

## Choosing the Right Candidate to Build Your Team

By Bonni Carson DiMatteo

Unemployment is hovering over 9 percent. Only three years ago it was a third of that. Approximately 30 percent will be hired within four months. With all the talent that is in the market, will you find the right one for your position?

The comment we most often hear from CEOs is the regret of hiring someone in haste only to regret it at leisure. The opportunity we miss in the interview process to assess this candidate from all perspectives becomes a threat down the road.

As in any initiative, planning is half the challenge while implementation is the other. There are five steps to successful assessment that will help you fill the gaps of uncertainty in the process of finding key talent. Ask yourself some key questions that must be answered by the interviewee and create a process that chooses the top candidate. Include many ways of finding the answers to those questions, including scored individual interviews, team interviews, social interviews, DISC assessments, and presentation interviews; in all cases create questions that get at the traits and skills, both hard and soft, that will make this a successful fit.

By the time you see the candidate; your HR department will present people who meet your basic requirements for the job. The real challenge is creating a process that culls the extraordinary from the ordinary and finds someone who will excel in your corporate culture with your unique team.

**Individual Interviews and Rating Process.** Here are some questions to ask:

- Who is the ideal candidate?
- What kinds of results in his/her last job do I look for that may prove useful in this company?
- What is their value proposition?
- What are the greatest challenges of this position, and what type of personality traits; habits; communication style will help mitigate the challenge?
- What are the key functions of this job beyond the job description?
- Do they have to motivate staff; drive results; collaborate with other departments?
- What are their strategies to do that? How have they demonstrated that in other positions?
- What kinds of personality traits and communication style would help or hinder that process?
- How will this person fit into the team?
- Are they a motivator, analyzer, challenger, producer, supporter?

Given the key functions and key traits or habits that would drive success, create a weighted scale for each function from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest.) Construct a question or scenario that illustrates that function and rate their responses as you interview. Since we only remember 20 percent of what we hear—memory is a faulty function for assessing winners—writes down your impressions as you go.

For example, if one of their key functions as VP of Sales and Marketing is to be able to work closely with R&D to give a forecast on future needs, how does this person communicate across silos? What question would answer that?

- How have you gathered the information you need to make accurate forecasts in the past? Rate their response from 1 to 5.
- Follow up with a question about what would be their strategy here. Again rate from 1 to 5.

Everyone who interviews the candidate should have the same standards and process so that when you sit down together you can look at different parts of the elephant.

**Team Interviews** Team interviews with some or part of the team can reveal a whole other side of the candidate that can be camouflaged in individual interviews. How would this person complement, adapt, or challenge this team?

Create questions that get at some of your company's culture. If you are team-based, for example, ask a question about their most frustrating experience on a team and how they handled it.

If your culture is a pressure cooker, ask about the one time they didn't deal well with stress. If your culture values diversity, ask a question about a different situation that involved diversity or culture merger issues that they didn't handle well. You want to note where they place blame; what lessons they learned, how they are better equipped now to handle the situation. Red flags would be no experience to report or blaming others without any sign of culpability.

**Social Interviews** Take time to know them socially. Have lunch or dinner and see how they function in unstructured interview time.

**Presentation Assessments** Have them make a formal Power Point presentation to you and your team on some key trends or information relevant to their position. Notice their style and standard for presentation. Is it consistent with your culture and standard?

**DISC Assessments** DISC personality, values, or team assessments can give you important data that can then be translated into questions or scenarios that will help you avoid the "hire in haste, repent in leisure syndrome."

**Conclusion** Assessing candidates is a testing process. It should not be a crystal ball process. You want to use as many assessment tools as you can to find out when they leave the cap off the toothpaste.

1. Individual interviews with a standardized and customized screening process and scoring among interviewers
2. Team interviews by the potential team they will join
3. Social interviews to get to know how they are outside the structure of the office
4. Samples of presentations or proposals or reports they have made at meetings—power points without confidential information—to see their presentation standards and style
5. DISC or similar testing on personality, communication style, team style, values
6. Scenario questions that get at the "what ifs" of work
7. Questions that get out how they have managed change, failure, teams in the past

When you think about the last person you let go from the team, it was most likely not for their lack of relevant experience. More likely it was for their personality, style, communication style, diminished drive to produce results, and ways they managed themselves, others, and change that made you wonder, "Why didn't I catch that in the interview process?" By taking control of the process and using a five-step approach, you can spare yourself that question in the future.

Hiring the right talent is essential in the growth of your company. It deserves the extra time and variety of methods to choose the best fit for you, your team, and your company's culture and future success.

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