

In This Issue: “Three Hiring Mistakes And How To Avoid Them”

Test for Success  
Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding  
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People  
From Helm and Associates, Inc.  
And Kurt Helm

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Most hiring mistakes are sins of omission rather than sins of commission, but they can be costly nonetheless. The cost to replace a manager is usually estimated at one year of the manager’s salary or more, depending on the position, so it pays to make the effort to avoid the big, obvious potholes in the hiring process.

Just as they say in aviation that there are many ways to crash-land, so too in hiring there are many mistakes to be avoided (I’ve discussed twenty of them in previous e-zines and newsletters.) Here are what seem to me to be the three hiring mistakes that crop up more often than you would think:

1. Not giving managers clear hiring procedures to follow.
2. Not providing managers with a hiring checklist to follow.
3. Using different standards when filling a position with an incumbent than when filing it with an outside job candidate.

What makes it all the more a shame is that these three mistakes are so easily avoided! Let’s talk about what you can do, before you are under pressure to fill a key empty position, to avoid them.

First, remember that consistency in the hiring process is especially important. The EEOC says that whatever you have one job applicant do at any given stage of the hiring process, all job candidates who reach that stage must also do. For example, if you administer a pre-employment test to an applicant who passes the first interview, then you must administer the same test to all job applicants who pass the first interview, and before any other step in the hiring process. This consistency insures that all applicants treated equitably—that is, they face the same steps in the hiring procedure in the same order.

Now, there are two things to do that will insure that your hiring process is consistent:

1. Establish clear hiring procedures and write them down. Here's a list of some of the decisions or factors to include: there should be a written description of what the person who is hired will do; decide how to announce and advertise the opening in order to attract the kind of applicants you want. Who will conduct interviews? Do you have a standardized application form that gathers essential information such as contact information in one place? What pre-employment testing or background checking will be done, and at what step in the process? Who will make the hiring decision, and will a committee screen applicants to arrive at a group of final candidates?
2. Create a written checklist that hiring managers use. This can usually be a simple, one-page form that allows the hiring manager to check off requirements as an applicant meets them. It keeps everyone organized and provides a simple way to visually assure that commitments to and from applicants are met.

Make sure that your hiring managers use the written checklist by reviewing them and asking about missing information. It fosters consistency to establish a procedure and follow it, but remember that all procedures can be adjusted as needed! The key is to keep everyone involved in the process informed about the changes.

While we're on the subject of checklists to follow, remember to keep applicants' resumes free of written notes. Treat documents that you receive from applicants with respect and confidentiality and remember that the applicant may want to see it again. Interviewer's notes should be made separately (and here's another opportunity to use a checklist so that interviewers cover everything in their conversation with an applicant!) If you are required to keep information about gender, ethnicity, or age under affirmative action laws, do so on a separate "tear slip" that is kept separate from the applicant's files so that it cannot be seen by the hiring decision maker.

Now, let's talk for just a minute about that third avoidable hiring mistake that I listed at the beginning of this article. Why is it a mistake to use different standards when you fill an open position with an incumbent than when you fill it with an outside job applicant? Turn the question around, and the answer should be obvious: would you require an outside applicant to meet a higher standard – perhaps more technical qualifications – than you would require an incumbent employee to meet? No, because it would not be equitable for all applicants (and it might set someone up for failure.)

Promoting incumbent employees to new positions is a great way to create pathways to greater responsibility and professional growth, and of course the big advantage from your point of view is that you already know the person's assets and developmental needs. But to be fair to both outside applicants and current employees, the standards and requirements for the job should be the same.

Remember that the key to a successful hiring decision is a good match between the applicant's (or incumbent's) qualifications and the job description. Avoiding these three

common hiring mistakes is one way to be sure that you hiring managers consistently apply that basic criterion to the final hiring decision.

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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