

URL: <https://ecorner-stag.tcg.stanford.edu/quick-dips/look-for-red-flags-explicit/>

Organizational psychologist Bob Sutton shares a tip to help you decide if you'll like working with someone or not: collaborate on a project with them before fully committing, and look for warning signs of bad behavior. Sutton, a professor of management science and engineering at Stanford, has written a new book on how to avoid, outwit or otherwise deal with jerks in the workplace.



Transcript

let me talk about red flags.. So even better than quitting a bad situation is, before you take a job or start working with a client, is to try to figure out if you're getting into an asshole rich situation.. Now, you can do something like Glassdoor.. Not very useful.. It might tell you overall about the company, probably not about your boss unless you're gonna be working for the CEO.. One thing that's really useful sometimes gets dissed, but we have more and more evidence, gossip If you can find, is that me or you? Oh.. - [Man In Audience] It was me.. Sorry.. - So if you can find people who've worked in the same situation, that's very useful.. One of the best things is to actually do a little project with them before..

And so the little story here.. So this was eight years ago.. I think I have this right.. My colleague, Huggy Rao and I, Huggy and I still work together, we did a book on scaling up excellence, it was around that time, and we were considering having a long term consulting relationship with a client, let's just say a famous US firm.. And we flew to Boston and spent the day in the conference room with them.. This was about eight people.. And we had a classic alpha male, all transmission, no reception kinda dude.. He just talked, he talked, he talked.. We were just dying.. Anyway, it went on and on and on..

So finally, it's two o'clock in the afternoon, and unfortunately, I was sitting next to him.. And he looks at me.. As it says here, he was quiet for 15 minutes, and he said, "It looks like I'm listening.. "I'm just reloading." So he was just.. And then we get on the plane, and Huggy says to me, "That guy was a classic hippo." So what did he mean by hippo? And he stole this, by the way, from Frank Flynn, who teaches at the Stanford Business School.. One is, highest paid person in the room, maybe you've heard this.. And the other thing about hippos, and I love this picture of this hippo, is they've got these tiny little ears and giant mouths.. (audience laughs) So this guy was a real hippo, and so we elected not to engage in a long term consulting relationship with them...