

# BIB

## or how Matt Hudson is out to get you

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When it comes to looking for a job, especially when faced with the grosser, cattle-auction aspects of job interviews, most of the students who'll graduate this spring would welcome someone paving their way to that "good job with more pay."

And it was inevitable that some entrepreneur would see the endless commercial possibilities of taking the worry out of being hired.

The entrepreneur in this case is Matthew Hudson, a wheeler-dealer lawyer not unfamiliar with making a buck out of the student market.

And his scheme to take advantage of those commercial possibilities is Career Assessment Ltd., a computerized job placement service with a difference.

The difference is the setup, of the company and of the customer (read product.)

Quite simply, Career Assessment Ltd. combines the collation abilities of computer technology with the results of behavioral studies to come up with a new way of matching job hunters with employers.

"It will compare," a press release from the company says, "what the students have to offer with the employee characteristics sought by various companies in hiring staff."

For the student taking advantage of the company's service all that's required is five dollars and an hour or so of his time.

He picks up a Biographical Inventory Blank and fills in the required information. The blank and its instructions, according to promotional literature, will be available in most college bookstores, or by sending a cheque or money order to the company's Toronto headquarters.

The information provided on the BIB is stored and sorted by computer facilities of the Multiple Access General Computer Corporation, located in Don Mills.

The interpreted result of the questionnaire is sent to students in the form of a "personal counselling report." Career Assessment says this report should tell the student which areas of work he is best suited for.

The principle behind the BIB works this way according to a CA producer: "The reasonable and basic assumption behind the work in the field of 'biodata' is that people will most often behave in the future as they have behaved in the past. It treats the person as an individual, based on his unique life history antecedents, but is related to the social milieu in which he exists."

The fee paid by students goes, not to Career Assessments Ltd. but to the Human Studies Foundation, "a non-profit, Canadian institution being set up to further research into human resources, their allocation and use."

If all the money for the BIBs goes to the Human Studies Foundation, where does the profit of Career Assessment come in?

From the employers.  
For getting a selection service performed by CA, employers pay a minimum of \$500 to get several suitable candidates to fill two job vacancies, plus five per cent of the first year's salary of the persons hired.

If an additional employee is needed he can be provided for \$300 plus five per cent.

By the end of the first year of operation, CA expects to have data on about 5,000 students to fit the requirements of companies during the first trial period.

The data is extensive, running to 550 multiple-choice items on the BIB relating to every aspect of an applicant's past life. That data, combined with the "empirical keys" developed by the foundation, using past research results, forms the backbone of Career Assessment's product.

Hudson, Career Assessment's president, is a long-time student of the art of student marketing, although not a very successful one.

While at Queen's University in law, he was involved in an organization called Mr. Campus. It sold national and local advertising for desk blotters to be distributed on campus and for some time raised charter overseas flights.

Contrary to quite a few federal laws, Mr. Campus sold flights to Europe and Jamaica even though they were declared uncharterworthy by the Canadian government. To get around this, they continued to solicit passengers, but routed them through other charter groups, also an illegal arrangement.

He was also involved in an abortive attempt to set up a national advertising scheme. According to Hudson, he was approached by a number of university newspapers to pilot the scheme, but pulled out when he encountered stiff opposition, notably from Canadian University Press and its president, Stewart Saxe.

Saxe said Hudson had too little know-how, a poor plan, and was starting too late for the scheme to be viable.

The set up and sales techniques in Career Assessment and associated companies is far more sophisticated, than in his previous ventures.

Career Assessment has nine members on its board of directors. Hudson is president, James Hinckling (listed as "one of Canada's foremost industrial psychologists") is vice-president and George Elliot (a Toronto lawyer) is secretary-treasurer.

Multiple Access General Computer Corporation's vice-presidents of finance and marketing respectively, Harold Andrews and C. J. Kurtz, are directors as are the two psychologists in charge of the Human Studies Foundation, Edwin R. Henry and William Owens.

The staff psychologists are both from the U.S. Henry is described as semi-retired, formerly chairman of the department of psychology of New York University, director of social science research for Standard Oil of New Jersey and director of selection of the U.S. Peace Corps.

Owens, presently at the University of Georgia, as a professor and director of "psychometric laboratory," is said, in promotional literature, to be president of the division of industrial psychology of the American Psychological Association.

None of the other "eminent psychologists" described by Hudson as working under Owens and Henry are named.

Hudson said the other two directors haven't yet been named, but said they would be representatives of two groups of shareholders. When asked if there were any large shareholders he refused to say but did say "I can tell you this, the company is 98 per cent Canadian-owned."

He said both the corporation (Career Assessment) and the Human Studies Foundation started at the same time (1969) but legally, the corporation began first.

"In terms of concept, they came together," he said.  
"The concept is really one of research — there's going to have to be an awful lot of research done if this placement idea is to get better. But a research foundation doesn't happen to pay its own way so we're going to have to get donations from corporations and the government."

Hudson refused to name any trustees of the foundation, saying that they were just at the stage of asking people if they would consider joining the organization.

But in promotional literature sent to bookstores, the sales pitch was made in the name of the foundation.

From the letter: "The trustees of the foundation have decided to make use of on-campus bookstores as distribution points for the Biographical Inventory Blank."

But the University of Western Ontario bookstore manager told the foundation not to bother sending the unwanted and unordered BIB's and denied use of the bookstore name in any Career Assessment advertising. The letter sent by the organization took cooperation by bookstore authorities as a foregone conclusion, to the point of giving instructions on how to remit money when the BIB's arrived.

The bookstore at Carleton University also refused to sell the BIBs. At York, bookstore manager Steve Zalewski is still selling the BIBs, but with this article and a sign asking potential buyers to read the article first posted above them.

The technique used to get people to sign up for the scheme and to handle the BIBs for sale is typically high pressured.

The student is told in an ad that he has less than one week to purchase, complete and mail the form if he or she doesn't want to miss out. Similarly, the bookstore is told time is of the essence for students to benefit.

Hudson said CA would be providing some funds for the foundation because the five dollar BIB fee wouldn't cover even the processing of the form. But initially, he said, the foundation hoped to get government grants to support the research.

The question of storage of statistical minutiae and the possible abuse that could be made of this information was "a very important ethical question," Hudson said.

The foundation will only use the information for research with permission, he said.

Permission, however, consists of signing a consent form contained in the initial BIB. If the consent form is signed, putting the data in a pool for channeling to prospective employers under the screening process, it also gives permission for use in the foundation's research. So far the areas of research have only been defined as "human resources and their application."

And applicant can withdraw his data, according to Hudson, at any time with a letter to the foundation.

Career Assessment Limited and the Human Studies Foundation leave a lot of questions unanswered.

Hudson and his firm are financially stable and Career Assessments is a registered corporation. The method of collecting the data and the setting up of the non-profit corporation is legal.

But no safeguards are made for the possible abuse of privileged information and Hudson is not a man to instill a lot of confidence in the prospective applicant. Caveat emptor still prevails.

One thing you have to say for Hudson though. For a psychologist, he's a good capitalist.