

IN SEARCH OF A PRIVACY OFFICER

TOP FIVE QUESTIONS

Case Study: Yikes!

The Vice President, Corporate Resources ended the troubling call on her almost invisible headset and paused to gaze out the window. Her thoughts were churning at high speed. A trusted colleague at ABC Corp. had just briefed her on the results of their recent privacy review. ABC had just suffered a public relations nightmare after some confidential information on customers had been found in a city dumpster. She knew that the new law requires all Canadian forms appoint a Privacy Officer. Recalling the words of the various policy gurus, a staccato burst of thoughts stacked into the mental queue: "How much are we at risk? What do our policies not cover appropriately? What can I do to get this on the executive agenda? What is a "reasonable" response? Who would make a good Privacy Officer?".....

The Need

Effective, January 1, 2004 Canadian organisations will need a Privacy Officer. How will you go about getting the right person for this unique, new role?

The right person needs to be an agent of change. Yet, the changes must be done at a pace and style that accommodates the existing organizational culture and infrastructure. Revolutionary change itself may represent too large a risk. We are now faced with new and unprecedented need for privacy and protection of people related data.

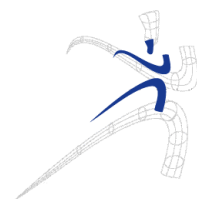
The following is a subset of interview questions that has been designed to help assess how a potential Privacy Officer will function in a business environment. The wrong answers might indicate you are interviewing a Privacy Wimp or potential Privacy Nazi. Neither would be a good choice.

Interviewing Questions

These are "seed" questions that can be used to initiate a discussion on each subject. In most cases, the questions are open-ended probes that require the candidate to provide an expository response. In some case, the best response may be clarification questions from the candidate.

1. Change Agent

Name three specific projects in past roles where you were required to introduce changes in culture and behaviour? Describe your approach to developing privacy recommendations and how you would gain support / acceptance for their implementation.



2. Management style

Describe instances of your management style preference in achieving delivery of urgent new business processes. How has approach this been received by your staff, your peers and others affected?

3. Compliance

Describe how you have implemented compliance regimens in past assignments. Which ones were most successful and why? Which ones were least successful and why?

4. Experience

Describe your related experience and how this prepares you for the role of Privacy Officer? Illustrate with a couple of examples how you garnered the support you needed for critical resources and initiatives? Where do you seek peer support? Describe a specific example of how you "sell" the concepts and ideas that you strongly believe?

5. Challenges

What do you see as the three main challenges for our business in complying with the new privacy legislation? How would you address these challenges? Outline the processes you would use to assess the quality and completeness of the privacy practises currently in place?

Responses

For most of the questions, the interviewer should analyse the responses for management processes. Even dynamite consultants or managers rarely know all of the answers. When they run out of "content" (i.e., the answers), they always have a "process" (a methodology that will eventually produce the answer or options). The best candidates ask tough questions and have the ability to craft observations and generalisations from their experiences. The good ones also have a ready supply of road-tested principles that help them through the tough situations that will always arise.

Conclusion

Recruiting for a new Privacy Officer is serious business. The exposure of making a mistake is as great as the potential of finding the right person. The questions you ask in the interviews can make a major difference in getting closer to the best fitting candidates for this difficult new role. Take these questions, two hours of high energy and enjoy the best interview possible.

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