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Shades of Nature

By Paul Addoms

The unquenchable thirst for the new, the cutting-edge, the next big thing, characterizes the blaring buzz of modern culture, which often obscures the plain truth that sometimes the best new ideas aren't new at all. They are actually echoes from the past, presented in a contemporary way. Which is precisely what makes **Conrad Shades'** window coverings the most unique and elegant on the market. Their simple, sublime designs are rooted in nature, and shaped by centuries of craftsmanship, yet they blend perfectly into the most modern interiors.

Conrad Shades, a sophisticated company with a global reach, started as a humble import-export shop in San Francisco more than 50 years ago. That's when Edie Conrad, a native Norwegian began importing biri-weaves, wall-coverings made from interwoven wheat and barley strands accented with silk and linen, from her homeland, and selling them to her well-heeled, Bay Area clients. In the 1960s she traveled to Asia and was transfixed by the sheer variety of natural fibers available and by the skill of the weaver artisans she met. With each trip she deepened her connection to Asia, expanded her catalog and further developed her singular collection of superbly crafted, hand woven window coverings.

Today Conrad offers dozens of handcrafted weaves from

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Elegant Enlightenment

By Adam Skolnick

Destiny struck Kevin Kolanowski in the form of an unforeseen chore - the kind that pops up in the middle of a project disguised as yet another obstacle to overcome. Only this wasn't an obstacle at all. It was a doorway, and an exceptionally well lit one.

Kolanowski was an interior designer at the time, working on a remodel that took cues from 1920s and 1930s Americana, and he couldn't find the right wall sconce to light the living room. Lighting was always fundamental to his designs because, as he tells it, "Light sets the scene, the whole mood of the house. You can have a beautifully designed space, but without proper lighting, it just crumbles." Still, light is but one of the many elements designers consider when crafting interiors. After combing the internet, and countless catalogs, he realized that what he wanted and needed didn't exist. He would have to build it from scratch.

"I had to figure out how to make it," Kolanowski said. "So I went out and found the platers, spinners and casters to create this [one-of-a-kind fixture] for my client." The client loved it, and the creative process it demanded - from design, to engineering to production, captivated Kolanowski and triggered within him a sort of career enlightenment. Six months later, in 1999, Kolanowski displayed 10 pieces on Thomas Lavin's famed showroom floor in LA's splashy design Mecca, the Pacific Design

"NOW HIRING", No Experience Necessary

By Monica Wofford

"Yes ma'am. I have a great deal of experience using Microsoft Excel. In fact, I created my resume using that program."

The interview was going well. She had the look, spoke well, and Bill thought she would get along with the other team members. He missed the part about Excel and hired her anyway. Her resume sure showed even more experience in his industry than he really thought she needed. Six months later with hours of training, coaching that went on for days and a ream of documentation, he was letting her go.

Bill, like many managers, had conducted interviews for years and after an all day session of "back to backs", he had missed a few key points of this employee's interview. She had the background, had the way with words that so many do in an interview, but did she have the right attitude? She came up with an answer to all of his questions, but how would she perform and how could he possibly know. Simple. Well, sort of. All interview candidates seem to go to "interview school". They have the answers to "What are your weaknesses?" and "Why did you leave your previous job?" down pat. You have to look deeper and these techniques will help.

Hire for Attitude Instead of Skill. Paul owned a PR company and had been in the business for twenty years. He could teach almost anyone how to call a radio station. What he had also learned is that when hiring PR reps from other agencies, he had to spend hours un-training all their old habits. If you are hiring a sales person, hire a go-getter with a love of people and a high self esteem, not necessarily someone who has sold for years. You can teach skills, you cannot teach someone to overcome rejection and surly customers, nearly as easily.

It is the attitude that will outlast problems and the attitude that will readily learn new skills.

Assign a Task in the Interview. Put your candidate on the spot. Avoid the same old questions; ask them to do the job, right then, right there. If your vacancy is an IT support person, role-play a difficult end user calling with a seemingly impossible problem that must be fixed yesterday. See what they say. If you are hiring for sales, have them sell you your own product. See how many questions they ask about it before just jumping into

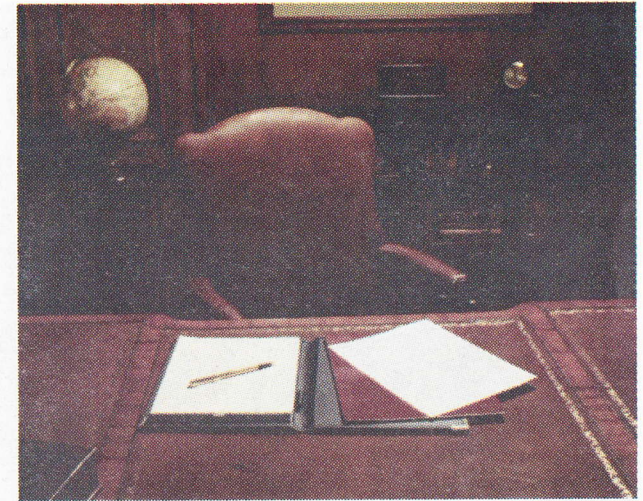
the six step sales process.

Pay Attention to the Past... Differently. Your candidate has had ten years working with our competitor. She has won every award for this type of position possible. So, how much do you think she will question your direction when you say to do something different than what she has been rewarded for? How quickly do you think she will be loyal to the very company she has competed against for years? Perhaps that candidate who has worked in a completely different industry but can demonstrate to you the right attitude toward hard work, learning, and customers would actually take less training.

Try Story Time. Asking closed questions in an interview, limits creativity and gives candidates a 50/50 chance of getting the right answer. Do you only want a 50/50 chance that they'll stay and be productive? Try asking him or her to tell you a story. "Tell me about a time when you and co-worker completed a project and received recognition." Then listen to the story for hints on how they prefer praise, get along with others, share credit with co-workers, or bad mouth their boss. Also, "listen" to their body language and for creative story telling. Much is revealed when a person tells you a story and almost always, the story will be true as most can't make up that kind of detail on the fly.

Ask for Passion. This one must be done delicately. After you have asked your standard questions and tested for skills that you need, find out the passion of the person you are about to entrust with this job. Whether you provide them with a profile or merely ask the question, the results are immediately revealing.

For example, Melissa was hiring a sales person. She thought she had found someone. All the questions had been answered with ease. The candidate's background suggested she had the attitude and making of a great sales person. Yet, when Melissa casually said, "What is it that absolutely lights your fire? What is it that you absolutely LOVE to do?" The candidate looked her straight in the eye and said "I absolutely love to type. I love to see if I can beat my own typing speed record and enter more information than anyone else can." Now this candidate doesn't do sales with Melissa, but she is one of the best admin data clerks she has ever seen and both Melissa and the candidate are



extremely happy. Many don't know who they really are, but most do know what they like to do. Make sure it is what you are hiring for.

Hiring is tricky and getting the right person in the right job can be a downright complicated gamble. We make matters worse by using the same old formula that even the candidates know and by looking at experience that may or may not matter. Try to keep in mind that finding the right person for the job is far more important than finding a person to fill the job. Want more work, keep filling jobs with those who think they know it all and tell you what you want to hear, but know little of themselves. Want more productivity and a long term team; spend more time learning about the person rather than reading their resume.

Monica Wofford, President of Monica Wofford International, Inc. is a certified CORE coach and trainer. She and the 12 coaches she leads help hundreds to determine who they are, how to work with others, and what their own true gifts are. Wofford brings more than 17 years of leadership experience to the companies she serves and provides training in Leadership, Service, and Confidence that impacts her client's bottom line and provides long lasting results. She is the author of "The Type A Myth", "Contagious Leadership", "Contagious Confidence," and "Contagious Customer Service" and can be reached at www.monicawofford.com or (866) 382-0121.