

OPINION

Selecting between shortlisted job candidates

We've shortlisted the top two candidates for a managerial position. The difference between them is minimal — a few decimal points in our scoring system. Is there a good way of resolving the tie in coin-toss situations like this? — Mad Scientist

A coin flip is an accepted tool for breaking ties in sports and elections. Between two job candidates, there are other options available.

One option is to conduct a final round of face-to-face interviews using a common set of questions for the two candidates, who are to be interviewed separately. You can do a panel interview where department heads or their representatives are tasked to assess the candidates.

You can have about 20 questions in a form that includes a space for the rating by the interviewers. For example, each interview answer is graded on a scale of one to 10, 10 being the highest.

Even if you have already chosen your best candidate, one option is to delay a decision pending the completion of pre-employment documents (like an NBI clearance), medical clearance and background investigation.

Further, you must understand that many interview questions are predictable, especially to managerial applicants. They may have done it many times before as interviewers for their organizations. The key is to formulate questions that are unpredictable but still relevant to the job.

UNPREDICTABLE QUESTIONS

The first thing to do is to identify the key elements of the managerial job. What are the critical requirements to make a job holder successful? Is it leadership? Initiative? People skills? Technical competence? Problem-solving? Decision-making? Don't ask the same questions you've raised during the first few rounds of the hiring process.

Instead, ask open-ended but direct-to-the-point questions. You can create your own key questions that are likely to bring out characteristics of an ideal candidate. Take note, however that you should connect these questions to what's happening in your organization, including its management style, without telegraphing your internal problems:

Leadership. Give one specific example of how you transformed the performance of your department resulting in improved profitability and sustainability. This question focuses on the applicant's results orientation. It's difficult to fake an answer as the question requires detailed information on "profitability" and "sustainability."

Initiative. Tell us about a performance milestone that was unprecedented in your organization, either among your peers or predecessors. This is designed to surface any "black swan" experiences. While it's difficult to find unprecedented accomplishments for every applicant, the answers provide clues on whether the applicant strives to do extraordinary things.

People skills. Who is more important to you — the customer or employees? Management experts will always tell you that the right answer is employees. There's truth to the maxim that if you treat your workers well, they will treat customers better. Douglas Conant is right: "To win in the marketplace, you must first win the workplace."

Technical competence. If your assistant has an emergency situation and can't report for work, can you perform his task given your best customer's tight deadlines? Can you perform the same tasks, no matter how difficult? This question explores whether a manager can demonstrate mastery of his direct reports' tasks.

Problem-solving. Tell me about a complex issue that you solved without incurring major expenses that prompted your boss to give you a bonus, a commendation, or a promotion. This measures creativity in resolving issues without throwing additional resources at the problem.

Decision-making. There are two applicants for one job. Both are equally competent and have nearly identical qualifications. How would you decide? What objective approach would you take to identify the best candidate for the job?

OTHER OPTIONS

When an applicant gives you an obscure answer, probe for clarification until you reach a point where you can conclude they have or don't have the experience needed. You can also make the final interview process more interesting if you can assign one or two interviewers to intentionally create stressful situations for the applicants.

This means throwing applicants off-balance. The method sometimes involves asking questions in a loud, threatening voice. You can also pretend to be in possession of reliable information that would prove negative for the candidate's image. Propose to call a former boss right there to gauge the applicant's reaction to a situation where the ex-boss is asked whether he would recommend the candidate or not.

Attend REY ELBO's Feb. 23, 2024 public program on "How Management Lost its Labor Cases in 2023" about the new decisions of the Supreme Court. Chat with him via Facebook, LinkedIn, X (Twitter) or e-mail operations@reyelbo.consulting for details.



SC rules gym took on employer relationship with former trainers

THE Supreme Court (SC) has ruled that Fitness First Phil., Inc. had an employer-employee relationship with ex-trainers in finding that the ex-trainers were entitled to benefits and legal fees.

In a statement on Thursday, the court found that the exclusivity clauses in the ex-trainers' contracts, making them wholly dependent on the gym for their incomes.

"Under the Freelance Personal Trainer Agreement, petitioners (the former trainers) were required to sell only the company's products per its price schedule and were prohibited from providing training outside of the club," according to the ruling, written by Associate Justice Amy C. Lazaro-Javier.

"Petitioners were also wholly dependent upon Fitness First for their continued employment in their line of business."

A copy of the ruling has yet to be uploaded to the court's website.

It held that elements of an employer-employee relationship include the selection and

engagement of the employee, the payment of wages, the power to dismiss and the power to control the employee's conduct.

Fitness First had initially hired the gym trainers as fitness consultants en route to transitioning as freelance personal trainers.

Their respective contracts involved them being paid by the company on a commission basis, the court said.

"Fitness First also held the power to dismiss petitioners when it became manifest that the latter were unqualified or unfit to discharge their duties or failed to comply with the monthly Minimum Performance Standards under the Agreement," the Supreme Court noted.

"When the status of the employment is in dispute, the employer bears the burden to prove that the person whose service it pays for is an independent contractor and not a regular employee," it said. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

Italy migrants on path to fashion careers

ROME — Less than two years ago, 35-year-old Yuliia Dobrohurska was fearing for her life under the threat of Russian bombings in her Ukrainian hometown of Konotop.

Now she is dreaming of a career as a fashion jeweler in Italy, the country where she has taken refuge.

Ms. Dobrohurska wore some of her creations on Saturday as she walked down the catwalk of the "Refugees live fashion show," organized by a Rome health authority, alongside professional models.

The event, which presented eight outfits and matching jewelry made by refugees, concluded a six-month course for 19 women and men who escaped war, violence and human rights violations, and now aspire to become fashion designers.

Flush with her success, Ms. Dobrohurska sees boundless opportunities opening up before her.

"I can't imagine what I can't make and what I can't do here in Italy," she told Reuters.

During the course organized by the Maiani fashion academy in Rome, she learned engraving, wax casting and embossing techniques to make jewelry.

She will now start an apprenticeship at a jeweler's in the Italian capital.

The Maiani academy is part of a network of 110 organizations which use the motto "culture is health" to promote the integration into employment of asylum seekers and refugees from 95 countries through arts and crafts.

While a career in high fashion may be a glittering final goal, the courses were above all an opportunity for the migrants to integrate into Italian culture and learn the language while seeking an outlet for their talents.

Saturday offered the chance to "showcase the beauty of these products made, designed and produced by the refugees," said Giancarlo Santone, a psychiatrist who works with the Rome Health department that organized the event.

"We are really pleased because we have seen the results on the health of these people who are victims of war and extreme violence," he added. "The benefits are really remarkable." — **Reuters**

FX, from SI/1

Authorized agent banks must submit to the central bank a list of existing and valid registration documents within two weeks, the BSP said.

The central bank will give banks until Sept. 30 to continue reporting the transactions of registered investments using the old report forms.

Banks should also "make the necessary preparations and adjustments to their systems and processes to ensure compliance with the new reporting guidelines."

The central bank is also considering allowing the sale of foreign exchange without the need for BSP approval for nontrade current account transactions.

Other changes include allowing banks and FX companies to sell foreign exchange to tourists or migrant workers returning to the Philippines, called "balikbayan" in Filipino.

"Departing nonresident tourists and balikbayans may reconvert at airports or other ports of exit unspent pesos up to a maximum of \$10,000 (P565,000) or its equivalent in other foreign currency, calculated at prevailing exchange rates, without showing proof of previous sale of FX for pesos," the BSP said.

It will also require the registration of debt securities issued by private sector residents.

This investment instrument falls under foreign direct or foreign portfolio investments depending on the degree of control or influence of the investor in the investee firm, the central bank said.

Debt securities are negotiable instruments such as notes, bonds and convertible notes that serve as evidence of a debt, it said.

"Nonparticipating preferred shares that pay a fixed income but do not provide for participation in the distribution of the residual value of an incorporated enterprise on dissolution, are also classified as debt securities," it added.

The BSP has undertaken various liberalization measures to ease foreign exchange rules to facilitate transactions of banks, public and private companies, small and medium enterprises, overseas Filipinos and the public in general, it said earlier.

The liberalization is being undertaken in a well-calibrated manner, giving due consideration to prevailing domestic and international economic and financial conditions, while ensuring that timely prudential mechanisms such as documentary requirements and safeguard measures are in place, it added.

The Philippine central bank has approved and completed 12 rounds of FX policy liberalization since 2007. — **Keisha B. Ta-asan**

Clean energy, from SI/1

The Southeast Asia Clean Energy Fund II mainly focuses on investments in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. Clime Capital earlier this week said it had raised \$127 million in commitments for its first close of the fund.

It said the clean energy fund is the "first blended investment fund established in Southeast Asia (SEA) to provide early-stage high-risk capital to support promising businesses accelerating the region's low-carbon transition."

The first clean energy fund started in 2020 and has made 12 investments.

The fund has invested in the Real Wind Energy project in Quezon province in the Philippines, according to its website.

The project has a potential capacity of as much as 500 megawatts. Funding was used for the installation of meteorological masts, a grid impact study and an initial environmental impact assessment.

It has also invested in Skye Renewables Holdings, a Singapore-based clean energy developer that covers projects in the Philippines,

Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. The fund's investment has supported Skye Renewables' deployment of clean energy solutions like rooftop solar installations.

As of end-2022, renewable energy accounted for about 22% of the Philippines' power generation mix. The government wants to increase the share to 35% by 2030 and 50% by 2040.

"As time passes without sufficient progress in developing the critical resources to reduce carbon emissions, the planet needs more businesses focused on accelerating the low-carbon transition to thrive," Clime Capital Chief Executive Officer and co-founder Mason Wallick said in the statement.

The fund is also backed by Allied Climate Partners, British International Investment, the Cisco Foundation, Australian Development Investments, the Netherlands' entrepreneurial development bank FMO, the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet, Impact Assets, Norway's Norfund and Sweden's Swedfund. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsnon**

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