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## Disciplined approach is way to go when selecting new hire

With the unemployment rate steadily climbing, more qualified job candidates are battling over the same open positions. Identifying the best candidate can be tricky, and implementing a disciplined process for hiring is vital.

When a position opens in your company, resist the temptation to fill it as quickly as possible no matter how prepared you think you are. Instead, develop a well-defined job description making sure it includes the position's responsibilities as well as the qualifications, qualities and experience you seek.

A thorough job description can help as you prepare an employment ad and develop a list of interview questions. Closely matching an applicant's skills and experience to the job description ensures that you are zeroing in on the best candidate.

Applications and resumes are another crucial tool in identifying the strongest candidates. While a strong candidate can sometimes appear weak on paper, in most cases applications and resumes are a good initial indicator of an applicant's strengths and weaknesses.

Pay as much attention to a candidate's employment history as you do his or her job qualifications and experience. Are there any inconsistencies? These days, frequent moves are to be expected and gaps in employment may be explainable, but be sure to ask about them during an interview.

Once you have identified the candidates you wish to meet, the interview process can begin. Use the job description to develop targeted questions. Use the same questions for each candidate so you can compare responses. Remember to ask any specific questions about a candidate's work history if you are concerned about gaps on the resume.

Begin every interview by putting the candidate at ease. Spend some time telling the interviewee about the company and the position, but try to adhere to the 80/20 rule with the interviewer doing about 20 percent of the talking and the interviewee 80 percent.



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When posing questions to an interviewee, there are a number of potential pitfalls to avoid. Certain questions could be considered discriminatory, and, if asked, could lead to lawsuits. Instead, ask open-ended questions that focus your discussion on work experience and qualifications.

Encourage interviewees to ask questions — not only will they learn more about your company and the position, they can also reveal candidates' priorities and how they think. It may be helpful to have co-workers or other supervisors interview a final slate of candidates so you can get different opinions and perspectives before making a decision.

Be careful not to favor a candidate too strongly because he or she followed a weaker candidate during the interview process. Conversely, you may need to give extra consideration to a candidate you perceived as weak if they followed an especially strong candidate.

Human nature causes many of us to favor candidates most like ourselves, but those individuals are not necessarily the most qualified for the position. However, there is something to be said for selecting a candidate who not only fits the position, but also fits the company's culture.

Refer to the job description and evaluate candidates based on how you believe they measure up relative to the skills and experience required for the job.

Job offers should be made orally, either in person or over the phone. A written offer letter or package can follow, but don't lose the right person because he or she accepted another offer while yours was in the mail.

Do not make any promises you cannot keep. Set realistic expectations — it will help prevent disappointment, potential performance issues and perhaps even litigation down the road.

If the ideal job candidate accepts your offer, in a perfect world, he or she would contribute at optimum performance levels from day one. However, even the most experienced professionals need time to get up to speed on an organization's practices and protocols. Unfortunately, too often companies do little to properly introduce new hires to the company.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### DO ASK:

- What kind of experience do you have?
- Of all your work experience, where have you been most successful?
- What were the primary responsibilities of your most recent job?
- Describe how your job related to the overall goals of your department and company.
- What would you have changed about your last job? What did you like best?
- What are you looking for in your next job?

#### DON'T ASK:

- How old are you?
- When did you graduate from high school?
- What is your nationality/race/religion?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Are you married/single/dating?
- Do you have children, or, for women, are you pregnant?
- What is your sexual preference?
- What are your political affiliations?
- Do you have a disability?
- Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim?
- Have you ever undergone a psychiatric evaluation?
- What type of discharge did you receive from the military?

Effective onboarding and training can accelerate new employees' productivity and help to ensure that they stay on the job, thus decreasing your company's cost of turnover, and can begin to positively contribute to your organization's operations and its bottom line.

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