Recruiting and Hiring Top-Quality Employees

Follow these tips to ensure you'll bring the right people into your company.

As all employers quickly learn, there's a world of difference between a worker who's correctly matched to their job and their organization, and one who is not.

But how do you find and match the right people to the right jobs? By including, in your comprehensive people strategy, a well-structured recruiting and selection program. The key to successfully developing such a program is to follow a proven recruiting process for the positions you need to fill. Resist the temptation to omit steps, because shortcutting the process can shortchange your results. Here's what you'll need to do:

1. **Develop accurate job descriptions.** Your first step is to make sure you have an effective job description for each position in your company. Your job descriptions should reflect careful thought as to the roles the individual will fill, the skill sets they'll need, the personality attributes that are important to completing their tasks, and any relevant experience that would differentiate one applicant from another. This may sound fairly basic, but you'd be surprised at how many small companies fail to develop or maintain updated job descriptions.

2. **Compile a "success profile."** In addition to creating job descriptions, it's important to develop a "success profile" of the ideal employee for key positions in your company that are critical to the execution of your business plan. These might include such positions as team leaders, district managers and salespeople. For example, let's say you currently have 20 salespeople. Within that group, you have four that are top performers, 12 that are middle-of-the-road and four that
aren't quite making the grade. If you could bump the number of folks in the top group from 20 percent to 33 percent, that could have a dramatic impact on your company's performance.

To accomplish that goal, you need to profile everyone in the sales group to identify any skills and attributes that are common to the top group but missing from the other groups. Using this information, you'll be able to develop a profile to help you select the candidates most likely to succeed in that position. Remember, you can't tell if you've found a match if you're not matching candidates against a specific profile.

3. **Draft the ad, describing the position and the key qualifications required.** Although some applicants will ignore these requirements and respond regardless, including this information will help you limit the number of unqualified applicants.

4. **Post the ad in the mediums most likely to reach your potential job candidates.** Of course, the Internet has become the leading venue for posting job openings, but don't overlook targeted industry publications and local newspapers.

5. **Develop a series of phone-screening questions.** Compile a list of suitable questions you can ask over the phone to help you quickly identify qualified candidates and eliminate everyone else.

6. **Review the resumes you receive and identify your best candidates.** Once you post your ad, you'll start receiving resumes...sometimes many more than you anticipated. Knowing what you're looking for in terms of experience, education and skills will help you weed through these resumes quickly and identify potential candidates.
7. **Screen candidates by phone.** Once you've narrowed your stack of resumes to a handful of potential applicants, call the candidates and use your phone-screening questions to further narrow the field. Using a consistent set of questions in both this step and your face-to-face interviews will help ensure you're evaluating candidates equally.

8. **Select candidates for assessment.** Based on the responses to your phone interviews, select the candidates you feel are best qualified for the next step in the process.

9. **Assess your potential candidates for their skills and attributes using a proven assessment tool.** A resume and phone interview can only tell you so much about a job applicant, so you'll need a dependable assessment tool to help you analyze the core behavioral traits and cognitive reasoning speed of your applicants. For example, a good test will provide insights as to whether the individual is conscientious or lackadaisical, introverted or extroverted, agreeable or uncompromising, open to new ideas or close-minded, and emotionally stable or anxious and insecure.

   The success profile you created for each position will help you determine which behavioral traits are important for that position. For example, you would expect a successful salesperson to be extroverted. On the other hand, someone filling a clerical position might be more introverted.

   These assessment tests can be administered in person or online. Online testing and submission of results can help you determine whether the applicant should be invited for a personal interview.

10. **Schedule and conduct candidate interviews.** Once you've selected candidates based on the previous steps, schedule and conduct the interviews.
Use a consistent set of 10 or 12 questions to maintain a structured interview and offer a sound basis for comparing applicants.

11. **Select the candidate.** Make your selection by matching the best applicant to the profiled job description.

12. **Run a background check on the individual to uncover any potential problems not revealed by previous testing and interviews.**

13. **Make your offer to the candidate.** The information you collected during the interview process will provide you with important insights as to starting compensation levels and training needs.

**Additional Pre-Recruiting Tips**

Before you start the hiring process, determine your strategy relative to how people fit into your organization. What is your process for making sure they're a good fit with your company's culture? Decide whether your approach to the cultural question should include a second interview. Also, who else, if anyone, do you involve in the interviews to help make this selection and judge the candidate? Your goal is to have a plan that will help you determine whether you have a qualified applicant who will fit into your company's culture.

In addition, decide whether you're going to conduct pre-employment testing. How much is it worth for you to know an individual's strengths and weaknesses, not just as a hire/don't hire test, but as a coaching tool to help you determine their training needs and the best approach to maximize the person's productivity? Pre-employment testing is often overlooked, when it could be a very valuable tool. For example, if you find an applicant who fits the job description and appears to be the person you want to hire, pre-employment
testing can help you determine how to work with them more effectively and move them along in your organization.

If you want your business to attract and retain good clients, your comprehensive people strategy must include a recruiting and selection strategy that attracts and retains quality employees. Following a well-thought-out, structured process will help you best match the right people to the right jobs in your company.