

Steward of Talent

Presenter: Margaret Graziano – Owner, KeenAlignment

Margaret Graziano, CEO of KeenAlignment, is a leading talent management expert, keynote speaker, and author of *The Wealth of Talent* with over 20 years of real-world, hands-on experience in hiring strategy and talent development.

She brings neuroscience to hiring, learning and development, and employee engagement. A pioneer in her field, she has developed a talent strategy system that gives business leaders the actionable steps they need to align their corporate strategy with their people strategy and thereby maximize employee effectiveness and engagement and develop high-performing teams who consistently elevate the customer experience.

A Certified Co-Active Executive Coach, Certified Employee Retention Specialist and Trainer, and an Organizational Development and Talent Architect, Margaret has been a guest speaker at conferences and seminars where she's captivated audiences with her presentations on Conscious Hiring, Leadership Effectiveness, and Workforce Optimization.

In this session, Margaret shows how to create long term value as a recruiter, by shifting to the mindset of being a talent steward for your clients.

Meeting: “Steward of Talent” by Margaret Graziano

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, watch the entire Episode and use the expanded talking points below to create a plan for implementation.

Facilitator: It is commonly known that all individuals should put their best foot forward throughout the interviewing process – both applicants and hiring managers alike. Offices are tidied up, everyone is polite with introductory small talk, and professional game faces are on.

“My greatest weaknesses? I work too hard. I sometimes care too much about the work I do. I don't know when to quit; some have even told me my tendency to over-achieve makes others in the department second-guess their value on the team.”

Sound like a familiar iteration of an answer you or your hiring managers have heard before, perhaps a time or two? Many would liken a first interview to a first date, which begs the question: when do you really get to know what is underneath the surface? Margaret helps us with identifying some core areas and key questions to ask to get beneath the surface. Take the following list and add to it.

INTELLECTUAL

- *Tell me about the last time you had to learn a new task. How did you go about learning it? What, if any tools, did you employ?*
- *Tell me about the last time a manager rejected one of your ideas. How did you react to his/her feedback?*
- *Tell me about the last time you had to stay late at work. Was that unusual for you?*
- *What tools do you use to keep yourself organized?*



- *I see from your resume that you were the lead on the XYZ project. Tell me about your greatest challenge as lead.*
- *Tell me about the last project you worked on where you were made to understand you could not fail. What steps did you take to ensure success?*
- *Tell me about your biggest work failure. What did you learn?*
- *Tell me about the last time you were asked to do something that violated your personal code of ethics.*
- *Have you ever had to fire someone? Why?*
- *How do you stay on top of developments/trends in your field?*
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CHARACTER

- *Describe your former boss.*
- *Take me back to a moment wherein you had to say what's on your mind to let your colleagues know what you felt or thought.*
- *We all have people we don't hate but we dislike. Why did you dislike a former coworker and how did you deal with him/her?*
- *Was there a time when you had to agree to a decision even if it was against your will? Why did you agree?*
- *Let's say we hired you, and you got fired after a couple of months. What do you think would be the reason?*
- *If you were starting a company tomorrow, what would be its top three values?*
- *If I assign work that isn't part of your job description, what will you do?*
- *Give me an unexpected situation you encountered in the past. How did you face it?*
- *Tell me a story about how you solved a conflict or disagreement between you and a former colleague.*
- *If I call your references now, what would they say about you?*
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RELATIONSHIP

- *Tell me about a team project that you worked on.*
- *Describe a project that required input from people at different levels in the organization.*
- *Share a rewarding team experience.*
- *Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult team member.*

- *What's something that you can teach me?*
- *Give me an example of a team project that failed.*
- *Tell me about a time you stepped up into a leadership role.*
- *What bothers you most about other people?*

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EMOTIONAL

- *If business priorities change, describe how you would help your team understand and carry out the shifted goals?*
- *Give an example of a time you had to respond to an unhappy manager/customer/colleague.*
- *Tell me about a time that you disagreed with a rule or approach.*
- *Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?*
- *Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?*
- *Tell me about the first job you've ever had. What did you do to learn the ropes?*
- *Give me an example of a time when you had to think on your feet in order to delicately extricate yourself from a difficult or awkward situation.*
- *Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with this situation?*

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MOTIVATIONAL

- *Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment.*
- *Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.*
- *Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. How did you handle that?*
- *Give me an example of a time you were able to be creative with your work. What was exciting or difficult about it?*
- *Tell me about a time you were dissatisfied in your work. What could have been done to make it better?*

- *What kind of rewards are most satisfying to you?*
- *What discourages you from wanting to do a good job?*
- *Tell me about a time when you were bored on-the-job. What did you do to make your job more interesting?*
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Facilitator: Let's move to Margaret's second major topic, which is the "when" to engage in these types of questions. For many candidates, this will come across as a "pattern interrupt" from what they are used to hearing from recruiters. Disrupting the expected course of conversation can be an effective method to digging beyond the surface answers that a candidate has mentally prepared. Off-the-wall questions purely for the sake of jarring a candidate are unnecessary and may leave the individual feeling turned off from the opportunity, but questions designed to achieve a certain objective can certainly be incorporated.

As an example, if the objective is to understand how much of an active learner the candidate is, asking about the most recent book read can reveal a more accurate answer than simply the direct question of *"do you view yourself as an active learner?"* If a firm wants to assess how willing a candidate is to pitch in whenever asked, the question posed in the interview could be *"the newest hire in our organization is tasked with taking out the trash each night, until the next new hire starts. How do you feel about that?"* The bottom line is if you ask the same interview questions asked by every other firm, you will likely get the same surface answers candidates have become comfortable giving. A pattern interrupt is a way to change a person's state or strategy; consider incorporating into your search process for more in-depth answers.

Margaret gives some examples of times and ways to interrupt the normal screening pattern; what works for you?

- Think about what will motivate your ideal candidate, and adjust your initial recruiting pitch to speak to those motivations
- Have the candidate "dream" with you (ask about their ideal career)
- Ask what they would allow to impede the process or get in the way of career development and progression
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