Sizing People Up   **October 2020**

Without question, Covid-19 has created both personal and professional challenges for most of us. Our business certainly slowed a bit in the beginning. During this time, our firm started a book club. Our first selection was Sizing People Up by Robin Dreeke and Cameron Stauth.

Dreeke is the former head of the FBI's Counterintelligence Behavioral Analysis Program (BAP). The BAP is "a framework for predicting behavior" that helps the agency size up spies, allies, and foes.

Before we read the book, we wondered if we would find parallels between our candidate assessment process and the FBI's program. Like the BAP, we believe that evaluation should be more than a gut feel or intuition.

We gathered regularly over a month to discuss Dreeke's six signs of behavior prediction. We soon realized that, while we are by no means FBI agents, our process does focus on many of the same signs that the FBI seeks.

For example, the FBI considers *Stability* as an important sign for verifying trust and predicting future behavior. Agents rely more heavily on subjects who demonstrate emotional stability. They look for people who are "humble, nonjudgmental, rational, understanding, and generous." They avoid people who regularly blame others, victimize themselves, show volatility, and manipulate others and situations.

Another key sign is defined as *Action.* The FBI looks for consistency and transparency in describing past actions. Resumes, Dreeke warns, portray the applicant in the best light. Evaluating actions, however, predicts more accurately how an applicant will perform once he is hired. Resumes provide a glimpse into past behaviors, but do not prove character. Dreeks believes actions and character go hand-in-hand..

While we haven't labeled these predictors as Stability and Action, we agree that these traits are crucial in predicting success. That's why we believe that in-depth, face-to-face interactions with candidates are the most important part of our process. We work to learn the whole picture of a candidate's life. We ask about the formative years and follow those threads throughout their career. We also delve deep into professional accomplishments and transitions. It's not about what they did, but *how* and *why*.

Our process reveals who the candidate really is. It allows us to understand past action and emotional stability as indicators of future behavior. In our decades of experience, we have seen leaders with these qualities outperform others.

Reading Sizing People Up also gave us a tool for reflection. Discussing it together not only reaffirmed what we do and why we do it, but it also strengthened us as a team, which is important in these challenging times.

Has the pandemic given you and your teammates the time to read interesting books or listen to insightful podcasts? If so, please share. We would love suggestions for our next book club.

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