



Derailer Lookout List for Interviewers

Candidate Name:

A derailer is any behavior or action that could cause a leader to fail in, or become deflected from, achieving their intended purpose. The list below was created by Tad Dwyer and Greg Marsh based on their knowledge and experience of the derailers that commonly thwart the success of newly hired or promoted leaders.

Instructions: After interviews, check any derailer that you believe the leader (or their hiring manager, for hiring manager derailers) may be particularly susceptible to. The Leadership Assessment and Transition Acceleration Program will focus on identifying and defusing these derailers.

Personal Characteristics

- Lacks the intellectual agility or flexibility to learn and adapt quickly
- Lacks the critical thinking skills to make effective decisions in ambiguous and/or rapidly changing environments
- "Smartest guy in the room" syndrome
- Indecisiveness, rigidity, or lack of nimbleness; lacks a bias for action
- Absence of sufficient "grit" (passion + persistence); lacks ability to inspire greatness, roll up sleeves, and persevere toward difficult goals
- Emotional volatility; overreacts to setbacks; intimidates or distracts others with emotion
- Lacks self-awareness; fails to understand his/her impact on others; not cognizant of his/her developmental opportunities
- Resistance to being coached or advised

Leadership Characteristics

- Prevailing leadership style does not match company needs
- Fails to secure early wins that stimulate improved execution
- Inability or unwillingness to work collaboratively with PE partners
- Difficulty adjusting from a large company culture to a smaller, more entrepreneurial one
- Failure to build effective teams

Transition Missteps

- Failure to build relationships with key stakeholders
- Failure to staff effectively/not making key changes soon enough
- Choosing the wrong early initiatives to focus on
- Cultural insensitivity
- Inability to make the leap to a higher-level position (CEO, etc.)
- Failure to take into account the full list of challenges for the new transition

Hiring Manager Derailers

- Lack of clear expectations from the hiring manager
- Not following through on promises made during the hiring process
- Surprises or sudden changes without sufficient communication
- Not allowing the new Executive sufficient autonomy to lead, "micromanagement"

Other Potential Derailers: