

# Guest Consultant Brendan Betancourt: Do You Hire Based on the Candidate's Ability to Smile?

If you are like most people, you probably don't even notice if a candidate smiles spontaneously. During interviews, most of us are so consumed with the candidate's skills, and finding out if they can do the job, that we often overlook important aspects that in many cases may be more important.

The funny thing is that you can teach people most any skill, but you can't teach them to smile. And for people in the service industry, smiling is probably the most important skill of all.

While researching a talk, I came across this little story that Tom Peters told in one of his presentations.

*I once said to a Starbucks regional manager, "I'm stunned that almost all of your store people, from the U.S. to Saudi Arabia, always sport a smile. What's your secret?"*

*She smiled as she answered: "We hire people who smile!"*

*And to keep them smiling?*

*"We promote the ones who smile the most."*

*Could it be that simple?*

I can see some people saying, yeah, but Starbucks is different than a medical office.

Oh yeah, how so?

Whether we want to admit it or not, those of us that work in private practices, we are in the service industry just as much as Starbucks is. If anything, we ought to be more emotionally connected with patients, than Starbucks is with their customers, yet we are probably the industry that hires less on smiles and more on skills.

Smiling is the only expression I can think of that is understood by everyone despite culture, race or religion. It's a sign of pleasure, joy, happiness, or amusement. It is also an inviting expression; one of welcoming or politeness and friendliness. In fact, research shows that smiling correlates with greater trust, greater financial earnings, and increased interpersonal cooperation.

We are not hiring right now, but when we do, I'm going to make sure I look for that smile before I evaluate their skills. Because we can always teach them how to do things in our office, but we can't teach people to smile spontaneously. That comes from within.



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