

12 Steps to Recruitment and Selection

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Getting the right person in the right position is essential to organizational success. Every position has key prerequisites and critical responsibilities that contribute to the operation. The challenge of finding the right people can be daunting and mistakes can be costly. Recruitment failures can result in expenses associated with advertising, orientation and training, compromised client satisfaction, and suffering staff morale. Effective recruitment and selection strategies are therefore key to organizational success and profitability.

One of the most successful strategies used by many organizations today involves a 12-step program designed by Steve Brinkman (1987). You can increase your likelihood of success when you employ his 12 simple hiring guidelines. The strategies outlined here are fundamental and can be applied to any organization.

Searching

The first step is to set high standards and communicate them—to employees assisting in the recruitment process and to the applicants. It should be clear that only strong candidates will be considered.

Establish rapport with all individuals who may play a role in the search process. A good working relationship between these employees and the hiring manager will motivate them to positively contribute to the process. For instance, they will be more likely to seek qualified applicants to promote increased productivity and success for a manager with whom they have a good working relationship than they will be with a manager who is unpleasant or unreasonable. Good working relationships contribute to better outcomes.

Do not restrict the process or burden yourself by a sense of obligation to an internal candidate. There are times when an internal candidate is the best candidate for a position. However, limiting the search in this way may place arbitrary limits on the organization; therefore all open positions should be viewed as just that: open.

Screening

Once you have identified some viable candidates, the challenge of the screening process begins. All candidates, internal and external, must be assessed. Assessment begins with thoughtful review of the résumés and applications submitted. This seems fairly obvious; however, negative ramifications can ensue if important items are missed. For example, the length of previous employment may be indicative of whether the applicant is a “job hopper” or has a tendency to remain in one position over time (Brannick, 2001). Significant gaps in employment should also be identified. Job changes and gaps in employment are not necessarily negative but warrant investigation upon interview.

Candidate testing is frequently overlooked. Operating under the presumption that the candidate is qualified for the position, some managers feel that it may be demeaning to test the candidate. This is a mistake. Interviews are heavily influenced by our subjectivity. Having an objective measurement tool can balance the process. Depending on the position, tests may include skills tests such as typing, spelling, grammar, mathematics, data entry, use of diagnostic equipment, computer literacy, medication administration, etc. Other testing methods include personality testing, intelligence testing, psychological testing, etc. These test results can provide useful insights and can be a beneficial part of the employment process; however, they must be considered in light of the totality of the

12 Steps for Hiring Productive Employees

1. Set standards high and communicate them.
2. Establish good rapport with search personnel.
3. Consider external as well as internal candidates.
4. Carefully review résumés/applications.
5. Test candidates.
6. Ask the right questions and listen carefully to answers.
7. Check all references.
8. Include a second interview with at least two individuals whose judgment you trust in the process. Then get feedback from all the interviewers.
9. Trust your intuition.
10. Be open to salary negotiations, but do not make promises you cannot keep.
11. Never rush a search.
12. Use a probation period to evaluate your hiring decision.

Source: Brinkman, 1987

screening process. Factors that affect the applicant's test results should also be considered, including cultural influences, disabilities, etc. No single indicator guarantees successful selection. However, a comprehensive assessment will increase the likelihood of placing the right person in the appropriate position.

Interviewing

It seems that more attention is focused on the interview than on other aspects of the recruitment and selection process. Surprisingly, however, interviewing is too often approached in a cavalier manner without appropriate preparation.

It is imperative that the right questions are asked during the interview and that the interviewer listens carefully to the answers. These answers can sometimes give more information about a specific candidate than the information found on the résumé or application. For example, you may not want to consider an applicant who is unfairly critical and verbally slanders a previous employer due to the negativity this individual may bring to the organization (Wang, 2000). (There are times, however, when these criticisms are justified.)

As the saying goes, the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. So when interviewing, ask behavior-based questions rather than hypotheticals. Behavioral interviewing techniques reveal candidate behavior or responses to specific situations. For example, you might try statements like the following: "Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation" or "Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done." Responses to these kinds of questions tend to provide a more specific and substantive basis for evaluation of competing candidates, particularly when the same questions are asked of all candidates. Further, they insert discipline into the interview process to keep it on track and within an appropriate timeframe.

Vetting

When the interviewer and the candidate really "click" during an interview, it is tempting to bypass reference

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checks. It would be a mistake to shortchange the process this way. The hiring manager should check all references. This includes, but is not limited to, calling previous employers, managers, and supervisors to solicit their impressions of the applicant's work ethic and performance. It is important to note here that employment verification with the human resources department does not rise to the standard of a reference check. Speaking with individuals who are familiar with the candidate's professional capabilities to validate past performance is essential.

Once you have narrowed the field to the two or three candidates under serious consideration, it is important to validate your impressions through a second interview by another manager. The more information gleaned about a candidate, the greater the likelihood of a successful hiring decision. Having multiple interviewers in the second interview provides perspective and insights into how candidates respond under pressure. Once the interview is completed, take the time to debrief thoroughly with the interviewers. Share insights and impressions all around and trust your intuition.

Negotiating an Offer

Do not dismiss a candidate over salary requirements or condition of hire demands without investigating the opportunity for negotiation. A great deal is invested in this process and you expect a long-term relationship. In the larger scheme of things, the salary differential or time off within the first six months may be a small price to pay to get a superstar. Approach negotiations truthfully and avoid making promises or commitments you cannot keep.

Evaluating

Patience can be in short supply when you are working short and operational demands are taking their toll; however, it behooves you not to rush the recruitment and selection process. Shortchanging the process can com-

promise the outcome and ultimately your organization. Even when you believe you have landed a superstar, take advantage of the probationary period to assess the employee "fit" with the organization's culture, and reinforce performance expectations. A disciplined approach to recruitment and selection, utilizing the strategies outlined, will reap long-term benefits for your organization. **AE**

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