

The Thrill of the Hunt – Help in Hiring the Right People

By Michael L. Heisser

The economic boom just cost you another key employee to the competition. Sign on bonuses and new BMW's are not just reserved for professional athletes anymore, as firms lure top people into lucrative employment contracts. Reluctantly, you throw an ad in the newspaper, starting the time consuming and costly process of replacing an employee. When you factor in all the direct and indirect costs associated with hiring, training, and ramping up a new employee to full productivity, you will have spent dollars equivalent to the position's annual salary (mid-level manager). Factor in the intangibles of frustration, interruption, and uncertainty, and the whole experience becomes as popular as hunting bear while wearing a fur coat... until now.

Whether you are an owner, manager, or human resources director, if you are in business and have employees, you will find yourself in a hiring situation. The question is: do you have a hiring process in place producing desirable results, i.e. "the right people?" To avoid joining the prevailing mentality of hiring the first person who walks through the door, follow the outline below with two important steps to enhance your hiring process.

Evaluation

A vacancy is an excellent time to review a position's overall contribution to your company. How does the position help your company accomplish your goals? Is the position even necessary? Can the duties be reallocated to existing employees? How would you change the position to improve performance? What type of person do you need to fill the position? What type of training does the position require? What are the goals and performance measurements of the position?

A simple analysis will offer new insights to the value associated with the position. Identify the high payoff activities of the job and the impact on your core business. Select at least three measurable evaluation criteria to gauge the worth of the current position. Write a position description based on your findings.

Consider your alternatives in meeting the requirements of the position. Consider outsourcing part or the entire position. Many companies are reducing costs by outsourcing human resources, information technology, deliveries, and accounting (especially payroll).

Identify existing employees who may be ready to "step up to the plate." Filling the position from within may significantly shorten your rebound time, reduce productivity loss due to needed orientation (learning industry, customers, products, etc.), and decrease training time. Rewrite the position description to enhance the benefit to the company, making sure to include specific performance measurements.

Stay the Buyer

The key to a successful interview process is to stay the buyer. This concept revolves around asking questions that give the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities; and prevents you from selling them on why they should work for you. When you stay the buyer, you engage in data gathering as opposed to information dissemination.

After wading through the variety of resumes and applications, you select your top candidates for a personal interview. Write your questions before the interview and write the candidate's responses during the interview. Ask specific performance oriented questions and accept only specific responses. Keep probing until a quantifiable response is given. Measurable accomplishments make comparing candidates and verifying results when checking references easier. Keep the face to face portion of the interview within an hour. Where

appropriate, use personality profile tools to gain additional insight into your potential employee's fit for the position and into your organization.

Staying the buyer also means you refrain from making an offer until you are sure you have a desirable candidate and your offer will be accepted. The second an offer is made, you switch from buyer to seller. Remember, attracting the top performers requires a buying versus a selling strategy.

Put away your rifle and fur coat and apply the evaluation and stay the buyer techniques. Take the money you saved by enhancing your hiring process and buy a new BMW for yourself. I bet you have never seen a BMW with a gun rack in the rear window!

Originally published in The Strategic Edge™, Spring 2000 issue, published by American Business Advisors, Inc., Englewood, Colorado, © 2000, American Business Advisors, Inc. – All Rights Reserved.