

## For Hiring Managers: Does Your Organization Help or Hinder Your Recruitment Efforts?

By Kathy Bornheimer

This topic may seem unusual when discussing career issues. However, as a hiring manager you are responsible for projects and people. Sometimes the project or technical aspects are the easy part of your job. As usual if there are any readers of this magazine who are managers, feel free to comment on the following ideas or concepts.

As a hiring manager you have 3 levels of people to be accountable to: your manager, your peers and those who report to you.

Oddly enough you have more control with the staff who you have hired than the staff that you “inherited.” Having a good group reporting to you can make your job and ultimately your life easier. You need good people who can help you achieve your budget and department or group performance standards. Some of you have experienced a job search recently. That experience will help you evaluate your new employer’s process.

Does your employer’s recruiting and hiring process help or hinder your abilities to find these good people? If you’ve been with the company less than one year your perspective as a candidate will be fresh in your mind. Go back to that experience: how pleasant or effective was it?

### THE HIRING PROCESS FROM START TO FINISH

When evaluating your company’s process look at the basics. First, do you have a system in place to recruit and hire a quality workforce or do you just “fly by the seat of your pants?” If you have no system it’s just a matter of time before failure will hinder your efforts. With shrinking staff needs and budgets, the “luxury” of absorbing a poor fit no longer exists. It will cost more time and money that you won’t have in your budget. Gone are the days of big recruitment budgets and the use of outside recruiters (headhunters) and your HR department is just as “lean” (or leaner) as your group. Plus, some of the more experienced ones were laid off during the company’s down sizing frenzy! If you do have a system, assess the structure and people responsible for this system. Does the system help you or hinder you?

- ▼ Who is responsible for formulating policies?
- ▼ What’s the history and reasoning for the existing policy?
- ▼ Who is responsible for implementing the policy?
- ▼ When was the last time your system was evaluated, modified or updated?
- ▼ What type of flexibility is built into the system to accommodate “exceptions to the rule” or “emergencies?”

Size of organization, company structure and products/services can be key factors that any manager deals with in their recruitment efforts. How “hands on” you are will determine the quantity and quality of your candidate pool. Some managers would rather have a root canal than be responsible for this part of hiring. However, the more directly you’re involved in the recruitment process the happier you’ll be with the results. If this is something you are just not good at then develop your staff to assist you. Look at your group and see who your “alpha” people are. Your best employees will attract people just like them.

An “alpha” employee is described as someone who:

- ▼ Is good at what they do
- ▼ Likes what they do
- ▼ Likes who they work for
- ▼ Has good interpersonal communication skills

These people can do most of your “leg work.” However, make sure that they want to do it, and you as the manager must still make and deal with the final decisions.

Finding a good work force is no longer a personnel issue, it’s a business issue. It affects your budget and group performance. Strong networking abilities within your field must be encouraged and rewarded. If you find good people through your resources but your company’s policies or procedures inhibit hiring, those positive actions will diminish or even cease.

Does your organization utilize *gatekeepers* or *qualifiers*? There is a difference. *Gatekeepers* keep people out, *qualifiers* help you find and select talented professionals within their networks. This could range from HR, the people who answer the phones or your co-workers. Are they helping to get people in or keeping them out?

Take a hard look at the “want ads” or job postings your company runs. Actually read the ads that are being used to fill your openings. Focus on: layout, size, accuracy, and tone.

- ▼ Are they user friendly?
- ▼ Do they accurately describe the job?
- ▼ Would you respond to those ads/postings?!

Want ads or job postings are not the best way to find good people. However, if you’re going to use them make sure they accomplish their intent.

Read your competitor’s ads; are they better than yours? Again the accuracy and tone of the ad can serve as qualifiers or gatekeepers.

Once you've found some potential candidates, interviewing is the next important step. Have you and your staff been trained to be effective interviewers? If you don't know how to obtain the information you need to make a selection, you may not make the best one. Plus, more and more candidates are better trained and prepared than you are at interviewing. If you're a regular reader of this column you know that 90% of the focus has been on the job seeker side. You need to make sure that you don't lose control at this part of the process. A bad hire can be expensive and stressful, plus the smaller department or company can not absorb a bad hire the way large ones can.

Interviewing factors to consider:

- ▼ Glean information from a resume and/or application form to formulate your questions.
- ▼ Plan as a team (HR, other managers and peers) questions or areas to focus upon.
- ▼ Who is best equipped to conduct the technical part of the interview?
- ▼ What critical areas will you address in the reference check to support your impressions you've formed during the interview?
- ▼ How skilled are you at asking open ended, behavior based questions?
- ▼ How quickly and decisively can you act once a qualified candidate comes to your attention?
- ▼ A seamless flow or process can make candidates feel confident in you as a manager (especially for IT professionals) and your organization. Most candidates now realize that your behaviors in the interview process reflect your behaviors as their boss.
- ▼ Extend offers that detail the job, explain the compensation and provide a competitive salary.

In some markets highly sought after candidates have a 'shelf life' of fresh fruit in July. They are also currently employed and/or have other companies making them offers. If your organization doesn't act quickly, smoothly, and correctly you'll have to start the process all over again. In the mean time you've spent time and money and you still have that opening(s) in your group. You and your existing staff can become taxed if this shortage continues on a prolonged basis.

Again, your budget, your performance, and your group's performance will feel this impact. This affects your ability to meet your goals thus affecting your evaluation.

## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

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Let's take a look at a system that will save you time and money plus improve your career. It will take some work to set this up but the ROI (return on investment) will make it worthwhile.

- ▼ Think in terms of sales/marketing not just personnel. How much effort and creativity are you putting into this process? If you just "pawn" it off to HR you'll get what they think is best. The amount of money you spend is not always the key, creativity is. Don't try to out spend your competition; someone will always have deeper pockets than you.
- ▼ Always be recruiting. Have your network up to date and expanding. Collaborate with your key people to share resources. Don't start from scratch every time. That's where time and money will be wasted.

- ▼ Develop and implement strategies that have multiple applications. Don't reinvent the wheel each time. Keep those business cards and resumes that you don't need immediately and save them for a later time. Plus the candidate may not fit job A but he/she fits job B.
- ▼ Look at attitude and aptitude, plus think in terms of make vs. buy. How long are you willing to wait for that perfect match? Some positions go unfilled for 6+ months. In that time you could have brought in a less experienced person and trained or groomed them to the level you need.
- ▼ Be nice to everyone! Don't alienate your future workforce or potential referral sources.
- ▼ Form a recruitment team. Choose your "alpha" staff and listen to them. Keep HR updated to your needs, ideas, and resources. Never assume that you've tried everything.
- ▼ Be assertive and demand customer satisfaction from public/private institutions and agencies. You can not develop relationships with large *institutions* (major universities, state/federal agencies). You must develop relationships with *people* within those organizations/agencies to achieve your goals.

It is probably easier to develop a system from the ground up than to adjust a flawed or outdated system. Strengthening a weaker recruiting/hiring process is the easiest if you already have the basics.

Don't delay! The global economy and demographics make it imperative that you develop an effective system. It doesn't take a lot of money to achieve success but it does take organization, creativity, consistency with flexibility and teamwork.

With all of this in place your job and your life will be easier. Now you can focus on what's really important to you and your department. 🔄



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