



Personnel Hiring

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Question:

"I'm in the position to hire a new employee, but still tight on money so I want to make sure that I get exactly who I need. I know the interview process is critical to getting the right person. Do you have any advice? "

Yes, I understand your situation. Most people look at previous employment history and skill sets to decide on candidate selection. Although past history and skills can be decent indicators of future work, it is far wiser to look at this process through a different set of lenses. Each job actually calls for four major areas to be looked into before a candidate can be considered a good fit. To add value to your organization, be a good return on your investment and for them to be successful so that a long-term professional relationship develops, the four areas to consider are:

1. Company or department culture
2. Behaviors the candidate will need to possess to successfully complete job requirements
3. The actual skill set required to successfully complete the job
4. What does the organization or department *need* in terms of a team member to help them mature, evolve and be more successful?

Begin with the big picture and look at the culture of the department or organization a candidate will be coming into. The essential elements of culture are invisible, but learning about yours is paramount when making a decision to bring another person into this elusive mix. A brief and over simplified description of culture is: *It's how things are done in your company, the rights and rituals, company climate, reward system, basic values and the shared assumptions that a group has made in learning how to successfully deal with external tasks and cope with internal relationships.* Next in line are the behaviors required for this person to be successful.

Behaviors are attributes of a person's personality, which will increase their probability for success or failure within a certain culture and job. Behaviors cannot be taught; typically people are born with certain behavioral patterns and as one ages they tend to adjust but don't typically change due to training. For instance, you may want to hire a salesperson. The behaviors that top your list are:

1. Ability to communicate easily with others
2. Make people comfortable
3. Copes easily with rejection, doesn't take it personally and moves on to the next client

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4. Provides information and closes the deal without coming across as “pushy” or “arrogant”

Skills on the other hand, are learned competencies, which can be generally achieved regardless of one’s behavioral set. In other words, keyboard proficiency, understanding computer programs, the ability to learn and explain sales features and benefits are all skills that can be learned through systematic acquisition of information and practice. And last, what type of person does your department need to maximize its strengths?

The last question, and in many ways the most critical and overlooked is, what does the department need, from a human and systemic standpoint, to improve and excel as a unified team? For instance, do you have a department that is mainly full of young get-it-done types who could benefit from a slightly older more methodical type who could add stability to the unit? Or perhaps, there is a group of older people who tend to be set in their ways and need someone with enthusiasm who can jump start your department. Obviously these are extreme examples but you get the idea. What does your team need to grow and expand; someone from the inside, not a manager?

Years ago, I worked on a consulting project with a large multinational corporation. One of the areas that needed guidance was the IT department. The Information Technology department employed eighteen techs that were under the age of thirty-five and two that were fifty-eight to sixty two, but no one who could bridge the gap, including the 48-year-old director of IT. Candidate (1) was around the age of 38, had less technical skill but was worldly, mature, had owned a business and knew what responsibility and internal and external customer service meant. He turned out to be the best fit because he could speak to both the younger set and older techs. In addition, he had a calming effect over the whole department and brought an element of moderation that was lacking. Candidate (2) had a better skill set and looked better on paper, but was more of the same; he wouldn’t have added anything new to the department except another pair of hands. By hiring candidate (1) we received another pair of hands, but more importantly, we hired a person who helped this department expand and grow to the next level of efficiency. So to answer your question, you are looking for someone who can add value to the whole organization, not just fill a spot for the moment so everyone can get back to work ASAP.

As you can see, adding a new person to your organization can be a short sighted quick fix of finding a body to fill a slot or it can be part of a systematized approach to building your company that will separate you from the competition. To recap look at:

- locating the right person who fits in with your culture
- has the right mix of personality and behaviors that will help your team stretch and grow
- has the required skill sets to be successful in the position
- someone who can help you take your team from where they are to where they need to be by adding something special because of their behaviors, personality and/or unique approach to your business and industry.

Taking the extra time to make the best choice will save you from having increased rates of attrition, high training costs and personality difficulties, which may lead to costly litigation in the future. Good luck and be choosy.