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Hiring for Success

By Megan Tough

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Hiring someone new to work in your business is one of the most critical decisions a business owner makes, although it is not always given the justice it deserves. If a position is vacant, or additional staff is needed, recruitment decisions are often driven by the pressure to get someone in quickly, rather than waiting for the best person to fill the job. Lack of proper and systematic recruitment process can also result in a high cost to the business.

The direct and indirect costs of this recruitment process are many, and have been estimated to be at least 30% of the new person's salary on average:

- Recruitment costs - include advertising and agency fees (if used), travel
- Cost of time - for everyone involved in the interview process
- Cost of having the job unfilled if the process is lengthy
- Cost of lost productivity - "the show must go on!" Co-workers are picking up extra workload and completing unfinished projects. The reduced productivity of managers who lose key staff can be a big issue
- Cost of training - on average it takes 20 weeks for new employees to become fully productive. Consider also the costs of orientation, learning materials and lost productivity of the manager overseeing the new employee.
- Costs of person filling in - this may be a current employee, in which case their own job suffers, or a temporary person.

Further costs are incurred when the process is inefficient and time-consuming, and when the process does not result in the best person for the job being hired.

So the incentive to hire the right people and keep them for as long as possible should be a focus for all businesses.

So what approach to recruitment gives the best chance of long-term success?

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Job Definition

You need to have a clear understanding of what the job involves in terms of activities, responsibilities and priorities. Once the nature of the job has been clearly defined, we can begin to specify the attributes (education, skills, experience, competencies) of a person who is likely to do the job successfully. It is these, particularly the qualitative skills, that make the biggest difference to job fit.

Attracting and Assessing Applicants

There are numerous sources for finding applicants for a job. Some of these include traditional newspaper advertising, approaching people directly, use of agencies, job groups, unemployment agencies and so on. The one you use will vary depending on the job and industry. When it comes to assessing applicants, most people make the same mistake - we all believe we are good judges of character, and trust our gut when it comes to making hiring decisions. Sometimes this will work, often it

will not. A sound recruitment process works to take as much of the subjectivity out of the process as possible.

To achieve this you need to be organized in your approach to hiring. There are all sorts of assessments and "psychological" testing available now to make more objective hiring decisions. This is not practical for many business owners, so at the very minimum you should include the following steps in your process:

- Have a written definition of what the job involves
- Decide what skills are essential for the position - this can include technical skills and qualitative skills such as communication, negotiation etc.
- Develop a list of questions to get an understanding of each applicant's experience in each essential skill. There are numerous resources available on behavioural questioning techniques to help with question design
- If possible try to interview with 2 people present to ensure you are not being biased in a particular direction
- Ask every applicant exactly the same questions, and note down their answers so you can compare them afterwards.
- Make your selection based on each applicant's fit to the essential criteria - only use the responses they gave you during the interview, don't let your "instinct" take over.

One of the major benefits of using sound recruitment and selection practices is that they increase the likelihood of selecting successful employees. The hiring decision is an important one with many consequences. A good choice results in an effective employee who will help your business meet its goals and objectives. A poor decision will lead to reduced productivity and increased costs.

Megan Tough, director of Action Plus, works with small business professionals who are ready to do more than 'just get by'. Increase your income – decrease your stress! To learn more and to sign up for more FREE tips and articles like these, visit www.megantough.com

I Don't Need A Resume - I Can Tell Them What I Do When I Get There

By Ann Baehr

Gone are the good old days when you could walk in off the street and speak with the hiring manager for a competitive position. Although some companies still operate that way, a resume is usually required first.

Pretend for a moment that you are a hiring manager. The receptionist knocks on your office door and announces that Mr. Smith has arrived to interview for the currently advertised pharmaceutical sales representative position. Baffled, the hiring manager states that there must be a misunderstanding because she never scheduled Mr. Smith for an interview. She instructs the receptionist to tell Mr. Smith to forward his resume and cover letter to express his interest in the company and the position.

Some people might think the hiring manager should have interviewed Mr. Smith since he showed an effort to apply for the position. Others would have done exactly what the hiring manager did. Why? Because she didn't know anything about this candidate. She would have been unprepared to address his qualifications without having had the opportunity to review his resume beforehand. What's more, she really didn't understand what his situation was or if he even qualified for the job. For example, does he have a required bachelor's degree? Does he have sales experience? Is his background in bio chemistry, pharmaceuticals or in medical equipment sales? Is he a job-hopper? Was he out of work for many years? Is he changing careers? Did he recently relocate? These are all very important factors to consider when trying to paint a picture of a candidate to get a feel for who they are and how they would be a good fit for the company.

This is why it is so important that a resume is sent first so that the hiring manager can PRE-QUALIFY a jobseeker. This saves a lot of time and hurt feelings. After all, why would the hiring manager want to spend a half hour interviewing a candidate that does not qualify for the position? If every unqualified candidate showed up unannounced and was interviewed, there wouldn't be time to interview the qualified candidates! Believe it or not, there are still occasions when a resume is not needed. But, that is only when a company invites applicants to fill out a job application form or if there is a mutual acquaintance who puts in a good word for the candidate, and the hiring manager schedules and interview without needing to see a resume. Keep in mind, the hiring manager has been introduced already by the mutual acquaintance who has done the job that the combination of a resume and cover letter — the dynamic duo — is intended to do: to introduce them to the reader and to provide a professional background and expressed interest in a company and a particular position.

Ann Baehr is a CPRW and President of Best Resumes of New York. Notable credentials include her former role as Second Vice President of NRWA and contribution to 25+ resume and cover letter sample books. To learn more visit



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