

Hiring Well

09/8/08

We're going to be hiring September. In the past we've made mistakes, hired people who weren't what we expected, or who weren't a good fit for our company. I know bad hires cost time, money and potential. How do we make better choices this time?

Define needs, have enough good candidates to choose from, use a standard vetting process, check references, and have a process for on-boarding new candidates. Paying attention to past mistakes is one way to get the bugs out of future searches. Look at currently successful employees to help you define what's right for your company. The goal is to build a high performance team that can take your company to the next level. Let's get to work.

Your company has to be clear about requirements for the position to be filled. Misunderstanding what's needed can make a disaster of an otherwise well-thought-out hiring process. Take a little time to define what your company needs.

Ask your employees to help put on paper details about the upcoming hires. Answer the following questions. What are the position's basic requirements: education, experience, temperament, skills? What will the person in the new position have to accomplish within the first year on the job? How will this position impact profits, customer

relations and future growth of the company?

Start with a good search. Open the doors wide to potential candidates. Post ads in newspapers and through job sites on the internet. List the job on your website. Contact colleges for interns or to post ads for alums. Contact head hunters and negotiate a search arrangement. Post notices in your community. Tell everyone you're looking.

Go back through current employees' backgrounds. Where did they come from? How did they find your company? Try those routes again, if possible. Tell employees you're looking for more good people and ask them to help build the pool.

Give candidates multiple ways to contact your company: email, fax, phone. Specify requirements in the ad, and tell candidates to detail their experience as part of their response. Tell candidates you will check background and references as part of the interview process.

Lay out a standard process to vet candidates. Start with a list of minimum and optimum requirements – which probably came out of your initial meetings with employees where you discussed job requirements. Decide who will go through incoming resumes to check for basic requirements. Have a phone interview and at least 1-2

face-to-face interviews, plus reference checking, as part of the interview process.

Build a list of standard questions to ask every candidate. Verify information on the resume: jobs and dates, education, etc. Ask candidates to describe a typical day on the job. Ask about their ideal work environment. Ask them to cite examples of problems and successes, talk about co-workers and managers. Ask where they expect to be in 3+ years.

Stay out of the discussion and observe the candidate. Use, "tell me more", to get the candidate talking. Ask yourself, is what I'm hearing from this candidate a match with the attitudes, skills, experience and attributes of people who succeed in my company?

References may give you a whole new perspective on candidates. Questions you can ask include: What advice would you give to this person's next manager? Would you hire this candidate again? Did this person leave the company in good standing? Be sure to check at least 2 -3 references.

Be leery of candidates who cannot produce references from people they've worked for. Substituting peers for managers is not an absolute rule-out, but it may be an indicator of problems. You want to know that your candidate can command the



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respect of managers, and also has the good judgment to select good working environments.

Assess candidate profiles. Who best matches your company's needs? Whose income and advancement expectations are most in line with what your company offers? How do candidates get along with the company's current employees? Does this person's vision of where they want to be in 3+ years match where my company is going?

Try to line up 2-3 candidates, all of whom could be good choices for the company. Begin negotiations with each. Watch how the negotiation process unfolds. Select the candidate who makes the most reasonable demands, present and future. Be careful to not overpromise future benefits, bonuses and assignments – you will be expected to step up to those demands.

Finally, lay out an on-boarding process for new candidates. Make a good impression starting day one. Help new employees build confidence they've made the right choice. Help them get off on a good foot with their new jobs.

Looking for a good book? Try Hiring the Best: Manager's Guide to Effective Interviewing and Recruiting, Fifth Edition, by Martin Yate and Martin John Yate.

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