

ARE YOU EMPLOYING A PSYCHOPATH?

by Tes Ebersohn

WHAT IS A PSYCHOPATH?

A PSYCHOPATH IS TYPICALLY A PERSON WHO IS:

1. INCAPABLE OF FEELING SYMPATHY

They simply cannot feel sorry for someone they are victimising. As a result they never show any remorse. It just does not exist for them.

2. INCAPABLE OF FEELING GUILT

They never ever feel guilty about the harm they do to other people. They have no conscience. It is difficult for a normal person to understand this. They do understand the difference between right and wrong but this does not influence their behaviour in any positive way.

3. A PATHOLOGICAL LIAR

They lie about anything and everything. Nothing they say can be taken at face value.

4. EXTREMELY MANIPULATIVE

They find ways to manipulate people around them to suit themselves. They are not above making up horrifying lies that they cannot sustain, to get what they want. They can be superb actors when it suits them.

5. PARASITIC IN NATURE

They look for ways to take what they have not earned, whether it is being financially parasitic with their partners or whether it is by stealing credit for other people's work.

6. EXCEEDINGLY CHARMING

Because they are so charming they often make fantastic impressions at interviews, giving them an above average chance of getting the job.



7. LUSTS AFTER THRILLS

They are often sexually promiscuous, regardless of whether they are in a relationship or not. Psychopaths love power. This is the ultimate thrill for them. If they don't have it then they lie about having it.

WHY IS THIS DANGEROUS FOR MY COMPANY?

The most extreme and notorious psychopaths are the serial killers like Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer. Both of them displayed classic psychopathic traits when they used charm to isolate their victims so that they could have complete power over them. Neither of them ever felt even the slightest guilt over their actions.

These two are not alone. According to recent research a full 1 % of the population are psychopaths. Most of these are in the business world, where they are most comfortable.

The psychopaths that apply for a job at your company are however most likely not serial killers. While they will probably not murder anyone, they will most definitely be a destructive force in your company. If you get off lightly you will end up with a divided and unproductive workforce of unhappy employees. You will probably also lose some of your most valued people.

IT IS LIKELY THAT
YOUR PSYCHOPATH
WILL DEFRAUD
YOUR COMPANY IN
SOME WAY

Your psychopath will immediately set about dividing staff into categories that suit him or her. These categories will be something like the "useful allies", "difficult to manipulate", "of no importance to me", "a direct threat to me" and "the one who makes the promotion decisions". He then starts to spread dissent in order to split the groups to gain more control. This is easy for him because he is a pathological liar. He isolates his Victims by cutting them out of the lines of communication. Those in the "difficult to manipulate" category are targeted to such an extent that they suffer depression, anxiety and panic attacks. They fear going to work and often feel forced to leave their jobs and in extreme cases even commit suicide.

At the same time, while the psychopath is victimizing these people, he is showing the people in the "one who makes the promotion decisions" and the "useful allies" categories another face altogether. This face will be so different to the one that his victims see that most normal people when told about it will simply not believe it. They know him as a charming and promising worker.

It is likely that your psychopath will defraud your company in some way, whether by claiming excessive and unnecessary sick leave, placing unauthorised orders or simply stealing cash they have access to. There is a breed of psychopaths who are also small business predators. These people may even try and steal your business from you.

HOW DO YOU SPOT A PSYCHOPATH?

The best way to spot a psychopath already working for you, is to familiarise yourself with the points above and look out for signs of them.

An employee who offers the boss excessive flattery is it possible warning sign. Flattery is frequently used to manipulate people. In the case of a psychopath his facial expression may not match his words. If you are the subject of extreme flattery watch his face carefully to try and see how sincere it is. You may be dealing with a psychopath.



Another possible warning sign is if some staff members start to book off sick with stress and sometimes don't even come back to work. They may have become victims to a psychopath in your business. It is difficult to get to the bottom of the problem though because the psychopath is such a master of manipulation.

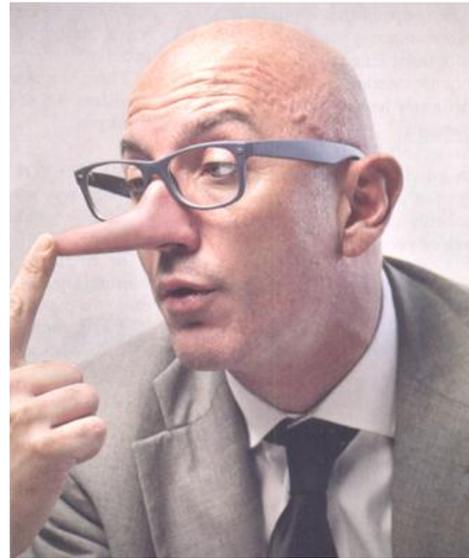
He looks like a good guy to everyone except his victims. In a situation where he is confronted he is usually very calm while his victim is in a state of extreme distress. The psychopath may even say something to heighten the victim's distress and make them appear unbalanced and out of control.

Because psychopaths are unable to feel sympathy we can use this to help us identify them. Engage them in a conversation about a terrible tragedy. Most psychopaths have learnt to act out some degree of sympathy but most are unable to sustain it. So draw them into a conversation around a tragedy and try and assess how deep their understanding is of the pain and suffering around the tragedy.

If an employee admits doing something wrong and you can see no trace of remorse it should definitely raise a red flag. If this employee is also charming and ambitious then it may be worth probing further. You might very well have a psychopath on your hands.

If you suspect someone may be a psychopath, look for lies. Randomly ask for evidence of claimed facts. If he claims to have been stabbed ask to see the scar. If he claims his father died ask to see the death certificate. If your suspect is a psychopath you will find a web of half-truths and outright lies.

THE WORKPLACE
PSYCHO IS SMART,
CHARISMATIC,
CHARMING AND
MUCH LESS LIKELY
TO GET CAUGHT



AM I PROMOTING A PSYCHOPATH ?

Almost all psychopaths are extremely focused on climbing the corporate ladder because they love power and because they have an aversion to routine, which makes them most suited to the executive lifestyle. Unfortunately they are often successful in business. Every company must find a way to be profitable or close their doors. In this environment of a need for profit their ruthlessness and willingness to do anything for the success and power they crave is mistaken for ambition and leadership. These people are frequently regarded as the up and coming leaders of the company. They appear to be smart, creative, driven employees who are full of energy. They are rewarded with salary increases and promotions. John Clarke, a Sydney based psychotherapist and author, has studied psychopaths in the workplace. He has this to say, "I think the workplace psychopath is actually much more dangerous than the violent criminal psychopath, because the workplace psycho is smart, charismatic, charming and is much less likely to get caught."

Paul Babiak, PhD, a New York based industrial organisational psychologist and author said, "That's the big problem. They are outstanding in their ability to charm other people. I always think of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. We call them 'corporate chameleons'. In a corporate setting, for instance, when you're looking for a leader, you want someone who is competent and loyal. A psychopath can easily convince you they're competent because they are very good liars and they are amazingly loyal because most of their relationships are built one on one, so they don't allow you to see the backstabbing, which is done in private. They are able to mask that."

Babiak, together with Robert D Hare, a professor emeritus in psychology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada wrote the book, *Snakes in suits: When psychopaths go to work*. They also developed the Business Scan 360, or B-Scan which is a personality test based on their research to try and assist businesses in identifying the psychopaths in their midst.

HOW DO I SPOT A PSYCHOPATH BEFORE I HIRE HIM?

This is not easy to do because they are so charming, good at manipulating and have no problem at all with lying.

The first and most obvious warning sign is if you really like someone after the interview. If this person was charming and left you feeling that they are exactly what you are looking for then perhaps it is time to re-evaluate very, very carefully. Obviously not everyone who makes a fantastic first impression is a psychopath. But psychopaths do make a fantastic first impression.

PSYCHOPATHS DO NOT
BELIEVE THAT THERE
IS ANYTHING WRONG
WITH THEM

Many psychopaths lie on the CVs as well. 'This is one of the easiest ways to catch them before you hire them. Phone the references listed on the CV. Some psychopaths come up with creative stories about why you cannot phone their references. If you cannot phone for references simply pass on the candidate. Don't phone once for references. Phone twice, a few days or even a week apart. That way if the phone number you have been supplied is a buddy's number you will discover it. While on the phone with previous employers check the dates that they claim to have been employed there as

well as their position and responsibilities. Make sure that the person you are speaking to was in fact

the person that your candidate reported directly to. You can check this fact with the receptionist of the human resource manager.

It may also be worth your while to have another look at the job ads you are placing. According to Clarke ads that say things like, 'you know you are best', 'you are able to influence people' and 'you are de-termined to win at any cost, for the organisation', hold a particular appeal to the psychopath. You are likely to get a higher response from psychopaths than with other ads.

CAN A PSYCHOPATH BE CURED THROUGH THERAPY

According to Clarke psychopaths do not believe that there is anything wrong with them. They believe that they are more intelligent than everyone else and that if others had the same intelligence as them they would behave in the same way.

Furthermore, psychopaths who have participated in some form of rehabilitation have become more dangerous because the rehabilitation only served to arm them with awful social skills that allow them to better manipulate people.



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