

How to hire for the long-term

Find and keeping good staff is an ongoing nightmare for many businesses. Here we look at how to hire people who will stay the distance.

We all know how frustrating it is when a key member of staff you have spent months finding and training decides to up and leave. Most managers would agree that the task of hiring the right person can be one of the most difficult jobs there is.

The simple fact is that most people just do not interview often enough to become expert at this function. And there is no doubt that hiring mistakes can be very costly. The impact of employee turnover can easily equal 150% or more of the base salary of the person who leaves.

Disruption

Hiring mistakes cause disruption in the workplace. People who do not perform to a desired standard cause a drain on other staff resources, making them less productive, costing real money.

In addition, you have to devote time to corrective action. This prevents you from being able to develop new and innovative ways to make or save money, address customer needs, develop plans to grow the company, or take advantage of new market or business opportunities.

Can all mistakes be avoided? No. Can you take steps to significantly minimise them? Definitely.

Define the job

Define the job in the clearest terms you can. This may sound overly simple – however, this is where many hiring decisions actually start to fall apart. In addition to listing the key responsibilities, duties and tasks, the definition should include key goals or accomplishments you want the person to complete within the first six to 12 months.

Make sure everyone involved in the selection process understands the job definition. Test the reasonableness of these responsibilities, and identify longer-term needs and goals.

The skills

Define the experience, skills, and talents you want the person to possess in order to be successful in performing the job.

Experience is defined as the set of past jobs where people have learned functional aspects of a certain role. These may include things such as experience in PAYE schemes, hedge funds, or US corporate tax. Define how much experience you want to have.

Skills are those technical requirements of a position such as management, good verbal communications, and presenting to financiers.

Talentpool Selection are specialists in finance recruitment for head office functions of large FTSE companies, Global 500 businesses and financial services. Find out how they can help your organisation recruit more effectively, please call 0870 46 056 46 or email sgodley@talentpoolselection.com

Talents are those attributes that set people apart from one another, such as enthusiasm for working on new challenges, or motivating others to perform to high standards.

The culture

Define the culture of the business. Elements of organisational culture include the decision-making process, communication style (formal or informal) and work values (family-friendly or 60-hour week expectations).

The correct definition of the culture will aid greatly in hiring for the long term. People will have a chance to excel when they are in an environment where they can thrive because their values and the values of the organisation are in alignment.

Identify the personality traits that are valued in your business, along with those that would be detrimental to success. These might include the level of assertiveness, initiative, cautiousness, etc, depending on the position.

Define the selection process

Define your decision-making process for selecting candidates. Make sure everyone involved in the decision agree on the selection criteria.

Many companies do not take this step up front, and wind up missing the opportunity to hire the best candidate because they can't agree on the selection criteria when that great candidate comes along.

The art of interviewing

We have all had interviews where the interviewer did so much of the talking that, as a candidate, it was hard to give your best examples of how you could help this firm. Then, when the interview is over, the interviewer makes a bold proclamation that the candidate is perfect for the job.

Sound familiar? As the interviewer, you should try to talk no more than 25% of the time and allow the candidate to speak at least 75% of the time.

When you come to assess skills and experience, the most effective approach is one where the candidate is given the most opportunity to relate their experiences in the form of stories.

Ask the candidate open-ended questions that request descriptions of how, what, why, or when they had a particular experience. For example, if you are interested in a candidates' ability to learn quickly, you might ask: 'What was the most difficult aspect of your present job that you had to learn?'

The follow-up question is to ask how long it took them to learn it and how they went about learning this difficult aspect. Your objective is to get the candidate to give you a full description of an experience that answers your question.

If you simply ask a leading question such as 'Are you a quick learner?' the candidate is of course going to say 'Yes' – but the interviewer has no way to assess the accuracy or validity of this answer.

Talentpool Selection are specialists in finance recruitment for head office functions of large FTSE companies, Global 500 businesses and financial services. Find out how they can help your organisation recruit more effectively, please call 0870 46 056 46 or email sgodley@talentpoolselection.com

The interview

- If possible, carry out two-stage interviews – the first interview to assess candidates' experience, skills, and talents, and the second (from your shortlist) focusing on personality and cultural fit within your organisation.
- Conduct assessments in order to verify your conclusions about the top candidates' qualifications. These include aptitude, style, technical skills, and personality testing, if you are using it.
- Sell the company to the best candidates. They have to be as excited to join your organisation as you are for them to join. Open up your business to a full inspection. Freely discuss the working environment in terms of structure, the level of formality and bureaucracy.
- Describe the plans for growth along with any problems the company has recently faced. Whoever you choose will find this out anyway, so you might as well be up front about it. They will be encouraged and impressed by your honesty.
- Fully understand what your best candidate wants in terms of a complete package. Know up front what you can offer in terms of salary, profit-sharing, holidays and other benefits.
- Do whatever you can to put together the best package possible. You have now invested a good amount of time and effort to woo the best candidate, and you don't want to lose them.

Cultural fit

For the personality and cultural fit interview, get a clear understanding of what they enjoy doing and what they do not enjoy. Do not assume that they will change. It is like a marriage partner who says they will change after the marriage or learn to like the person. It really doesn't happen that often.

If you ask a candidate to describe their worst working environment, and they respond with an answer that describes your environment fairly closely, the chances are they won't be successful in your company. It doesn't mean that your company environment is terrible; it just means that this person is not going to be happy. Unhappy employees do not make long-term employees.

And don't forget to listen to your gut instincts. Much underrated, they are rarely wrong. When it comes to hiring the right person, it could mean the difference between success and failure.

Other areas to explore

- Ask what special experience they felt really great about and those experiences they hated;
- Ask about the kind of supervision, guidance or direction they prefer;
- Ask them to describe their best and worst boss, and ask what they did not like about the management style of their worst boss.

It is always advisable to take notes, even if you think you have a great memory. You can use these notes when you have to try to remember the candidates you have interviewed several weeks ago.

Talentpool Selection are specialists in finance recruitment for head office functions of large FTSE companies, Global 500 businesses and financial services. Find out how they can help your organisation recruit more effectively, please call 0870 46 056 46 or email sgodley@talentpoolselection.com

Keeping staff

- Set clear goals and objectives for your new employee to accomplish within the first six to 12 months. Have this conversation within the first week of their start date.
- Ensure they have adequate time to become acclimatised with the job, the department, the people, and the business.
- Introduce them to the key people who will be relying on them to perform up to the defined expectations.
- Make sure they fully understand the goals, mission and values of the business.
- Provide regular and honest feedback in a manner that is both comfortable and effective. If you have some performance issue to discuss, do it as soon as possible (having allowed for acclimatisation).
- Provide positive and reinforcing feedback as often as possible. ❖