



Finding The Best People

Did you ever hire an employee who didn't work out? If you answered No, you are either a very skilled or very lucky manager. And you are part of a very small group.

Staffing successfully is time consuming, risky and expensive. An advertisement on Jobboom or Monster generates either too many or too few responses – too many responses results in a pile of CVs, many of which are junk, but you have to wade through them to know. Too few CVs leaves you wondering how you will find anyone suitable for your vacant job.

Once you start interviewing, each meeting takes 1 – 1.5 hours, plus time to prepare and time to review. If you do not interview often or have not been trained to do effective interviews, you may not have a reliable handle on whether the candidates will fit into your organization and make a solid and valuable contribution. If you have given a mandate to a search firm, you spend almost as much time, your chances of finding a suitable candidate goes up, but so does the cost. Typically, a search firm will charge 20% of the job's annual salary, which can be many thousand dollars.

Furthermore, this is important. Hiring, motivating and retaining good people is what Human Resources is all about – all HR functions, in one way or another, serve to provide staff who will help the organization succeed.

If the process is not a success, the shiny new candidate leaves prematurely or is a disaster and has to be fired – you are back to square one and you have wasted a lot of time and money.

Staffing can be less onerous, and success more likely, by following a simple formula.

Interview Effectively

Interviewing skills are learned – no one is a born interviewer. At least, read a book on interviewing. Better yet, get the help and advice of someone who has interviewing skills. The core skills are getting the candidate to speak about his experience and suitability for your position. This means you need to ask open-ended questions that invite the candidate to tell you who they are, and how their skills and experience will benefit your organization.

The other core skill is to listen. A classic mistake is to talk too much. Your job is listen and observe. There will be time to discuss the job, and better yet, to let the candidate ask perceptive questions about the job (this is a good sign).

It can be a very good idea to have a second person interview the candidate. Preferably ask someone with good interviewing skills and experience. Ideally an HR specialist can help, but at least use someone who can interview effectively and provide you with a significant opinion.

Reference Checking

This is crucial. Ask the candidate to provide at least three reference names. At least two should be former bosses, and none should be relatives or non-business contacts. Checking reference requires many of the same skills as interviewing. Plan open-ended questions, and let the reference talk. You are looking for evidence that the candidate will fit into your organization. What was the candidate's style of interacting with colleagues, clients, senior management? What specific achievements can the reference describe in detail? Was the candidate's performance above or below average compared to



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colleagues? Did personal issues ever interfere with business? Would the reference rehire the candidate (or why not)?

As in interviewing – your job is to listen.

Psychological Testing

There are a variety of online psychological profile services that are inexpensive and very effective. The best of these services provide an extensive report that provides a detailed profile of the candidate, highlighting strengths and weakness, as well as a description of how the candidate interacts with other, their approach to work, commitment, etc. These reports are surprisingly accurate. They provide a third source of information – a confirmation of the information learned from the interviews and reference checks.

Ideally, all three sources of information will tell the same story – and if they don't, you should find out why. If the picture of the candidate is inconsistent, or if the CV, interviews, reference checks and psychological profile do not match closely – head for cover, and look again.

Planning and a professional approach to hiring will save time and money for your organization – and stress and headaches for you.