



Sum It Up in One Word

In a recent meeting with a bank CEO I was asked to summarize in one word the key characteristic of the right candidate for a few positions. He was sort of testing me but I really think he was interested in that exercise. I learned later that he is indeed a “sum it up” and “bullet point” guy. Thought you might be interested in my responses:

The word that summarizes the key characteristic of a sales person: **Curiosity**

What does curiosity do for the sales person? Better discovery! Curiosity causes a sales person to keep on asking good questions about the things that the prospect (or client) is sharing. Curiosity is key to building relationships, deep and wide fact gathering, effective presentation design, larger deals and more effective closings. Unfortunately, we haven’t found a test for curiosity. You can usually uncover that characteristic in an interview or in coaching calls – you know it when you see it or are missing it. And look for sincere curiosity! Is the person genuinely interested or just asking rote questions? Curious people come back from a discovery meeting and know the most amazing things about the prospect. And when asked how they found those things out, they simply say, “I just asked” or “It just came up.”

The word that summarizes the key characteristic of a manager: **Adaptability**

A manager’s life is one of constant change and challenges. Think about the life of a banking manager in the last few years – how much has changed and how quickly did it change? And are we done with change? As a coach, you have to deal with personalities that are a multiple of the number of people you have working for you. You have to deal with a diversity of client situations – often within the same day. If you can’t adapt you can’t cope. When we diagnose management failures, it is often related to a lack of adaptability. Similar to the curiosity characteristic, we can’t find a test for adaptability. It is hard to really get a read on this even in an in-depth interview. You really have to find out how they have handled different situations. If

the answer seems to be always the same, maybe they lack adaptability. Ask how they make decisions, not just what decisions they would make in a given situation.

The word that summarizes the key characteristic of a leader: **Wisdom**

Wisdom is using the knowledge they have gathered to make the right decisions. Too many times people confuse knowledge with wisdom. Furthermore, too many times people confuse gathering knowledge with making decisions. Wise leaders know that not every decision they make will be perfect, but they are willing to make those decisions.

The word that summarizes the key characteristic of a consultant: **Candor**

One day I presented a report to a board of directors. The most interesting compliment from several individuals was *we appreciate you telling it like it is. You actually told us what you thought rather than just feeding back to us what you heard from management and from us.*

Think about it: Your employees can always tell you what you want to hear. Sometimes you need to hear from someone else what you may not want to hear.

Do these words fit your experiences? Do you have other key descriptors for positions? If so, pass them to me and I will share them in future articles.