The Candidate Selection Process

The Candidate Selection Process starts well before you ever write the job description, advertise the opening or begin to review resumes. The process of selecting a new employee should always begin with an understanding of your organization’s hiring philosophy.

For example, our organization hires people for three reasons:

1. to meet the demands of the role with excellence,
2. to bring value to the customer, and
3. to be builders of great culture.

Regardless of the role, your aim should be to hire the very best talent and ensure he or she will align with the Mission and Values of your company. For example, at our organization, whether it is a developer in our IT department or a receptionist at the front desk, all coworkers must have the intrinsic values and attitude required to “fit in” and embody our company Purpose, “To make life better for the people we serve.”

Hiring Philosophy

Be sure that when you assess and interview candidates you never ask yourself “if” they can do the job... a hiring manager should always be focused on “how” the candidate can do the job.

The best candidates bring (1) knowledge, (2) skill and (3) talent. A mistake many employers make is to focus on only one or two of these offerings. A world-class selection process places equal emphasis on determining all three.

Keep in mind that the candidate will also be assessing you and your organization. Your hiring philosophy should be understood by your entire organization (even those who do not participate in the selection or interviewing process) and the best candidates will notice that everyone they encounter is consistently aligned with this philosophy.

Before you open that job requisition, take a closer look at what the first moments of interaction will be for your candidates.

- What will their initial thoughts about your company’s culture be when they read the job description, when they visit your website, when a candidate walks into your office and is greeted by reception, when they walk down your halls?
- What does that candidate see and feel—experience?
- Is it an experience that top performing candidates will want to be part of?

Find and Hire the Best

With a solid and consistent hiring philosophy in place, ensure that this philosophy

The Selection Process:

- Ensure your hiring philosophy is understood by everyone in your organization
- Determine a target candidate audience
- Learn how this target audience looks for jobs
- Create a job description and publicize it
- Select key criteria to focus on when screening resumes
- Conduct pre-screen phone interviews
- Pick finalists to interview in-person
- Conduct interviews
- Check references, assess skills, test for talent, background check, etc
- Present an offer

WHAT ARE YOUR ORGANIZATION’S BIGGEST RECRUITING CHALLENGES?

- Finding good candidates: 2.49
- Filling positions fast: 2.32
- Dedicated hiring managers: 1.82
- Managing applicants: 1.68
- Sub-par job descriptions: 1.56
- Negotiating offers: 1.51
- Contacting candidates: 1.48
- Scheduling interviews: 1.44
- Reading Resumes: 1.43
- Lack of tasks: 1.13

1 = Easiest and 3 = Most Difficult

Finding good candidates is the biggest challenge recruiters face.
remains the focus as you complete the steps of the selection process:
1. Determine a target candidate audience
2. Learn how this target audience looks for jobs (online job boards, magazines, social media)
3. Create a job description and publicize it
4. Select key criteria to focus on when screening resumes
5. Conduct pre-screen phone interviews
6. Pick finalists to interview in-person
7. Conduct in-person interviews
8. Check references, skills, etc
9. Present an offer

**Your Job Posting**

Make sure your job posting “sells” your company. Does the job sound attractive? Does your company seem like an exciting place to work? Is there growth potential, the chance to use certain skills or other compelling opportunities?

If you write a generic ad, you're likely to attract generic, undistinguished candidates. A well written description should catch the eye of top performers and deter unqualified candidates from applying.

If you already have an existing job description for the open position, review it carefully to ensure it fits your current need. A previous draft may be out-of-date, especially if the position has changed in any way since it was last filled.

The key elements of the job description:
- Position title and general description – explain who they will report to and who will report to them (if any).
- Key responsibilities – Give a glimpse at what their daily and monthly tasks will actually be. Use very specific language; for instance, instead of saying, “Prepare reports,” try: “Prepare monthly reports on subjects related to the company’s financial strategies and performance for review by senior management.” Give the applicant an idea of how the role fits into the department’s operations and supports the business.
- Skills and attributes – Include the type of experience required to perform the job in addition to interpersonal or soft skills, such as the ability to negotiate with vendors or manage interdepartmental projects.
- Educational requirements – Be careful not to specify that certain qualifications are required if they are not absolutely necessary to succeed in the role. If you list a particular credential that would be ideal, but is not essential, you may end up alienating a highly qualified candidate who has everything you seek except for the cited designation.
- Salaries, benefits and perks – Compensation and benefits are the top factors applicants consider when evaluating a potential employment opportunity. Highlight your offerings, especially if the pay or perks significantly exceed industry standards.

The job description has relevance throughout the hiring process and beyond. By clearly communicating expectations and outlining roles and responsibilities, you enable new hires to arrive prepared and provide a roadmap for their continued growth within the role.

**Interview Process**

Consider how your overall interview experience fits into the candidate selection process.

Take a look at world class employers and notice the commonalities in their interview process; it should be much more than a question and answer session. The interview process is an opportunity for your managers and the candidate to plant the seeds for a future relationship. The interview process should never be rushed and most world-class employers incorporate at least three separate interviews. There is much research and analysis on the amount of money and time that is lost on a “bad hire.” When the hiring decision is made, everyone involved in the decision should unanimously agree that the candidate is the right hire; not an “acceptable” hire, but the RIGHT hire.
It is worth taking the time to continue the search until the right candidate is selected.

Be confident that your interview questions will allow you to learn enough about the candidate to assess if he or she is the right fit. Go back to your hiring philosophy and align your interview questions with the mission and values of your organization. For example, Zappos is widely recognized as a “Best Place to Work.” The company is a maverick and operates under a model that breaks many of the “standard rules.” A question one of their hiring managers asks in the interview is “how weird are you?” The reaction and response often gives Zappos insight into how well the candidate will align with the way Zappos operates outside the box.

Adams & Martin Group offers a great white paper on Interviewing Strategies which includes the questions you can and can’t ask. Please let us know if you’d like to receive it.

Selection and Assessment Tools

Skills assessments and personality profile tools should only be used with an established strategy for analyzing the results. It is useless to review results within a vacuum. Be sure to benchmark the scores and results of your top performers. Find patterns among the skills, abilities and personality traits your best internal coworkers share. Focus on these commonalities and require that candidates meet these standards – any other skills or traits the candidate revealed in assessments are individual strengths that the candidate can bring, but know what basic skills and behaviors truly define a “fit” for your organization.

The Offer

Sometimes the offer and negotiation process can be as revealing as the initial steps of the selection process. The selection process is not over until the candidate accepts the job offer. Once you have settled on a decision, do not ignore red flags that may arise during the presentation of the offer. A top performer will often be pursued by other employers or receive counter-offers from their current employer. How the candidate handles the job offer can also be revealing. Respect the genuine communication and expectations of the candidate, but realize when the candidate is revealing that “the money” or “the title” has become more important than becoming a part of your team.

If your organization has successfully communicated its philosophy and expressed how the candidate can be part of accomplishing the objectives of the business, you should continue to notice that the candidate continues to speak to the big picture. If the candidate begins to put the focus on some other detail, it may be a sign that this wasn’t the right fit after all.
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