

"...often the best ideas come from cutting across disciplinary boundaries and looking into other fields for new ideas. And...nothing will make a field stagnate more quickly than keeping out foreign ideas." Roger von Oech

## Change Leadership Thought Topics Taking the Mystery Out of Hiring By Kathy Freitas PHR

Have you ever interviewed someone, brought them on board and then been very disappointed after they started in the job? If so, you are not alone. In today's world of rapid change and mergers and acquisitions, opportunities for bad hiring decisions have increased tremendously. While there is no crystal ball for winning at the hiring game, the following suggestions can increase your success rate:

*Analyze needs* -Successful hiring practices start with an objective and thorough analysis of the needs of the company. Every organization is different, and every time you hire the requirements change. Take the time to analyze the positions that are open and make a list of the skills, abilities, and competencies necessary to fill these positions.

*Determine the right fit* - After baseline criteria for new hires are established, another critical part of the process is to decide what personal qualities would make a candidate a right fit for your organization. Skills and technical knowledge can be taught, but not fit. Fit has to do with whether or not a person is a good match for your organization. Fit also has to do with what the person can add to your company as a whole. An analogy here might be planning a picnic. While every candidate brings something to the picnic, having every candidate bring desserts doesn't always work. All organizations are complex, and knowing what will and won't work in your company is essential for successful hiring outcomes.

*Find out about past performance*- The premise here is that past performance is a usually a pretty good indicator of future performance. Plan to find out how candidates have dealt with tasks, other people, and situations in the past.

*Develop the questions that will get you the answers you want* - In addition to asking standard questions that will confirm education, experience and knowledge, the interviewer should be able to get specifics about interpersonal strengths or weaknesses, motivational factors, and personal qualities that fit the person for the job. Some questions that will help get at this information are:

1. What made you happy at work in the past? Why?
2. How have you dealt with a co-worker who is struggling? What have you done personally? If you have never done anything is there any particular reason why?
3. What has stressed you out at work in a past job? Why? How did you respond to that stress?
4. Have you ever had to quit a job because of tough working conditions? If so what were they?
5. Who has been your best boss in the past? Why was that person the best boss? What did they do right? Who was your worst boss? Why? What did they do wrong?

Questions that provide data about past performance are:

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1. Tell me about the last time you were unable to meet a deadline and why? Who did you tell about this and when?
2. Have you ever had a personality conflict with anyone at work? If so who and why? What did you do about it?
3. What project or task did you complete at your last job that gave you a sense of pride? What was your role in this? What part of it was difficult? How did you handle it?
4. Everyone has a time when they are juggling a lot of things at once. Can you describe a time when you were really busy doing things and describe what they were and how you handled them? *(For more insight about priorities and focus, listen to see if the candidate includes both work and personal items. Note how much of each are mentioned)* Did you have to readjust your priorities?

How you phrase your questions is important. Instead of asking questions such as *Are you a hard worker?* or *Tell me about yourself?*, ask *Tell me about a situation at your last job when you worked the hardest? What was going on? How did you handle it?* Answers to questions phrased in this way will provide a better sense of the whole picture.

If additional information is needed, probe for details by using the STAR model - *Situation, Task, Action, Result*. Sometimes STAR answers can be very telling in a negative way, which is valuable data as well. Using the previous question (*Tell me about a situation at your last job where you worked your hardest? etc.*), a negative STAR response might be as follows: *Last year when it was review time I knew if I stayed late and came in early and worked hard while they were watching me I would get a good raise so I worked extra hard during that time.* This answer helps reveal what was really motivating the employee.

*Avoid interviewing mistakes-* The goal of an interview is to learn enough about the candidate to assess his or her potential for success in your organization. Many interviewers forget about the goal and talk too much about the job, the company, the culture and the weather. Skilled interviewers do their homework. They have outlined the desired skills and personal qualities needed and developed questions that will help them get the information they want. When they start the interview, they plan to listen more and talk less.

Preparing for a successful hire requires up up-front planning. While following these suggestions may seem like a lot of work, the cost of a bad hire is exponential: the cost of a good hire is well worth the effort.

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