



## When Small Minds Prevail

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Leslie Rhatican sat in the chair in my office for a job interview. I was the project director for a half-million dollar study commissioned by the U.S. Small Business Administration. I supervised a staff of seven. We were in need of someone with strong financial analysis skills, preferably an M.B.A.

Leslie was sharp as a whip. As I began speaking to her, I couldn't believe that she was available. She wanted a couple thousand dollars more than we were offering for the position, but I felt sure that I could go into the big boss and explain that she would be worth it. I let her know flat-out that I wanted her for the position.

At that point, her body language changed. She sat back in the chair and relaxed a bit. It seemed as if a huge burden had been lifted from her shoulders. I asked her what her job search experience had been, and she told me a story I didn't know was still taking place in this day and age.

As it turns out, Leslie had had several interviews and done remarkably well. Why had others not hired her? She told me that in one case, the interviewer said that he would have been intimidated by her knowledge, a rare admission. In another case, it was clear that she represented a threat to the future promotion of the gentleman interviewing her. Essentially, in one interview after another, the interviewer was fearful of bringing Leslie into the company and onto their teams.

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She was almost tearful when she finished the recounting of her experience. I told her that she had come to the right place. I didn't feel intimidated by her intelligence at all; we were looking for the best possible person. I explained to her that her brilliance didn't diminish my career prospects in any way. I said it is a shame that she had to encounter such small-minded people, who were more interested in guarding their own turf than making progress for their respective organizations.

When Leslie started with us on the following Monday, she proved to be true to form. She was as good as I had presumed, and it was a pleasure to have her on the team. As weeks passed, she became an essential cog to our machine. Our new and improved trajectory would come crashing down if she was not among us.

I weep for the highly talented individuals, men or women, who have to endure job interviews conducted by insecure, fearful, or incompetent individuals who do a disservice to everyone as a result of their warped selection process.

Could these kind of backwards hiring practices be taking place in YOUR organization?