

“In This Issue: How to avoid bad hiring decisions

Test for Success  
Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding  
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People  
From Helm and Associates, Inc.  
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## How To Avoid Bad Hiring Decisions

Every hiring decision comes down to a judgment call. After all the interviews, discussions about the interviews and test results, the decision boils down to: do we hire this person or do we not hire him? The results of a bad hiring decision are, at a minimum, the loss of the money, time, and effort spent on the hiring process. The worst-case scenario is that hiring the wrong person can be costly. He or she could run off some of your better employees, alienate your clients, or steal from the company. What can you do to avoid bad hiring decisions?

Begin with a good idea of exactly what you expect the new-hire to do. While job descriptions help to understand what the job consists of in terms of duties and responsibilities, they don't always describe what the person will actually have to do.

What unofficial ways of doing things will he have to learn? What relationships will he have to maintain or develop? What will he have to know in order to get along with his new boss? Specific answers to these questions can be hard to come by, but the best way to understand the requirements of those positions is through discussions with other employees who fill the same or a similar position and with those who supervise them.

Now that you have an idea of what the person will be doing you can put together the requirements of the job. Think about each of the requirements in terms of “Necessary, must have” requirements and “Desirable, but not absolutely necessary” requirements. Don’t fall into the trap of creating a list of requirements that is so stringent that few applicants would be able to meet them.

There are two kinds of information about an applicant: objective information and subjective information. Objective information is factual; it can be verified. For example, information on the Performance Profile Report is factual. It is based on empirical research. On the other hand, the information you see on a resume may seem to be factual, but it should not be considered factual until it has been verified.

Subjective information, on the other hand, is difficult, sometimes impossible, to verify. The best example is information obtained from the interview. Interview information is based on the interviewer’s impressions of the applicant. These impressions can vary, depending on how the interviewer is feeling on the day of the interview and on all of the things that can influence the interviewer’s state of mind. As a result, interview

impressions often turn out to be poor predictors of job performance.

You can improve the quality of information that you get from interviews in several ways, and my favorites are the following three:

- Plan the interview before it begins. Look at all of the information you have about the applicant and figure out what you would like to ask him or her about. What areas do you not have enough information about? What areas or facts have raised specific questions in your mind? How can you ask questions that are open-ended and don't "telegraph" the answer you would like most to hear? Write down your plan.

- If more than one person will interview the applicant, coordinate your efforts so that you don't both ask the same questions. Agree on the questions to be asked, how to follow up on answers, and stick to your plan!

- Take notes during the interview, and leave yourself a few minutes at the end of the interview to summarize your impressions, the applicant's answers to specific questions, and your recommendation for the next step in the process. It's amazing how much information is lost after interviews because no one writes it down and shares it with others during the selection process.

Finally, put it all together. Everyone who has participated in the selection process has information and impressions to contribute, and the quality of hiring decisions is improved

greatly when participants share and evaluate all the information they have gathered. Use these three tips during the final evaluation process:

1. Gather as much information about your applicants as you can, with a particular focus on getting factual information. Verify as much resume information as possible.
2. Be careful about falling into 'like' with an applicant. We just naturally like some people better than others, but unless the applicant is going to report directly to you, remember that how much you 'like' the applicant is less important than how much the person's prospective boss will be able to work productively with him.
3. Be on the alert for any negative impressions from the interview, regardless of how small or minor they seem, that suggest the applicant has an attitude(s) or an outlook(s) that could interfere with his behavior or relationships at work. Negative impressions should be discussed with the applicant's prospective boss and coworkers to be sure that they can be accommodated.

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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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