

## THE RISE and RISE OF THE NARCISSIST

**An article written to assist candidates to explore the environment of their potential next job.**

As a matter of course, we advise our shortlisted candidates to do their due diligence on their prospective Bosses / Owners (SME's) /Directors and the environment they have created in their respective businesses. *People due diligence that is.*

The reason for us giving this advice is that candidates need to be fully aware of what they are applying for and be confident that they both understand and can deal with, the nuances of their future bosses.

The financial reports and other information are one thing but what about assessing the potential flaws and attitudes of the people in charge? The Owners/Directors and Senior Staff set the culture of the business and YOU need to assess whether YOU are a fit to that culture.

Here are some tips to help you with your assessment.

**Candidates: Start by asking “what is the staff turnover prior to this vacancy being available”?**  
**High turnover = problem boss or bosses, (either lousy leadership or poor (sometimes none) recruitment processes or both).**

There are many characteristics that define how bosses/owners WILL behave after the appointment is confirmed which may not be apparent during the interview process. One type of boss to aware of is the Narcissist.

### **Clues for Candidates to look for when dealing with the NARCISSIST.**

**One of the most common causes of staff turnover is the Narcissistic boss (NPD<sup>1</sup>).** The word *narcissism* comes from a Greek Myth about Narcissus, a man who “*sees his own reflection in a pool of water and falls in love with it*”.

Here are some symptoms for you to explore.

1. **They always talk about themselves.** People with NPD lack empathy and are unable to recognize or understand the needs or feelings of others.

**Candidates: Beware of the person who overuses “I” and who during the interview subtly shifts the interview focus from finding out about you to telling you about themselves.**

2. **They Fantasize:** The minds of people with NPD tend to be filled with elaborate fantasies about “*success, power, brilliance or beauty etc*”. As a result of these imaginings, they feel they should have the best of everything which might include houses, cars, clothing and jewellery and other “things”. The purpose of these fantasies is nothing more than to fend off their feelings of insecurity and inner emptiness. Over time the person with NPD will acquire status affirming more “toys” than they have time or the inclination to use. Yet they will continue to feed their insatiable appetite for more, more and more.

This is especially true with those who, upon examination, have had an unsatisfactory/loveless upbringing characterized by abuse, broken relationships, emotional deprivation, or were born into a dysfunctional family unit or alcoholism etc.

**Candidates: Beware of the prospective boss who dresses to impress e.g. more diamonds (than fingers), unusually strong “look at me” demeanour (hair, clothes etc) or who appears to want to impress you with their material possessions.**

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<sup>1</sup> NDP – Narcissistic Personality Disorder

3. **They believe they are superior:** To maintain these feelings of superiority, they will resort to belittling others by focussing on that person's flaws – real or imagined. NPD's do this to effectively hide their own flaws/insecurities.

*Candidates: At interview, ask about the person who held this role prior to the vacancy. Be alert to the Narcissistic boss or manager who will criticize or belittle that person.*

4. **They are needy and require constant praise:** However outwardly confident the Narcissist may portray themselves as being, they are usually incredibly insecure and have a very fragile self-esteem. Have you ever wondered why people who have had cosmetic surgery (ostensibly to improve their appearance), always seem to be wanting more surgery to make themselves be even better to the point that when things go awfully wrong (which often happens), the surgeon will always cop the blame. Such is the blameless nature of the Narcissist.

*Candidates: Ask the person interviewing you how they became so "successful" and sit back and go for the ride. This question is sure to get the Narcissist from zero to top gear in a very short space of time.*

5. **Narcissists are highly reactive to criticism, expressed or implied.** They quickly respond in a defensive, abrupt, rude and often offensive manner and are unaware of their actions. They will attempt to make "put down" remarks and exaggerate the facts to put themselves in the spotlight.

*Candidates: Think about how life will be for you after the "honeymoon" period is over i.e. 180 days from that job offer.*

6. **They exude a sense of entitlement:** Which results in Narcissists expecting others to offer them special favours and fulfil their requests without questions. Narcissists view others as "existing primarily to serve their own needs" (just like a 2 year old child).

*Candidates: Beware of the owner or boss who focusses primarily on what they expect of you without asking what you might expect of them.*

7. **They take advantage of others:** People are naturally drawn to Narcissists finding them "attractive, charismatic and exciting" which is why the Narcissist have no issues getting people to do what they want. But equally when those needs are not met, things turn to custard quickly, with little or no regard for the feelings or interests of the person who used to be so good. Narcissists often have very tumultuous friendships and romantic relationships that are short-lived.

*Candidates: During interview ask yourself this question "do I feel that I am about to join a solid team or is it more like I am being assessed to help make money for the boss"?*

## **Final Word:**

While Narcissists have always been part of humankind for centuries it appears that in today's material world, is it that they are increasing in numbers or are they are just more visible? Either way be careful.

*Candidates: Make sure you go into the first and subsequent meetings with eyes wide open. Employment is a mutual agreement not just an offer of a job made by your prospective boss.*

*And remember - If it looks too good to be true – it probably is.*

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## **Business Consultant**