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A history of the future

History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.

Winston Churchill.

The person I want to recruit into my research team most is a historian. However, I probably wouldn't approach Niccolo Machiavelli for the job. Partly because he died almost 500 years ago, in 1527. But also because his personality-type is a bit hard to read. The job interview panel would most likely score him highly on selection criterion 1 ('demonstrated understanding of history and its implications for the future') but he might struggle, even if only by reputation, on selection criterion 2 ('ability to work well in teams').

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) was a Florence-based historian and philosopher known for his poetry, comedies, carnival songs and writings in the field of politics. He is particularly well known for his famous novel *The Prince*, from which the concept of Machiavellianism arose. Machiavellianism basically means doing dodgy, naughty and downright mean stuff to get whatever you want in politics and life. Despite having the ability to see, and describe, this side of human nature Niccolo Machiavelli is widely considered a great historian. For all I know he might also be a great team player. His insights into the past have helped us understand certain aspects of human behaviour. They also help us predict how some humans might behave in future situations.

In his other famous work, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, Machiavelli says:

Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past;
for human events ever resemble those of preceding times.