

How Do I Hire Right?

What a terrific problem to have! You are in a position to hand pick the right employee to help you to either build your business, save money, or improve a process. Think about it: why else would you hire? Every time a position vacancy is created, you have the opportunity to hire right...or wrong.

On a daily basis, our staff and I discuss with our clients the various methodology used in screening a candidate. These methods range from skills testing, job fit analysis, personality testing, employment references, background investigations, behavioral interviewing,...the list goes on! When I am asked., "Out of all of the screening methods, what is the single most important factor in hiring?" Loudly and clearly, I say, "ATTITUDE!" Though the "right" attitude for your company may vary from another company, it can be determined in a variety of ways including proper use of each of the methods listed above.

All of us have worked with someone with an "I don't care" attitude. It is poisonous! Not only does this person monopolize managerial time, they are poisonous to the work environment. In a service environment, they can erode your client base. In a manufacturing environment, they have a measurable negative impact on quality. In my experience, a poor attitude is to blame for 80-90% of employee problems, aka, "wrong hires."

How can the right attitude be determined during your hiring process? It can't always, but here are a few ways to improve your odds:

1. **Don't rush the hiring process.**

Meet with your candidate multiple times, in a variety of situations including in the office, over lunch, even with a client. Consider hiring the candidate on a project basis or on a temporary to hire arrangement before making a long term commitment of employment. Either option will allow you to observe them in a working interview situation.

2. **Remember that the past usually predicts the future.**

Talk to past employers or volunteer leaders who have worked closely with employee. Don't forget to inquire about attitude, teamwork, and their willingness to do what it takes. Do not focus only on skills, dates of employment, and reason for leaving. If a candidate has a poor excuse for each job loss, don't be fooled into thinking that things will change.

3. **Utilize behavioral interviewing techniques.**

Have the candidate describe an actual work situation. Have them describe the situation, their role, and the result. How did they feel about their supervisors, coworkers, and subordinates during the process? Were they a hindrance or a help in solving the problem? I recently heard an interesting method from the founder of Kinko's. He always questioned the candidate about their relationship with their family. His feeling is that a person who does not get along well with their parents will not respect authority. Obviously, there are legal implications regarding some personal questions, but this is simply one example that he has found to be a predictor.

4. **Observe, observe, observe!**

If you meet a candidate for coffee or lunch, observe the way they treat the host or hostess, the wait staff, and even others in the restaurant. A more casual environment will enable a candidate to relax and allow you to get to know them better. Another example that I have heard from a hiring manager is to set up a situation in which a clerical employee spills a box of paperclips or business cards on the floor. How does the candidate respond: by helping or by watching? Our receptionist gives us feedback regarding those who are especially kind or exceptionally rude to her in the lobby while waiting for their interview. I take her experience

with a candidate very seriously. Candidates are not “on guard” with others in the office as they would be during the formal interview. Bottom line, you need to know how this person interacts with others. How will they treat their coworkers or your clients?

5. **Invest in professional resources to determine what is most important for your job, your culture, and your company philosophy.**

What makes someone successful in the position? Unless hiring is your business, it makes sense to involve those who are experts in the field. Several excellent tools are available to employers who are willing to invest a very reasonable sum of money to ensure the success of their hiring process.

Consider the cost of the wrong hire: research has shown that the cost can be from 50% to 150% of the annual salary, depending on the type of position. I've always been told that if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right the first time!

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