

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

SAYS NO TO NEPOTISM!

This is a sensitive but ever-important topic, at the core of workplace ethics. Nepotism is an extension of the cancerous corruption rife in other areas of society. When someone is recruited purely because of their tribe/family or 'connections' to certain 'politically correct' personalities that is corruption and it can have devastating repercussions in the workplace.

When discussing this issue with clients of ours, it becomes clear that Human Resources must be at the forefront of this battle, and there are some ways of ensuring total transparency. If employers want to distance themselves from the recruitment process, they should out-source short-listing, preliminary interviews and objective testing to a third party organization which has proved itself 'blind' to biases when recruiting candidates, short-listing only on the basis of experience, qualifications and competencies. When we saw that a client of ours always seemed to choose candidates from a certain tribe from our final short-lists, even when they were ranked lower than other candidates, we stopped working with them. Recruiting agents need to examine their morals, and turn away business, if need be, to ensure they do not get 'used' by clients as a cover for nepotistic decisions. If clients state an ethnic background as a criteria, or ask agents to carry out a recruitment exercise even though a candidate has already been identified, they are aiding and abetting nepotism.

Candidates who are recruited purely because of who they know politically become morale destroyers amongst the staff body who had to work hard to ensure recruitment. This type of 'queue-jumping' will lead to de-motivation and a flood out of the better managers already in the organization. Once recruited, candidates there due to nepotistic decisions also become impossible to manage and feel they are 'above the law' and even if they do not perform they will be 'protected' from redundancy. There was a case I heard where an organization recruited a driver as he was related to someone important, but the driver refused to report to anyone apart from the MD! Furthermore, politically 'connected' candidates, once recruited, feel secure and, in fact, will expect regular promotion - thanks to their powerful guardians! Organizations should also be aware that a candidate placed through nepotistic means will always owe his loyalty to their 'guardian' not their employer, and as such the 'guardians' might be using them as internal 'spies' or suppliers of the organizations' goods and services.

So how should organizations handle the constant pressure from the 'powerful' within society? Many of our clients reply to such requests by saying that the candidates that qualify have been passed to Career Connections for an internationally recognized and objective assessment, amongst all other candidates. Transparency is key, and in that way if such a candidate gets through our interviewing and test systems at least we are confident that they fit the role requirements and competencies. It can happen that such candidates are worthy of a chance - but it is important that they are treated in just the same way as others. If such candidates do reach final interview stage, though, they should be subjected to two panel interviews, to give all managers a chance to 'buy into' the decision to recruit them. An up-front discussion with the candidate that they will be treated as equal to others at their staff level will also be an important point to make at interview.

Many employers have rightly become so loath to be associated with anything resembling nepotism that they avoid even observing the assessment of their short-listed candidates for fear that they be insinuated in trying to 'bias' results. Another more complicated development is the fact that when faced with two strong candidates managers may now decide to hire the candidate who is not from their background, just to avoid being seen as biased. That is the other side of the coin...

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