

Getting past perfect

THE APPRENTICE' CASTING DIRECTOR LOOKING FOR PERSONALITY BEHIND THE RÉSUMÉ

By ANDREW GUY JR.
Houston Chronicle

AUSTIN — Send in the clones.

Then fire them.

Please, somebody fire them.

Where's The Donald and that hand when you need him?

The more than 800 people who showed up in Austin Saturday for the chance to be on the next season of *The Apprentice* had several things in common: they were well-dressed, well-groomed, sharp, intelligent, educated and successful.

But the show's casting team was worried about running into the same issue they'd seen in other cities: people who are too well-polished, too well-groomed, too well-spoken.

Too ... perfect.

"Be yourself," casting director Paul Gordon said. "Please! That's what I tell people. We want humans, not robots."

Good advice. Clichés came flying out of people's mouths faster than the bats under the Congress Street bridge.

"It's really that road less traveled," said Keith Ferris, a 37-year-old business owner from Austin, when asked why he wanted to be on the show. "Do I have, truly at my core, what it takes to make it?"

Joshua Jenson, a 32-year-old certified public accountant from Oklahoma City, believes he "knows how to make it in the big leagues."

"It's my destiny to be the next apprentice," Jenson said.



Alex Jones / Special to the Chronicle

Joshua Jenson, standing, explains his feeling on relationships in the workplace to other group members during tryouts in Austin.

"I think it'll be a win-win for us all: for me, because I'll get on and win the whole thing, and for them, because they'll have my skills. I can't lose. I'm good, but I want to be great."

And he'll probably give 110 percent.

Eight days a week.

Twenty-five hours a day.

To win one for the team.

Contestants spoke of being consensus builders, of being able to "strategically align the team with the company's motives," of being true leaders in a storm and, naturally, of stepping up to the plate.

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