

# AGREUS

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO  
CULTURAL FIT IN FAMILY OFFICES



Culture, noun. *“A collection of values, beliefs and behaviours that dictate how a group of people work together to reach a common objective.”*

Cultural Fit Hiring, verb. *“The process of screening potential candidates to determine if they fit in with the culture of the Family Office. This is based upon the alignment of values, beliefs and behaviours between the professional and the Principal.”*

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## INTRODUCTION

by Agreus Founders Tayyab Mohamed and Paul Westall

When hiring for your Family Office you need to think Family first and Office second.

Can this person take your husband to hospital appointments? Can they jump on a plane without notice to manage your international holdings? Can they watch your daughters recital if you are stuck at work or if you can't make it in, can they take your seat at the table?

In the world of Family Offices, anything is possible and the professionals hired to do the unthinkable have to be problem solvers, agile and absolutely committed to the cause.

Most importantly, they have to be the right Cultural Fit which is an often forgotten part of the hiring process that should really be the first step.

This is a workplace where it is more than just business, it is personal. You are recruiting into a team that is managing, growing and protecting family assets.

It is an environment where your hires may be required to go above, beyond and beside what their job title suggests and above all, they must be able to fit perfectly into your family as well as your team.

The problem however is not a lack of understanding of why we need the right Cultural Fit hires. It is often the case that Principals and Family Office Leaders do not understand their own culture or what it requires which is why the first step we take, is helping you to define it.

In this complete guide to Cultural Fit hiring in the Family Office, we will help you determine your own Family Office culture, who is best suited to that environment, their key competencies and where to find them. We explore the part Emotional Intelligence, Compensation and Personality plays in the conversation while outlining best practices in achieving and attaining a productive culture.

# 92%

of Family Office Professionals believe Cultural Fit is more important than qualifications in the hiring process

## DEFINING YOUR CULTURE

When trying to establish Cultural Fit, you must first think about your own culture. Defining your own organisational beliefs and the ideal qualities the ideal hire might possess.

It is important to look at the gaps missing in your current resources, not simply from an academic and skills perspective but also exploring the likes of Emotional Intelligence (EQ), personality and diversity of thought.

You need to identify what characteristics you could benefit from whether that is an analytical profile to scrutinise your commercial decisions or an empathetic mindset to tell you the impact they might have on other stakeholders.

You need to then think about your purpose, beliefs and behaviours.

From Investment Banks and compete-orientated cultures to smooth-sailing Family Foundations, purpose dictates culture. An investment driven Family Office which incentives aggressive risk-taking cannot host the same culture as a Family Office focused on philanthropy. Bringing your objectives into the culture defining process will help you, as will looking beyond

the jurisdictions of the role and focusing instead on how this hire might also fit in with the Family behind the Office.

Are there idiosyncrasies belonging to your family that may impact the person required to fill your next position?

With the line between Family and Office further blurred through the pandemic, it is even more important to ensure your next hire can fit perfectly into your family as well as your team.

In this section, we help you navigate your way to defining your culture with the help of the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument, theorised by Cameron and Quinn in 2006.

We have interpreted the quadrant to reflect the Family Office environment and help you reach a conclusion of which of the four top cultures your Family Office falls into. The Clan Culture, The Adhocracy Culture, The Hierarchy Culture and the Market Culture.

**There is no right nor wrong culture and simply reaching this conclusion will help you decide who best suits that environment. This is the next section in our guide.**

## WHICH CULTURE DO YOU HAVE TODAY?

## WHICH CULTURE DO YOU WANT TOMORROW?

### THE CLAN CULTURE

*"We're in this together"*

The Clan Culture is a Family Office that comes together harmoniously as a tribe. It is a friendly workplace with a community feel and its professionals are happy to share a lot of themselves. The Clan Culture feels like an extended family with its Principal and Leaders taking on parental figures offering regular mentorship, learning and development. The organisation is held together by loyalty and tradition, commitment is high and an emphasis exists on Human Resources – compassionate about people and their sensitivities. This is a culture which thrives from teamwork, participation and happiness.

### THE ADHOCRACY CULTURE

*"High Risk, high reward"*

The Adhocracy Culture is a dynamic, fast-paced and high risk environment which requires entrepreneurial and creative minds to help the Family Office be cutting edge, innovative and daringly different. This culture requires people to stick their necks out, take huge risks and experiment. Experimentation and innovation are the backbone of this culture. There is an emphasis on being leading edge, acquiring new resources and being uniquely successful. Being a product or service leader is vital and invites creativity in order to achieve it.

### THE HIERARCHY CULTURE

*"Get it done, right"*

This is a very corporate like model where a clear chain of command exists, featuring multiple layers of management. There is a clear distinction between employees and leadership and a clear set of rules and procedures governing every action. The Principals and Leaders of this organisation pride themselves on being co-ordinated, organised and efficient. It is a smooth-running operation, stable, high-performing and efficient. Success is defined in terms of delivery and low cost.

### THE MARKET CULTURE

*"We're in it to win it"*

This is a results driven organisation with a focus on getting the job done. People are competitive and goal orientated. The Principals and Leaders of this organisation can also be competitive but they can be demanding, tough and expect a lot from their employees. They care about winning, their reputation and becoming market leaders in their chosen fields. Success in this culture is defined by market share and status.

# THE CLAN CULTURE

## THE PROS

- Highly collaborative environment where every employee is valued and listened to
- A horizontal structure exists, allowing access to leadership and continued learning
- There is less bureaucracy in this culture
- There is an open-mindedness to new ideas
- These cultures are action-orientated and embrace change
- There is high employee satisfaction and consequentially, low turnover

# THE CLAN CULTURE

## THE CONS

- It is difficult to maintain growth
- There is often ‘too much talking’ that does not always lead to valuable conversations
- Can often lack direction with multiple loose objectives
- Can also sometimes lack leadership due to the horizontal structure
- Boundaries are often missing causing difficult conversations later down the line
- When promoting individuality, expression and personality, personality clashes can occur

## HOW TO CREATE A CLAN CULTURE

The first step is to communicate with your employees and ask them to communicate back. Take a note of the things they value and dislike and then act on those items. In the meantime, try to introduce a horizontal structure which can be as simple as making your office more open-plan and removing physical barriers to leadership. Make a continuous effort to ask for feedback, key for an emphatic and communicative culture but when collaborating, ensure to diarise meetings and set agendas to avoid wasting time on non-valuable conversations.

# THE ADHOCRACY CULTURE

## THE PROS

- The ability to be fully creative and autonomous in order to achieve greatness
- High profit margins and notoriety in any given area
- Goal orientated, structured but open-minded

# THE ADHOCRACY CULTURE

## THE CONS

- “Risk is risk” meaning there is always a chance of failure
- The highly competitive culture can often create rivalry between employees, aiming for the same goals

## HOW TO CREATE A ADHOCRACY CULTURE

The first thing to do is to map out your commercial objectives and targets. These can act as your key performance indicators and goals for your workforce to reach. Brainstorm with your team to propel new ideas and then implement a structured strategy to get there. Set clear guidelines on targets and decide about what level of risk you are happy for your professionals to take, then communicate it.

# THE PRO’S, CON’S AND HOW TO’S

# THE HIERARCHY CULTURE

## THE PROS

- Clear direction, always
- As a result, for professionals there is always a clear career trajectory and clear steps defined in order to reach each and every promotion

# THE HIERARCHY CULTURE

## THE CONS

- Little room for creativity
- Heavily bureaucratic and slow to adapt to change
- Professionalism is valued over personality, company takes priority over the individual always

## HOW TO CREATE A HIERARCHY CULTURE

A Hierarchy Culture can only work if there is a clear chain of command, as a result, the first step you must take in achieving this culture is to fill any gaps that exist within your management. The second thing to do is to use your new management to create and embed clear company objectives and ensure every person is working to a short and long-term goal.

# THE MARKET CULTURE

## THE PROS

- This culture is stable and structured with everything evaluated with the bottom line in mind
- Profitability is prioritised and so there is equally room for high profit margins and success

# THE MARKET CULTURE

## THE CONS

- External success is prioritised over internal satisfaction which can have a negative impact on its culture
- Professionalism is also prioritised over personality with little room for creativity or new ideas. Equally with everything tied to the bottom line, there is no budget for change.

## HOW TO CREATE A MARKET CULTURE

In a Market Culture, bottom line is everything so you must first start by evaluating your budget and the return on investment you hope to see from each department. This involves the roles themselves and the targets attributed to each. It is important in a Family Office with a Market Culture to think about your long-term reward structure and look to the likes of Long-Term Incentive Plans to incentivise and reward top performers.

## FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Now that you have an understanding of your Organisational Culture today and the one you aspire to achieve tomorrow; you can start to think about what the perfect Cultural Fit might look like. Here we have devised a list of the key Cultural Fit requirements for each of the four types of culture:

### THE CLAN CULTURE

- Embraces change
- Friendly, welcoming and approachable
- High empathy and compassion and high levels of Emotional Intelligence to interact with an incredibly personal environment
- Generous with their time and energy and be aligned with the company for the long-term
- Demonstrate loyalty to a previous company
- Committed to continuous learning and development and not be a person who believes they are a finished product
- Must not require too much guidance or direction

### THE HIERARCHY CULTURE

- Dedication to the company and their long-term development
- Patient, no quick route to leadership
- Respect for authority
- Someone who wants a clear career trajectory and will put in the work at each step
- Enjoy structure and governance
- Someone who can also deal with bureaucracy
- From an Accounting and Finance perspective, this is where a big four candidate may thrive

### THE ADHOCRACY CULTURE

- Creativity
- Not afraid of failure
- Dynamic, interchangeable, adaptable
- Innovative/ Cutting edge
- Ahead of trends
- Innovators and Early Adopters/ not laggards
- Money motivated and goal orientated
- Sales driven
- Lead by impulse and gut feeling rather than analytics
- Entrepreneurial / go-getter
- Huge risk appetite
- 'ask for forgiveness not permission' type

### THE MARKET CULTURE

- Analytical mindset, able to keep budget/ numbers in mind
- Leadership qualities should be found within professionals of every rank
- Trustworthy
- Highly competitive and driven
- Loyalty, able to see company as own
- Goals orientated
- Research orientated, able to keep an eye on market trends
- High EQ to deal with demanding line managers/ principals



# PERSONALITY TESTING

## THE DO’S, DONT’S AND COLOURS

The hiring process often includes psychometric testing, competency quizzes and open ended questions but something that is often forgotten, is personality.

It is important to firstly distinguish between the endless personality quizzes that can be found online and the simple art of understanding which personalities compliment different scenarios. Not all personality tests are accurate. They can also be quite overwhelming for a professional who is passionate about working for you and concerned about selecting the wrong answer to a hypothetical question. They are at times misrepresentative and often cheat Family Offices out of finding exceptional talent.

We saw this very situation unfold some years ago when working with a Family Office in California. They were seeking a replacement for their Chief Financial Officer, on course to retire after earning the title of an unofficial family member. He was the perfect Cultural Fit and as a result, the brief was to find a similar profile in terms of achievements, experience and personality. The Principal was convinced the next hire needed to pass a personality test having recently discovered the phenomenon but upon testing the current CFO to create a benchmark, discovered he would be an awful Cultural Fit on every single level.

These tests do not focus on personality from a hiring capacity. They should not mine data regarding mental health, gender, race, age, ability or class. They should in no way be discriminative or prejudiced and should exclusively concentrate on personality during a journey of personal self-discovery.

Aligning personalities during the hiring process does not require online testing but rather an understanding of the characteristics, behaviours and cognitions of your employees, present and prospective and utilising them to ensure you have a great culture.

Each and every person has a different personality, from those that are loud, powerful and decisive to others who are perhaps more peaceful, agreeable and diplomatic. Each of us possess a different personality and something used to measure them is “the people test.” The Hartman Personality Profile as it is officially

titled, uses four colours. Red, Green, Yellow and Blue. Each colour represents a personality type with Reds typically striving for leadership positions, stubborn but driven and opinionated but passionate.

Blues on the other hand are analytical. They are deep thinkers who require not just empirical evidence before forming a conclusion but over-analyse much around them. They respect intelligence, require process time and appreciate sarcasm. They are often introverted and frequently inventors.

Yellows are the life and soul of any party and every office. They are sociable, lively, outgoing and trusting. They can however be frantic, flamboyant and hasty. Then there are Greens.

This group is where the majority of Support and Operational Professionals sit. They are emotional, loyal, compassionate and respectful. They enjoy frequent praise and dislike confrontation or public displays of criticism. They are imaginative, creative and thrive off positive relationships, a kind culture and helping others.

The Family Office is often led by the Patriarch or Matriarch who mostly sit within one or two colour camps. Red or Blue. They are driven, powerful and can be decisive, confident and opinionated. At times, they can also be quite stubborn, narrow-minded and egotistical. We all have our flaws and so do our colours.

Blues as we mentioned are analytical and numbers driven, they require statistics and empirical evidence but equally, their cautiousness, line of questioning and slowness to commit can fall as a flaw in today’s aggressive and fast-paced world.

With Family Office Heads as Reds and many staff members as Green, there are clashes that can quite easily occur without understanding what each colour requires. We take personalities into account when finding the perfect Cultural Fit for your organisation but once inside, it is a practice worth keeping to retain your top talent.

**Here are some handy ways of interacting with each of the colours in your workforce and something to bear in mind when recruiting.**

### GREEN *“let’s do it harmoniously”*

- Given that Greens are quite sensitive and avoid confrontation whenever possible, it is important to offer public praise and private criticism. It is also important that when providing constructive criticism that you offer specific examples and case studies.
- Greens need to be listened to and feel valued. Make an effort with your Green team members to listen to their suggestions and make sure you let them know they are valued, frequently.
- Greens do not like to be put on the spot so give them time to prepare for a meeting, offer an agenda and summary with frequent recaps and confirmation.

### YELLOW *“let’s do it together”*

- Your mood is infectious to Yellows so smile, crack a joke and show enthusiasm and passion at every opportunity.
- Yellows need positive reassurance so often assume their statements are questions, requiring a nod or seal of approval.
- Be dynamic. Yellows are perhaps the least structured and disciplined employee but that does not mean they are not hard-working or excellent workers. Do not mistake their energy and optimism for being non-serious or uninvolved.
- Find a way to use Yellow’s strengths. Why not put them in charge of planning your next social event?

### RED *“let’s do it now”*

- Reds are creative, inquisitive and full of ideas. Be open minded and tell them when to slow down; they won’t unless you tell them to.
- They are action-orientated and enjoy brainstorming followed by clear next steps. Ensure these are always agreed and take time to be their sound board.
- Reds can get bored easily and become impatient with slowness. Keep up to their pace and do not take their ‘to the point’ tone as disrespectful.
- Reds, due to their passion, can take criticism personally. Ensure when offering criticism that it is constructive and necessary.

### BLUE *“let’s do it right”*

- While most Patriarchs are Red, many Leaders are Blue. They are analytical and so when making an argument or pitching an idea, you must make sure it is no-nonsense and logical. Blues also enjoy ample time to respond to any new idea.
- Blues like to ‘take charge’ so do not be afraid to stand your ground and be prepared to do so.
- They can also be quite stubborn and as a result do not enjoy micromanaging. Try to offer flexibility and freedom with your Blues and make an effort to see the bigger picture, something they require.
- Blues can sometimes appear to be anti-social and impatient so take these as signs that something is bothering them and make an effort to step out and ask them if they are enjoying their current workload or task.

## THE UGLY SIDE OF PERSONALITY TESTING

HBO recently televised a documentary, underpinning the dangerous side of Personality Testing with a particular focus on the Myers-Briggs 16 Personality Test.

The documentary homes in on the \$2BN industry and how it is being used to promote discrimination and hinder mental health in the hiring process. Its use as a screening tool has been put under the most scrutiny with critics claiming the test is a means for personal self-discovery and should not be exploited by corporations looking to mine data and discriminate against gender, ability or poor mental health.

The movement has even gained support from the Myers and Briggs Foundation itself supporting the sentiment and publicly stating its opposition to the tool being used for hiring purposes.

On the Myers and Briggs Foundation website, it is stated that *“Although there are many useful applications of the MBTI Assessment in the workplace, there are ethical concerns in using it for hiring purposes. Please carefully consider this as you develop your program for employees.”*

Echoing these thoughts is the Center for Applications of Psychological Type which states that “It is unethical

and in many cases illegal to require job applicants to take the indicator if the results will be used to screen out applicants. The administrator should not counsel a person to or from a particular career.”

This is why Agreus does not agree with personality testing in the hiring process. In our opinion, Family Offices should undoubtedly explore personality in their hiring process but we do not under any circumstance advise that personality testing should be used to screen or reject candidates.

This is one reason why we focus on the colours.

The Insights Discovery four colour model, provides an effective way of understanding your existing and future employees while ensuring you know how best to interact with them for an efficient and inclusive workplace culture. A workforce requires every colour. This model is not a way to screen or reject potential hires but rather a tool to enable you to learn how to embed them into your business.

**Understanding personality is about simply understanding the characteristics, behaviours and cognitions of employees and using the best range of your own characteristics, behaviours and cognitions to create an efficient and effective culture.**



## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND IT'S PART IN THE HIRING PROCESS

Something of equal importance to understanding personality, is Emotional Intelligence.

Otherwise known as Emotional Quotient or EQ, Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand, use and manage your own emotions in a positive way to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathise with others and defuse conflict.

Once a buzzword in the hiring process and often coupled with the topics of workplace culture and gender diversity, EQ is one of the most important parts of the hiring process when recruiting into a Family Office.

Professionals in any scenario are expected to carry themselves professionally but in Family Offices, there is an additional prerequisite of interacting with a family.

Prospective hires will often work alongside several key members of a family who despite holding equal authority, have opposing opinions and requests. We see this often with Matriarchs and Patriarchs who have equal vetoing power. Professionals must be empathetic and compassionate enough to listen to their requests before making an accurate assessment and forming advice based on both evidence and emotion.

They must be confident but obedient, use initiative and influence but adapt and be continually aware that they are an advisor and not a decision maker. Professionals may form a poor opinion of an idea at times based on data or a gut feeling but have to accept that they may not be a change catalyst and the wealth they are generating does not belong to them. They have to be trustworthy, able to communicate and often, manage conflict.

Sometimes however, EQ isn't about resolving family rifts but simply playing a part. We recently worked

with a Family Office where the Principal was also the primary care-giver to her partner. It meant the next hire into the Family Office needed to be the right-hand person to fill in for the Principal, not just in the Family Office but at home too. This meant chairing board meetings and driving her partner to hospital appointments as and when necessary. The line between Family and Family Office was non-existent at times and the next hire had to be empathetic, willing and sympathetic to the cause.

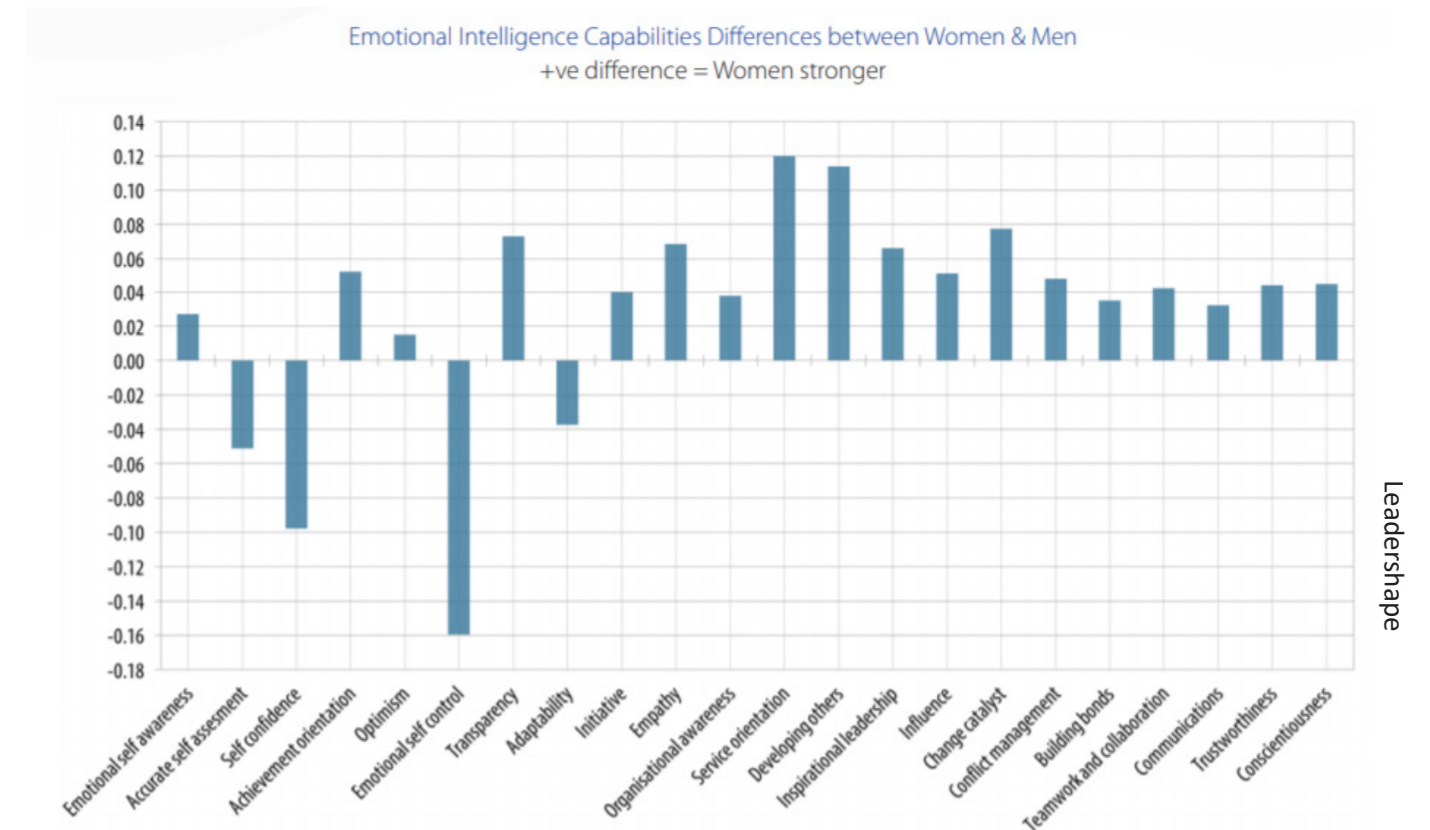
EQ is vital in your next Family Office hire but it is also vital for the success of your workplace culture. All of the characteristics we have listed make for an efficient culture but something we have not yet discussed is gender and the part EQ plays in the process.

Women are scientifically proven to possess higher quantities of EQ than their male counterparts and an organisation that has helped us to visualise this imbalance, is Leadershape.

The organisation studied the Emotional Intelligence capabilities of men and women across 19 areas. These as you can see, range anywhere from Emotional Self Awareness and Optimism to Empathy and Trustworthiness.

Women scored higher than men in 15 out of 19 categories with men ranking highly across Emotional Self-Control, Self-Confidence, Accurate Self-Assessment and Adaptability. The key qualities found in higher quantities within women were Service Orientation and Developing Others, Transparency, Empathy and Inspirational Leadership.

When embarking on a recruitment drive for your Family Office, it is important that you have all aspects of diversity covered. Of course, a difference in culture, gender, race and ability is welcomed and commercially efficient but in this regard, we refer to diversity of thought.



### Working with a balanced short-list of men and women guarantees diversity of thought.

It means with a balanced leadership team, you can have a team of professionals who are both confident and compassionate, empathetic and emotionally self-aware, conscientious and communicative. EQ is a vital component of an effective workplace culture, but you need all quadrants and all key themes covered which is something only possible with more than one gender present.

This is key not just for an inclusive culture but commercial success. In fact, according to McKinsey companies in the top quartile of gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns that were above their national industry median.

### QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Is there a component of EQ your workforce is currently missing that you think it could benefit from?

### Competency vs. Qualification.

In chapter six, we will focus on the qualifications that can be taught and the competencies which are natural and necessary characteristics of a perfect Cultural Fit. Emotional Intelligence is both a competency and a taught skill and it is important to think about the difference in both.

**Arguably, you cannot teach compassion or empathy nor can you make a person 'more trustworthy'. You can however teach a professional, competent in their role and culturally a perfect fit, how to better manage their emotions. You can offer advice on how to perform accurate self-assessments, build confidence and develop them into inspirational leaders themselves.**

When trying to establish Cultural Fit and considering EQ, make sure to consider the elements of emotional intelligence you need in your next hire and those that you can teach, build and develop.

# CULTURAL FIT VS. MIRROR IMAGE HIRING

*“Hiring for your Family Office can be likened to completing a puzzle. Each piece is different but requires one another to make one complete picture. You need like-minded people who align with your values, beliefs and culture but you do want diversity of thought because great success comes out of the ability to be challenged.”*

The process of screening potential candidates to determine if they fit in with the culture of the Family Office is based upon the alignment of values, beliefs and behaviours between the professional and the Principal.

In the world of Family Offices, Cultural Fit is also a hugely important consideration. More than half of all Family Offices have less than five employees and so one poor Cultural Fit can have a disastrous effect on the entire Family Office.

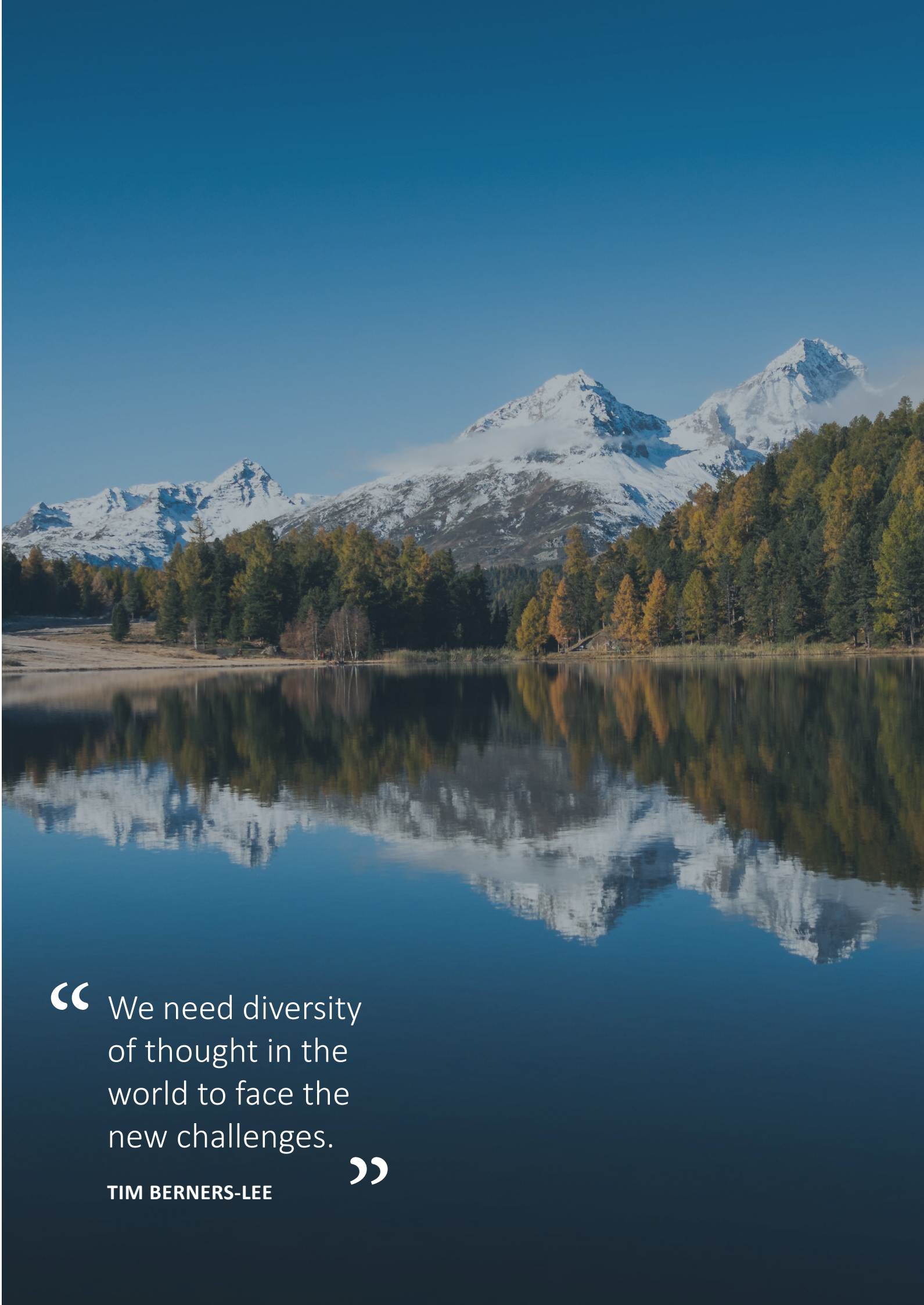
While it should play a pivotal role in the hiring process, assuming the candidate is qualified and competent, Cultural Fit Hiring does not and should not translate to Mirror-Image Hiring, the process by which a Principal or Hiring Manager recruits an individual based on their almost identical characteristics. This can include characteristics such as, thought-process, beliefs and at times, education or culture.

To make matters more confusing, there are many similarities between this definition and that of Cultural Fit but there is an important distinction.

When hiring a professional based on their ability to fit perfectly into the culture of your Family Office, you do so in an attempt to create a harmonious and efficient workplace culture. You can rest assured that the individual is aligned with your values, beliefs and behaviours and is working towards the same goals as the Family Office.

Mirror-Image Hiring however can often but not exclusively, relate to a physical likeness, with many recruiting a ‘mirror-image’ professional which not only hinders physical diversity efforts but jeopardises diversity of thought, key not just for an inclusive culture but as aforementioned, commercial success.

**Cultural Fit should be one of the most important considerations for the hiring process but make sure when finding the ‘Perfect Cultural Fit’ that you are not confusing it with a mirror-image recruit. Also ensure when screening candidates that you look for those who align with your values and also those who do not necessarily agree with all of your opinions. Diversity of thought cannot be achieved within a group of professionals who share the same thought-process or opinions.**



“ We need diversity  
of thought in the  
world to face the  
new challenges.

TIM BERNERS-LEE

## COMPETENCES VS QUALIFICATIONS

### WHAT CAN BE TAUGHT AND WHAT CAN'T

While a workforce made of perfectly aligned professionals allows for a robust and well-balanced team that is also dynamic and amenable, competencies are still key.

During the hiring process, Family Offices can run the risk of following one of two dangerous paths. The first is to search for Cultural Fit in their next hire and treat competencies as secondary. Then there are those who in the hunt for the most-competent professionals, forget to consider culture as part of the hiring process.

The two are not mutually-exclusive. You can use a meritocratic approach to find the most-skilled, qualified and competent person for the job who is also able to fit perfectly into the culture of your Family Office. Equally you could find a perfect Cultural Fit hire who lacks in qualifications but has a desire to learn.

We once worked with a Family Office in the Film Industry where the Principal chartered a yacht every summer. Each yacht came with a crew, charged with the upkeep and one summer, one crew member in particular caught his attention. He was young, a cleaner and used his summer holidays to earn money while having new experiences. He was also an aspirational Film Director, something this Principal knew a thing or two about. He decided to give this crew member some scripts to look over and true to his word, he did. He spent all night annotating the documents, finding flaws that had otherwise gone undiscovered and impressed the Principal. He showed passion, charisma and an ability to solve problems and by the end of the charter, he had secured a role within the Family Office. Today he heads up the Family Office.

You do not have to sacrifice skill-set to make a Cultural Fit hire and equally, you do not have to hire the same type of person over and over again to ensure you find the right profile. They are not mutually-exclusive so long as you stay open-minded and challenge your own concept of the ideal hire.

**Our Accounting and Finance Recruitment Advisor Tom Stuart offers his thoughts on competencies vs. qualifications in the realm of Financial Services.**

When we embark on a search for a Family Office, regardless of whether the role requires a Financial Accountant, Senior Investment Analyst or Chief of Staff, the skill-set and qualifications required are a given. The largest part of our search comes with finding qualified professionals who meet the criteria while also fitting the culture.

Some placements are straightforward while others require compromise and while we speak to clients about the elements they can afford to miss out on, it should never be Cultural Fit.

We use the example of a Financial Accountant quite regularly when illustrating this 'compromise'.

A Family Office may require a Financial Accountant and seek an ACA or ACCA qualified professional who is Big Four trained with experience in Private Wealth – attaining not just an incredibly high knowledge of Financial Accounting but an understanding of the size, model and growth of a Family Office.

We work with ACA, ACCA, CIMA and FCA qualified

candidates every day and only represent exceptional members of each qualification. However, while their CV's might be flawless, they may not always suit the culture of the Family Office.

The Family Office requires a professional to be dynamic and interchangeable, comfortable in a quiet team of three and understanding that while their compensation may increase with time, as will their exposure to great opportunities and autonomy, their job title may never change and nor will the size of their team.

Of course, we have placed impeccable ACA and ACCA qualified accountants into the most intimate of environments and they have thrived and remain today but qualifications and Cultural Fit requirements do not always come hand in hand and to offer an example, we introduce a Partner at one of the Big Four.

Aged 30, she has a team of 30 under her management. She is extremely driven, competitive and thrives from the diversity of the role: the different accounts, faces and unpredictable needs belonging to each.

She enjoys overseeing a sizeable team and training her reports while concentrating on her own progression which takes a linear approach of new titles, bigger offices and higher compensation.

In Practice, Professionals have a very clear career trajectory. They spend several years attaining their qualification and have benchmarks and thresholds at every step of the way. Competition is the culture.

This profile while impeccable and suiting to a broader Financial Services company is not necessarily the right Cultural Fit for an organisation that requires a person who thrives less from leadership and more from autonomy, purpose and playing a part in a small and intimate team.

Sometimes the two cultures can align exceptionally but it can often cause a culture shock for the individual, causing them to return to the slower-paced and predictable corporate world while forcing Family Offices to return to the recruitment drawing board unexpectedly.

**You must of course list the qualifications and experience you hope to find in your next hire but above all, ensure Cultural Fit is equally considered.**

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## QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

Think about your next potential hire, their competencies, qualifications and Cultural Fit capacity.

Can all three be achieved simultaneously?

If the answer is no, which are you most willing to compromise?

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE AND THE ROLE

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In this section of the guide, we offer a logical paradox in the exception to the rule.

The Family Office environment requires different needs from different people. Each of those people have different personalities, cognitions, characteristics and behaviours. Above all, they have different job descriptions and each description may well require a different personality.

As we suggested earlier, many Support and Operational Staff have Green personalities while many Principals have Red or Blue Personalities, all of which have exceptional traits, required for their roles.

Equally, we require difference and not just in our thoughts but our behaviours too. We need those who are comfortable with leading and those that are happy to be led; we need some who are brave enough to speak out and others who prefer to listen. Each of these qualities form a part of a person's Cultural Fit capacity and while every employee needs to fit in with your culture, their characteristics may vary and at times, completely differ.

We use a Family Office with a Clan Culture as a prime example. They have a small and dynamic team and require their employees, present and prospective, to understand the importance of collaboration. They are required to help each other for the collective success of the Family Office and so being a Team Player is a non-negotiable requirement in all hires. However, as we explored earlier, Clan Cultures can be hard to maintain with growth and often expansion leads to the creation of subcultures.

Take the position of an in-house lawyer for instance. This person while friendly, approachable, dynamic and possessing almost all key 'Clan Culture' requirements, must be a Solo Player. He shares the collective objective of success, working to protect his colleagues and leaders but he cannot be a Team Player. He can not work with his team members or help his team members from an everyday capacity and instead must act alone.

In every Family Office there are subcultures and when it comes to hiring, while professionals must fit in with the culture of your Family Office, there isn't a 'one culture fits all' box to tick.

Take your operating business as an example. Does it boast the same culture of your Family Office and does it require the same people?

Or, if applicable, take a look at your Investment Team. Would you say they share similar personalities with your Support or Operational staff?

**We need difference and while we highly recommend that you follow the definition of your organisational culture to attract the best talent, stay open-minded and be willing to compromise if and when necessary.**



## TANGIBLE NEXT STEPS

By this stage of our guide, you should have an understanding of your own culture, your key requirements and the ideal personalities that fit into both. You may also appreciate how the likes of personality testing and colours can help you to interact with each prospective and present hire and see the positive impact that diversity of thought can bring.

Most importantly, we hope to have emphasised that you do not have to sacrifice skill-set to find the perfect Cultural Fit hire and equally, you can find this in the most qualified and competent individual. While hiring requires compromise, you do not have to forego competency.

**These are the next steps you can take to make the perfect Cultural Fit hire:**

1

### Write out your values and make them present.

In order to find your perfect Cultural Fit, you need to find your culture and the best next step is to define your values and make them present throughout your Family Office, embedding them into the every day.

Print them out, add them to meeting agendas and model them. Values will only work with a top-down sponsorship approach and it is vital you share your own experiences with these values, emphasising their importance to you and your Family Office. For instance, if a value is charity, discuss your philanthropic work with the team and emphasise why it reflects your Family Office Culture.

Also make sure they align with your commercial objectives. Embed them into your overall strategy and above all, ensure they are sustainable and long-term characteristics of your culture. They cannot just be buzzwords to attract potential hires.

2

### Map out your vision.

Is your end goal to be a Market Leader? Are you looking to break-boundaries? Build a Community? Create an heirloom?

You need to map out your end goal and the short and long-term achievements necessary to reach that milestone. You can then use this vision to sell your Family Office to prospective hires and invite them to be part of this extraordinary journey.

Working towards a shared objective aligns interests and it works even better with long-term reward structures such as Long-Term Incentive Plans.

3

### Map out the requirements.

So you have a vision, what do you need to make it a reality?

If your Family Office has an Adhocracy Culture, destined to be cutting-edge and determined to be market leaders, maybe you require innovation. This may require leading technicians, engineers and early adopters who will not only help you externally achieve success but help you embed a constantly evolving, fast-paced and pioneering culture within your Family Office.

Think about your Family and not just your Family Office. We speak often about the idiosyncrasies belonging to Family Offices that require patience and understanding but what about your family needs. Do you require a hands-on professional that can also help out with childcare or medical appointments? Does your spouse have an external operating business that could benefit from shared expertise? Do you spend a large amount of your time overseas and require a person to travel with you?

It is undoubtedly important to think about the academic and technical requirements missing in your current resources but really think about your vision and your family, work backwards and identify who you want and who you really need.

4

### Perception vs. Reality.

Does your perception match your reality?

While hiring an exceptional professional based on their ability to fit perfectly into your ideal hire might be a great start, if your current culture does not correlate with your ideal culture, your 'perfect Cultural Fit' hire might not either. Part of this process is performing a 'reality check', exploring your current culture and ensuring it is one you are both proud of and able to attract the right talent into.

When identifying your culture, be honest and really contemplate whether it is the culture you have or the culture you want. Hiring tomorrow's talent for today's culture could be a mistake.

5

### Interview the personal and the professional side of the candidate.

Once you have defined your culture and its values, your ultimate vision and the requirements and steps you need to take in order to get there, you can start hiring and while in this guide we have provided the key considerations for the hiring process – including EQ, Diversity and Meritocracy, think about first impressions. Afterall, they count.

Remember to think about both the professional and personal attributes of the candidate. Bring the prospective hire into the office for a formal interview and then why not ask them to join you and the team for a friendly drink or dinner? While this might not be all that necessary in the corporate world, in Family Offices it is vital you test how this hire might interact with you and the team during the everyday – office meetings, family and social events included.

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

While in the world of recruitment, candidates are often primed and prepped ready to make the perfect first impression, rarely do clients receive the same treatment.

At Agreus, we believe the questions asked are even more important than those answered and to best prepare you for the interview, we have formulated a list of questions for you to ask your next prospective hire.

Focusing on culture fit and competencies, core values and challenges, we believe an interview is about determining whether the professional we present to you will fit into both the culture and dynamic of the Family Office.

**The following questions will not only help you find the right person but they will also help you eliminate the wrong hire – a vital part of the interview process that is often overlooked.**

- What type of culture do you thrive in? (Does this response reflect your newly defined culture)
- What values are you drawn to?
- In your friendship group, which friend are you?
- What is your ideal workplace?
- What best practice would you bring with you that ensures a great culture?
- Tell me a time you worked for a Family Office where you were not a good Cultural Fit?
- Are you more comfortable with a hierarchical organisation or a flat structure?
- Do you work better independently or in a team?
- Do you have any experience working in a similar sized team? If so, how easy was it for you to work in that close knit environment?
- Would you call yourself a natural leader?
- Are you a problem solver? Can you give me an example of where you solved a problem in the workplace?
- Do you prefer autonomy or guidance?

# CONCLUSION

We have been helping Family Offices find their perfect Cultural Fit hires for over a decade and during that time, have been able to develop an understanding of what works well and what doesn't.

We have also been able to develop a matrix, capitalising on these learnings and use it every day to ensure we find the perfect Cultural Fit hires.

While many would leave their secret ingredient, secret, we believe every Family Office deserves to find the perfect Cultural Fit which is why we have detailed this matrix across 10 chapters.

The steps listed in this guide are steps we follow every day. We always start by defining a Family Office's organisational culture and subcultures, finding the right people who will fit in with those cultures by considering personality, EQ and diversity. We do this while paying close attention to the likes of diversity of thought as well as taking into account the trends evolving in similar sized Family Offices across the world.

We use the qualitative information our clients tell us alongside some 10 years of primary data to determine where compromises have to be made and the peculiarities of the Family that need to also be considered as part of the hiring process.

We do this to ensure the hire we make today will remain tomorrow and in fact, we recently discovered that more than 95% of candidates we have placed in the last five years remain employed by their Family Office today.

**For a personal conversation about how we can help you hire the perfect Cultural Fit, please do not hesitate to get in touch.**

“Hiring for your Family Office can be likened to completing a puzzle. Each piece is different but requires one another to make one complete picture. You need like-minded people who align with your values, beliefs and culture but you do want diversity of thought because great success comes out of the ability to be challenged.”

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