

What Do I Do to Hire a Good Person

09/03/07

What do I do to hire a good person? We're growing and I need to hire someone who can help me expand our sales efforts, and provide some other backup support around here. Thanks for your advice.

Results can be substantially better, if you do get the right person in the job. Hiring well is all about process. You'll also need some tools: job description, interview scripts, back-up interviewer. And, you need to exercise patience and persistence.

It's easy to fool yourself, by saying, "I'll know what I like when I see it." In actuality, it's easy to get swayed by candidates. You start changing around the job to suit the person, rather than sticking to your criteria of what your company needs for its next hire. Or, you can settle for someone who isn't exactly right for the job.

You can waste weeks, months, or years, working with someone who is under-producing. Process, tools and patience will increase the chances of getting the right person in the right job the very first time you try. And that's what will produce superior long term results for your company.

Let's get started with tools. Define your criteria, describe the job and create phone and face-to-face interview scripts. Discipline

yourself to put it down on paper where you can look at it.

A job description includes an outline of what the person will do and what he or she will be accountable for producing. If the job includes several areas of responsibility, i.e. sales, office support, client management, describe each area separately. List the top 5-10 tasks in each area, (then list the top 3 accountabilities, or deliverables, you would expect your candidate to produce).

For example, if the candidate is responsible for sales, tasks might include:

- finding and calling on leads (# / week , # / month)
- locating prospects with needs and timing that fit the company's target (# / month)
- filling the pipeline with short and long term prospects (# short / # long)
- introducing you, or others in the company to qualified prospects (# / month)
- making final presentations (# / month or quarter)
- closing a specific % of prospects (# / month or quarter, close ratio %)

Next, define basic attributes and qualifications candidates must have. Do they need a college

degree? Do they need to be assertive, aggressive or passive? Verbal or auditory? How much of their time will be spent listening and gathering information vs. making presentations on the products or services. In sales, are you looking for a hunter or a farmer?

Now you can prepare the interview scripts. Start with the phone screen. This is a 15-30 minute interview script that you or someone on your staff uses to screen out people with whom you don't need to meet. Phone screens can be real time and energy savers.

Upfront in the phone script, ask the candidate to describe his or her most recent job, the one before that and the one before that. Ask about current compensation and expectations. Ask for references – not necessarily phone numbers, but definitely the names, titles and relationships of people the candidate would plan to use.

As you go through a candidate's background on the phone, listen to hear if they've already done what you need, and have the attributes you need. Check that recent compensation and expectations are in your ballpark. Be sure that references are people they've reported to in recent history. If so, keep going. If not, thank them for their time and move on.



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Next, you need an in-person interview script, and a back up person to do a second interview. This script is a more in-depth version of the phone screen. A set of prepared interview questions helps to keep the light on the candidate, to prevent you from talking too much, and help you do what you should be doing, which is getting to know about your prospective new hire.

Either before, or after you interview, have another person on your staff do an interview – with another set of prepared questions. After the candidate leaves, compare notes. See if you both feel the same way about the candidate.

Bring back candidates you both like for a final interview. Have another set of questions to ask, and use part of the second interview to promote the job and the company to the candidate. Ask why the candidate thinks he or she will find that in your company. By now, the candidate should know enough to be able to answer that question specifically. Clarify what the candidate is looking for, in terms of personal goals, experience, and income, so you know you have the right fit.

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