

**Jonas Salk, scientist and discoverer of the polio vaccine, said intuition “will tell the thinking mind where to look next.”**

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**Logic  
or  
Emotion?**

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## “GUT FEELING” AS A SCREENING TOOL

Screening prospects for a position area is an experience filled with apprehension. Challenges include steps from possibly review the job description, deciding what skills to focus on while screening, going through the actual advertising process and reviewing the applications received. And you haven't even scheduled interviews yet. When are you supposed to do your 'real job'?

When hiring employees or volunteers one of the greatest risks an employer faces is the possibility of hiring the wrong person for a position, In addition to the cost of paying someone who is doomed to fail, there are also the costs of the initial time, money and effort spent in the entire hiring process, the training time when they are first hired and the coaching time spent supporting the person. In essence, the 'opportunity cost' of making the wrong decision.

Gut feelings can arise at the beginning of the recruitment process continue even after the hiring decision is made. Typically they start when you notice that something 'just isn't right'. When recruiting it makes sense to follow your instincts and dig into resumes and question references closely. Perhaps you see a slight inconsistency on the resume. Or their interview presentation leaves you uneasy. A reference may seem a little too careful with their choice of words. Or explanations of gaps in the employment record, frequent moves from job to job, or town to town may be unconvincing. Whatever the case, you should not ignore your gut feelings. Usually, there is a valid reason for your sense of unease. Like a red flag, your intuition gives you a reason to probe deeper.

I recall one time a job candidate's resume sent warning signals even before the interview. This person looked great on paper. He had the relevant education and experience. The resume was excellent – logically laid out, neatly presented, good use of language, no typos. In fact, it was so good, it made me nervous. The first two people interviewed were energetic, convincing and enthusiastic about the position. Our interview

team was pleased with both of them, but remained eager to meet the third prospect. The third interviewee had the 'perfect' resume.

He arrived for the interview appropriately dressed, on time, quietly enthusiastic. As our questions drilled down into the particulars of his resume, it soon became apparent that he had only superficial experience of the type required for the position. Within a few minutes we ended the interview. Afterwards, we agreed that this was an example of how things can appear too good to be true.

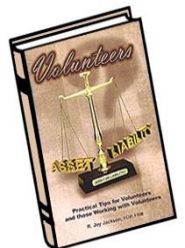
Today, you don't even need to use your own intuition. There is software for that! Numerous firms now offer software that purport to screen applicants to identify behaviours that make them the 'right' or 'wrong' candidate for vacancy. Their tools help you make hiring decision after candidates' complete assessments that reveal whether their knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and personality traits provide a good fit for your organization. Do they work? The providers insist that they do; they say that employers using these systems increase employee hiring success and retention. If you have used any of these systems, I would appreciate hearing from you on how well they worked (or didn't work) for you.

In the meantime, it may be necessary to push ourselves to pinpoint exactly why we are apprehensive about an applicant. Once the source of unease is identified, it can be explored further. Ask yourself if it is a real concern, or just that something about the person that is not exactly what you expected? Be careful to ensure the feelings are about the candidate, and not some baggage that you have brought to the process based on past experience. Gut feelings are a critical part of the process; the trick is to know when to rely and intuition and how to use it to make an informed decision. Successful managers hire workers who pass both the structured examination process and their intuitive screening.

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- Tips for you and employees who work with volunteers
- Ideas for minimizing effort and maximizing results through volunteers



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