

In This Issue: “How to Make Bad Hiring Choices: Rule #19”

Test for Success
Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People
From Helm and Associates, Inc.
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How to Make Bad Hiring Choices: Rule #19

As a helicopter pilot I served with used to say, “There are 31 ways to crash land. To land without crashing, avoid doing any of these 31 things.” I don’t know if there are 31 ways to make bad hiring choices, but there are a bunch, and I’ve addressed eighteen of them in previous Newsletters and Ezines. In order to reduce the odds of your hiring choices turning into crash landings, let’s look at Rule #19: why you need to avoid basing your hiring decision on only one piece of information about an applicant.

Rule #19 – Avoid Basing Your Hire Decision On Only One Factor

Few of us would intentionally base a hire decision on just one piece of information about the applicant, but it does happen.

It doesn’t make any difference what the one thing is; it can be yours or someone else’s interview impressions, the resume, drug test results, personality test results, or something else. If you have a favorite source to information that you rely on solely, you’ve just increased the odds of making a hiring mistake. Let’s look at some sources of applicant information that are easily over-relied on.

The Resume

The resume is usually the first piece of information you see about an applicant. If you are in a rush, it is easy to simply take the information on the resume at face value. After all,

no one would lie on their resume, would they?

Firms that do background checks on job applicants indicate that up to 60% of credentials claimed on resumes are “fudged,” either a little or a lot. Degrees and honors are claimed that weren’t awarded and grade point averages exaggerated. Job titles and job descriptions are spun like tops. So, when it comes to trusting the resume, caveat emptor (Let the buyer beware.)

The Interview

Many experienced interviewers feel that when they are face-to-face with a person they can read his character like a book. Sometimes that works, but sometimes it doesn’t. Just one example: some time ago our President met with former head of the Russian Secret Service and current President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. During this face-to-face encounter Mr. Bush “looked into his soul” and saw a man of character. Well, Mr. Putin has shown himself to be a man of character indeed – just not always good character.

What the interview gives you is a chance to evaluate the applicant’s ability to present himself or herself in a positive way. If the job in question requires making a good impression as, for example, a salesperson must do, then the impression the applicant makes in the interview can be an important preview of one aspect of the job.

In any case, it’s a good idea to confirm your interview impressions by having other members of the management team interview the applicant also.

Suggestion: After these interviews, when you call these managers together to compare notes, start by asking the most junior member his or her opinion and then work up the chain of command to the most senior member present. Doing so will avoid having junior members of the team be tempted to simply agree with the opinions of senior managers.

Work References

Wouldn’t it be nice if work references were highly accurate, totally reliable indicators of an applicant’s potential to do the job you want him to do? For that to be the case, you need to know how closely the applicant’s former job duties and responsibilities resemble those of the job in question. Simple enough; all you have to do is talk to his previous bosses, right? Unfortunately, it’s rare to be able to get through to someone who actually worked with the applicant, much less to a previous boss. And, if you are lucky enough to do so, you may find that they usually only confirm dates of employment.

Nonetheless, it is worth it to make the effort to obtain work references. It only takes a couple of phone calls and, if you get lucky, you could end up with a clearer picture of how relevant the applicant’s work experience is.

Psychological Assessments

A good set of psychological assessments can give you objective information about the applicant's work style and preferences. In the final analysis, however, the data from psychological assessments is only one more source of information about the applicant and, like the other sources of information about an applicant, should never be the sole basis for a hire decision.

The Solution: Use All Of The Information

The best way to avoid bad hiring decisions is to use all of the sources of applicant information described above, as well as whatever other job-relevant sources of information about the applicant you can get your hands on. Putting all of this information together will let you see where there are consistencies and where there are contradictions. Making sense of this information will yield a composite picture of the applicant. This balanced and more completely representative picture of the applicant will best reveal his or her true strengths and potential problem areas.

As my pilot friend would say, "The best way to land safely is to avoid doing the things that cause crashes." Obvious? Yes. But crashes are, unfortunately, a possibility in aircraft and in hiring. Don't let too much focus on one piece of an applicant's information lead you into a "hiring crash."

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Remember, People ARE your most important asset!

To Hire the Best, Test!

To Reveal Management Potential, Test!

To Diagnose Problem Behavior, Test!

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