

POLICY,  
POLITICS,  
&  
NURSING  
PRACTICE

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## POLITICS OF THE NURSE HIRING GAME

### (HOW TO BE “SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE BEAR”)

#### GOALS

1. Identify the definition, purpose, and process of a facility/organization’s hiring committee.
2. Identify the mutual understanding of job requirements.
3. Differentiate between in-house and out-of-house employment.
4. Emphasize Discriminatory Laws.
5. State “The Law of Three” for making decisions.
6. State the role of “Mentorship” in the hiring process.

#### KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Hiring Committee
2. Potential Employee
3. Facility/Organization
4. Job Acceptance
5. In-House Employment
6. Out-of-House Employment
7. Rules of the Hiring Game
8. Discrimination
9. Federal Discrimination Laws
10. Rule of Three
11. Human Resource Department (HRD)
12. Mentoring

#### FORWARD INTO NURSING EXCELLENCE

Politics in nursing leadership is alive and well. It includes leadership behaviors about acquiring and achieving positive leadership power. As nurses, we seek the intellectual prowess that promotes leadership power for all humankind’s health improvement. We are entrepreneurs. When we pursue excellence in nursing care or leadership behaviors, we stand as professional giants among our patients and constituents by knowing *why and how to perform* to reach our leadership goals. Standing tall among other leaders, we carry the banner of excellence and the know-how that is the exemplary beacon that shows an intellectual understanding of our behavioral choices.

**The following is the political process required of a powerful nursing leader who is expected to oversee the facility/organization’s hiring process. Guidance is also directed to the potential employee who is a recipient of a powerful hiring process. To be *smarter than the average bear* (an old “idiom”) means a person (hiring an employee and potential employee) performs with exceptional prowess.**

HAIL TO THE CHIEF—THE NURSING LEADER!

## THE HIRING COMMITTEE

### Definition of a Hiring Committee

A facility/organization's hiring committee is a group of administrative staff-- i.e., president, vice president, human resource manager, department heads, etc., or current employees representing selected facility/organization factions. This group (most likely) recommends to the administrator/president (by their evaluations and recommendations) the hiring or rejection of a job applicant.

It is not uncommon in small communities for hiring to be determined by only the Human Resource Director (HRD) without much (if any) input from another person or (let alone) a group. It bypasses collective thought and assessment of a potential employee's capability to conform to a job description. Only when necessary should only one or two people within any facility recommend employment—an uneven number of more than two is preferred (see the Rule of Three).

### Purpose of a Hiring Committee

A Hiring Committee's purpose is to recommend to the administrator/president of the facility/organization a person (from their perspective) who most likely meets the job's requirements under consideration. The committee often provides other comments and scores regarding the perceived degree of compliance between the job requirements and the potential employee's ability to meet the job requirements.

It is important to remember that committee comments are not always entirely objective but often influenced by personal intuition, personal information about the potential employee, and even a desire to have "another person" hired. Never underestimate possible hidden agendas and the committee members' inability to correctly assess a potential employee's abilities related to the job description. Objectivity is a desirable trait of a committee member; however, human factors, personal desires, and perspectives are always at play in any decision-making process.

An administrator/president of a facility/organization *never permits a hiring committee to usurp* his/her administrative/presidential role by allowing the hiring committee to make the final hiring decision. Therefore, it means that this employment burden carries the commitment of hopeful success of potential employees.

### Process of a Mutual Hiring Committee and Potential Employee Experience

The Hiring Committee's perceived process is to interview the potential employee for fulfilling the advertised/known job requirements. Objectivity is often promoted through the use of a checklist or another scoring mechanism to encourage objectivity.

There is to be accepted mutual respect between the committee and the potential employee. The committee will ask questions and determine the degree of compliance with job expectations. In return, time is granted wherein the potential employee asks questions that define and solidify his/her continued interest in becoming an employee.

Sometimes, there has been a negative verbal response from a committee member: "You are here to be questioned by us (hiring committee), not for you (a potential employee) to question the committee!"

WRONG—It is a mutually shared experience to determine if the job expectations and current potential employee's knowledge and abilities meet the job's expectations and the potential employee's ultimate desire to be employed! Sometimes, job expectations and the potential employee's ultimate desire and willingness to comply with job expectations change after observing committee behaviors and attitudes. It is better to be "*smarter than the average bear*" RIGHT NOW on both sides (committee and potential employee) and recognize the future mutual compatibility or lack thereof!

During a job interview, interactive committee member behaviors include members willing to ask the potential employee questions relative to the job description requirements and related past job behaviors. Conversely, other committee members might be in a world of their own by not paying attention or seemingly not interested in the interview process or the person being interviewed. Why is aberrant committee member behavior important to a potential employee? Because these are the same people who make up the environment in which a potential employee would be participating. From what is observed by the potential employee—the potential employee (most likely)- judges the desire to be employed.

There are times when a committee member is required to be on a hiring committee, and it is not the desired assignment. It could result in complacency by a committee member at a hiring committee meeting. After all, it is true that some members *must* think about and accommodate their own job responsibilities while trying to meet committee expectations. This committee meeting might not be the most important consideration of the moment when immediate concerns loom elsewhere. Perhaps this committee member should be allowed to be excused from the table.

It is appropriate and respectful that the committee members ask the potential employee, "Do you have any questions of us?" It is also expected that the potential employee comes prepared to the interview with questions about the job expectations.

#### Process Recommendations for Potential Employee

Looking for a new job has always been a challenge. Meeting new people and potential work opportunities can be very stimulating. And—how exciting it is to be asked to meet with a hiring committee for an interview! If the potential employee listens and watches the committee carefully, a collective group philosophy and individual personalities will emerge. The obvious integrative employee mixture that makes up a decision-making hiring body and the "life of the facility/organization" becomes obvious. After all: **THE EMPLOYEES AT THE TABLE ARE THE ESSENCE OF THE FACILITY/ORGANIZATION—BY WHAT THEY DO, SAY, AND HOW THEY INTERACT!**

As a potential employee, show your professional prowess by asking questions about the philosophy, purpose, and goal(s) of the facility/organization. Ask the committee members for examples of their intended organizational behaviors under selected circumstances—especially in the department of potential employment. As a potential employee, always present yourself as an *evaluator* of the job description and the employees representing the facility/organization as to your continued desire to be employed. Consider your capability and willingness to do the job once you see and hear interactions and responses to questions.

Showing strength, positive assertion, and informed intent are the major determinators of accepting or rejecting the job assignment. Do not appear to be wanting committee approval for your answers to

committee questions. Use scrutiny when evaluating the job. Be choosy when accepting or rejecting the job. If you have requests or concerns related to obtaining or performing the job expectations, say so!

Watch out for a small business attempting to hire with only one or two people doing the interviewing — an HRD employee or administrator, as an example. Minimal opportunities for evaluating the hiring committee's thinking and behavior decrease employment desirability and increase risks related to future employment satisfaction.

It is wise to review the job description of the job under question carefully. Also, who (by name and position) will be your supervisor/mentor? To what extent does his/her job description as your potential supervisor/mentor require civil and supportive behavior toward new employees? Is there a means for providing feedback about supervisor/mentor supportive behavior or lack thereof? What are the possibilities and requirements of personal promotion?

## **RULES OF THE HIRING COMMITTEE**

A Hiring Committee improves objective performance before each employee job interview by identifying in writing and reviewing with the committee the organization's philosophy, goal(s), purpose, and process used to determine the degree of potential employee qualifications. Of utmost importance is a review and firm stipulation of the discriminatory laws—including being watchful not to express any insensitive comments (inferred or implied) that refer to ANY discrimination. A copy of the job expectations under consideration for each job applicant should be provided and reviewed. Each committee meeting's minutes should confirm the preliminary review of the above-stated facility/organization guiding principles and reviewing the discrimination laws.

The content of an objective check sheet used by each committee member for each potential employee is related to job expectations and is careful not to include any discriminatory content. The check sheet content might be determined by past employment/job requirements and future expectations that advance the job requirements and outcomes. It might also require a score related to the possibility of the new potential employee maintaining and improving the facility/organization's quality and goals of the facility/organization. A scoring process can produce objectivity for interviewing a few to many potential employees—e.g., a specific numeric score for each potential employee provided by each committee member. All committee check sheets are retained for possible future liability questions regarding employment choices.

Hiring Committee policies and regulations mandate a consistent pattern of initial committee expectations. The committee expectations will remain consistent only if written policies and regulations are firmly in place and used consistently. Entropy related to policies and regulations will occur (movement toward randomness and non-existence) if these requirements are not respected through consistent, continuous use.

### **The Rule of Three**

There is NO MAGIC in number three! The magic is that it is an odd number (not equally divisible by the number two.) An uneven number of decision-makers allows everyone in a group to contribute their

decision. All decision-making bodies/groups/committees should have an uneven number of participants—so there is never a tie. Therefore, a determination is always made by the group due to a majority decision.

If the Rule of Three is not accommodated and, therefore, the decision-making body/group/committee has an even number, then a tie regarding a decision is possible. If there is a tie, the administrator/president breaks the tie by voting for the decision of his/her choice.

## **FEDERAL LAWS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR HIRING**

**The following laws are a commitment to providing an environment emphasizing the dignity and worth of all individuals. Legal counseling shall occur before disregarding any potential employee in question regarding any of the following discriminatory statements. The rule must be (for your protection)-- always contact your legal counsel about any discriminating concern!**

**Purpose of federal laws: To provide explicit guidelines for equitable treatment of all existing and potential employees.**

Title IV, VI, and VII of Civil Rights Act (1964)—Outlaws discrimination and harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, creed, service in uniformed services (as identified by state and federal law), veteran status, age, political ideas, marital or family status, pregnancy, genetic info, and stated later as sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression.

Know this: The discriminatory issue of age in the hiring process is present and most often covert. A facility/organization most often looks for vitality in youth while not considering the acquisition of successful age-related experience. There is no substitute for life experience, especially when combined with academic prowess. Therefore, most successful decisions of a more mature employee relate to having experienced multiple past successful choices and outcomes. With its naturally resulting experiences over time, age teaches successful living and useful methods of job success.

Employers said older workers were more expensive. But studies show that age and experience lead to increased productivity that offsets any increased labor costs. (Center for Retirement Research at Boston College)

On average, worker productivity rose steadily from age 25 to age 60. (Mercedes-Benz truck assembly plant in Germany).

*“Older workers do what it takes to get the job done.” – Theresa Ghilarducci, The New School*

For your possible continued research on federal laws:

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR-64) point 35, 100, 104, 110

Title 1X of Education Amendments of 1972

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR-28) point 54, 34, 106

Rehabilitation Act (Section 504)

Age Discrimination Act (1975)

American Disability Act---Title I & II

## **CONFLICT OF “INSIDE” (IN-HOUSE) AND “OUTSIDE” (OUT-OF-HOUSE) JOB EMPLOYMENT**

Employment pride acknowledges that Job-related and life-experiences as a potential employee are *more than one or a few* in a lifetime. Non-recognition by a committee of diverse experience in other employment situations and acquired pertinent knowledge through education or understanding regarding a job can emerge as a blatant demeaning experience for the potential employee. This failure to recognize potential by the committee can cause a potential employee overt frustration.

The hiring process can be a very covert committee process. When it appears to the potential employee that lack of committee consideration for a job occurs, most potential employees merely shrug it off and seek employment elsewhere. Remember this--job rejection is often not a measure of knowledge or ability!

The philosophy and resulting in-house employment biases frequently become an over-riding factor in making employment decisions. Such fears of new-comers with new and probable BETTER AND DIFFERENT WAYS can frighten some insecure committee members and leaders. Some facilities/organizations see themselves as “families” with mutual trust to promote their goals. Suspiciousness and fear of change for the better or worse are felt to be deterrents to their continued success. Therefore, their personal needs, concepts, and ideas come from existing and strong working friendship ties and personal alliances. The “inside” (in-house) employment preference is the common source that feeds current employee human needs of comfort and safety.

Hiring of an “outside” (out-of-house) new employee with the experience to do the job, no friendship ties, more objectivity, possible diverse leadership experience, and less concern and manipulation by “inside” (in-house) human associations is daunting to some facility/organization administrators. It can be challenging for an administrator/president who fears change and what is felt to be the unknown. Some committee members believe “outside” (out-of-house) hiring is risky. There seems to be no consideration of the unique, diverse, and positive outcomes of new ideas and various thoughts provided by “outside” (out-of-house) appropriate hiring.

A professional Human Resource Department (HRD) employee with appropriate and supportive guidance from an astute facility/organization’s administrator/president has in his/her job description to determine the facility/organization’s specific employment needs. There is usually a comparison request of a potential employee’s job advantages—“inside” (in-house) or “outside” (out of house)! Often, there is a personal bias by an HRD employee who initially determines applicants to be interviewed. HRD written policies and procedures are to support state and federal nondiscriminatory expectations. The position (HRD) is a powerful job with personal tendencies toward determining the type of potential employee to be interviewed. Therefore, assess his/her expected HRD job description and policies to meet the required legal expectations, compliance, and obvious tendencies to use personal administrative preferences. Any evidence of obvious biases or disregard of both an in-house or out-of-house potential employee can be legally challenged. Be aware that some potential employees are *smarter than the average bear* and will legally challenge refused potential employment opportunities that show obvious biases and discrimination.

## **AFTERMATH OF ANY COMMITTEE OR PERSONAL HIRING DECISION--MENTORING**

Wait—the drama is not over! After employment, a current and successful employee must perform as a mentor. The mentoring assignment is to accept and teach a new employee about his/her job description expectations. Do the current employees working with this new employee know their job description requirement of helping this new person be successful at his/her job? All nurse job descriptions within the facility/organization clearly state that new employees are assigned a mentor in their new role assignments and treated civilly and equitably upon orientation and thereafter.

All current nursing employees are human. They come in all forms—accepting, non-accepting, fearful, controlling (and you can name a thousand behaviors that make us who we are and how we treat others as human beings.) Mentoring employees who support newly employed staff in any position are to be civil and helpful as a part of their job description! However, some current employees covertly see new employees as an employment threat. Unfortunately, some established employees will overtly or covertly go out of their way to discourage new employee success. Ignore this warning if you like! However, a history by many nurses who have experienced and recalled untoward behavior by some mentors will make a believer. A mentoring person is to absolutely and kindly assist in new employee job assimilation.

## **THE PROWLING BEAR**

It takes a potential employee *smarter than the average bear* to accept and understand when a job interview shows a job to be inappropriate and refuses the job graciously. It takes a potential employee *smarter than the average bear* to accept and understand a facility/organization's insecurities and fears regarding hiring (without discrimination) someone new and somewhat unknown.

Also, it takes a committee hiring process carefully orchestrated by the facility/organization staff to prevent inequities in the hiring process—otherwise, that *smarter than the average bear* will be on the prowl.

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

Job Descriptions by this author

Entropy by this author

Discriminatory Laws -- (available online)

“Smarter Than the Average Bear” – (meaning online)

### **CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:**

1. What employee in a specific facility/organization's employed position should be on the hiring committee?
2. If you are aware of personalities in the facility/organization, who (by title and name) has the ability and personality to effectively and legally perform on a hiring committee? Why?
3. What are the specific policies and procedures that should be a part of the hiring committee?
4. How do you determine if a potential employee should be interviewed?
5. Who should be in charge of the hiring committee and why?
6. What are the directions that should be given to a potential employee regarding the interview process?
7. How do you inform a potential employee that they were not hired?
8. How do you make sure that a hired employee gets the guidance for the job he/she was intended to perform?
9. What is a job description and how is it used in the hiring process and post hiring process?
10. How do you determine a mentor?
11. What is the reasoning to hire an in-house or out-of-house person?
12. What does the mentor role mean and what are the expectations?
13. What do you feel are the greatest concerns in the hiring process regarding discrimination?
14. Why is the hiring process a "Political Process?"
15. How do you make sure that the Hiring Process Committee is known as an advisory committee to the administrator/president of the organization instead of the ultimate decision-making body for the hiring of a potential employee?

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