



LESSON 1

THE HIRING FACTORS PYRAMID: THE ICEBERG EFFECT

Introduction: More Than Meets the Eye

When we meet a candidate for the first time, we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. Their appearance, their resume, and their initial presentation are all just a small fraction of who they are.

The most critical factors for success—their attitude, their motivation, their resilience—are all hidden beneath the surface.

The Hiring Factors Pyramid, also known as the Iceberg Effect, is a powerful model that helps us understand the difference between what we see and what truly matters in a candidate.

The Three Levels of the Hiring Factors Pyramid

The pyramid is divided into three levels, with the most important and predictive factors at the bottom.

Level 1: What Everyone Sees (10% of Importance)

This is the superficial level, the things that are immediately apparent but have very little correlation with on-the-job success.

- **First Impressions:** This includes their clothing, their handshake, their smile, and their overall appearance. While a professional appearance is important, it is a poor predictor of performance.

- **Resume Basics:** This includes the schools they attended, the companies they worked for, and the certifications they hold. A polished resume can be impressive, but it doesn't tell the whole story.
- **Social Media Presence:** A professional LinkedIn profile can be a positive sign, but it is often a carefully curated and managed persona.

Level 2: Skills & Experience (30% of Importance)

This level represents a candidate's qualifications and past experiences. It is an important part of the equation, but it is still not the most critical.

- **Technical Abilities:** This includes their proficiency with specific software, their language skills, and their technical certifications.
- **Job History:** This includes their relevant experience, their career progression, and their past achievements.
- **Education:** This includes their degrees, their training programs, and their commitment to continuous learning.

Level 3: The Real Person (60% of Importance) - THE MOST IMPORTANT

This is the vast, hidden part of the iceberg that truly determines a candidate's long-term success. These are the behavioral traits and intrinsic qualities that are much harder to assess but are far more critical.

- **Work Attitude:** Do they have a positive, can-do mindset? Are they a team player? Do they take pride in their work?
- **Self-Motivation:** Do they take initiative? Are they driven to achieve their goals? Are they committed to self-improvement?
- **Persistence:** How do they handle challenges and setbacks? Do they give up easily, or do they persevere?
- **Maturity:** Can they handle stress and pressure? Do they make good decisions? Do they act with professionalism and integrity?
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Can they read and understand the emotions of others? Can they manage their own emotions effectively?
- **Cultural Fit:** Do their values and work style align with your company's culture?

Key Message: Hire for attitude, train for skills. You can teach someone how to use a computer system, but you can't teach them how to have a positive attitude or a strong work ethic.

The 2025 Focus: Hiring the Whole Person

The traditional approach to hiring often gets the pyramid upside down. It places too much emphasis on the superficial factors at the top and not enough on the critical behavioral traits at the bottom.



The Traditional Hiring Mistake:

- 80% focus on resume and appearance.
- 20% focus on personality and fit.
- **Result:** High turnover, poor team morale, and a toxic work culture.



The Smart 2025 Approach:

- 30% focus on qualifications and experience.
- 70% focus on behavior, attitude, and cultural fit.
- **Result:** Better hires, stronger teams, and a thriving organization.

Real-World Examples: Success vs. Failure

Success Story: The Restaurant Server

Level 1	Professional appearance and a friendly demeanor. (✓)
Level 2	Some restaurant experience, but not extensive. (✓)
Level 3	A positive, can-do attitude, an eagerness to learn, and a natural tendency to help their teammates. (✓✓✓)



Result: This server quickly became a customer favorite and was promoted to assistant manager within 18 months.

Failure Story: The Office Manager

Level 1	Impeccable resume and dressed for success. (✓)
Level 2	An MBA from a top university and a series of impressive job titles. (✓)
Level 3	A negative attitude, a tendency to blame others, and an unwillingness to collaborate. (X)



Result: This manager was fired after just six months, but not before damaging team morale and causing two top performers to resign.

Visual Element: The Iceberg Effect

