ceo on a compliments letter and from Kim's example, it made a big difference to them and I reckon it would make a difference to anyone. She stopped talking because she realized she said but. Since I started counting about eight minutes ago, she's actually said it 25 times, but she just doesn't hear herself saying it. And this is one of my public speaking lessons that we will be dealing with after we finished the podcast. But it also brings us to probably the last quality that we wanted to talk about which is holding yourselves and others accountable in this situation.

I'm holding both of us accountable. I'm holding Fulyana accountable for not remembering the lessons that I taught her all those years ago and I'm holding myself accountable for not teaching them well enough that she remembered them. So there's going to be a session after this, you can be sure. So I definitely take accountability.

I'm very embarrassed. So we probably need to wrap this up so that I can get the ruler out to rap her over the knuckles. But if we go back just as a brief summary for you, the things, the qualities that we look for in people that we associate with, for me, it's a good communication quality, a passionate approach to what they're doing and that they will confront reality head on. I'm just going to wrap up by saying we look forward to the next podcast and future podcasts will have some interesting executives from around the world that will also join us to share their views and experiences with you.

