

Top 10 Ways to Hire Better People Faster

- 1. Compress the "white space" in your hiring process.** White Spaces are delays in your hiring process that are unproductive, waste time, and virtually assure you'll lose talented candidates. Often the longest delays occur between critical selection events. For example, a recruiter may need several weeks to screen a few hundred resumes from the Web job boards, or candidates who make it through screening may wait weeks to interview with a hiring manager. Map your process to uncover white spaces, then redesign it to compress them. Technology (such as automated or Web-based screening and tracking) is ideal for eliminating unnecessary steps and reducing delays.
- 2. Know what you're looking for in candidates.** Amazingly, a quarter of all organizations surveyed don't define what they're looking for in candidates before they begin searching. A sound hiring system needs to be built around competencies (skills, motivations, and behaviors) that reflect the requirements of the target job categories or roles. Unless you define these competencies first, it's too easy to make a poor hiring decision or waste time because hiring managers and recruiters don't share a common vision of job success. Because jobs change over time, it's important to review competencies periodically to verify they are still valid.
- 3. Decide what sets your company apart and market it.** Approach the competition for employees the same way your sales and marketing departments approach the competition for customers. Begin by developing an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) - a marketing-oriented statement that spells out why a candidate would want to work for you over another employer. Don't focus on compensation and benefits alone. Include information about your culture, training opportunities, and job flexibility. Keep the EVP to the point and factual; don't make promises you won't be able to keep. Then market your EVP effectively. Build it into your Web site, develop marketing brochures for candidates, and make sure your recruiting staff and hiring managers know how to leverage the EVP in their discussions with candidates.
- 4. Use multiple recruiting sources.** Savvy organizations use a battery of recruiting channels and methods, including in-house recruiters, employee referral programs, headhunters, advertising, temporary staffing agencies, campus recruiting, and of course, the Web. Internet job boards can yield hundreds of resumes in mere hours, while your company Web site can act as a constant, virtual recruiter. Beyond the Web, your own employees are an important resource and source. Consider using bonuses and other incentives to encourage employees to refer qualified candidates. At the same time, through improved training and career planning, many organizations are filling important jobs from the inside - a boon to employee job satisfaction and retention.
- 5. Remember the best predictor of behavior is behavior.** Would a basketball recruiter ask potential players how they would handle specific plays? Not likely. A smart recruiter would ask about past behavior, look at playing records, and observe current behavior by watching the player in several games. The same principles apply to hiring the best candidates. Use interviews to gather specific examples of past behavior related to the competencies required for performing the job successfully. Then use simulations of real job situations to assess skills and knowledge. What better way to assess the skills of, say, candidates for a call center job than to have them handle simulated calls.
- 6. Always select for "can do" and "will do".** Screening for what candidates can do is common, but many companies fail to consider what candidates will do - their "motivational fit" for the job. New employees find out too late that they don't like certain facets inherent in the job or company culture - it's too stressful, they have trouble working in teams, they don't want to work on commission, etc. The solution is to assess motivation up front. You determine what motivational factors are present in the job and culture, at the same time candidates assess what they want in an ideal work environment and job. By comparing the two profiles and exploring mismatches before making a final offer, you avoid turnover and improve post-hire job satisfaction and performance.

7. **Blend technology into every aspect of your recruiting and hiring process.** Web-based technology lets you increase hiring speed and quality while reducing costs. Currently, job boards constitute the biggest use of the Web, offering access to thousands of resumes within hours. But the Web can also be a powerful tool for screening and qualifying that flood of resumes. Companies have begun to use the Web to collect and instantly match data on candidate skills, motivations, and experiences against job criteria. Other uses of Web-based technology include online interviewing, candidate assessment and testing, applicant self-scheduling, and tracking. Work the Web wisely and you save time for recruiters and hiring managers and nab top candidates before your competitors can.
8. **Hire an all-around athlete - the game can change tomorrow.** Organizational structures used to be static, jobs rigid, and work organized around functions such as marketing, finance, and manufacturing. Today, structures are fluid, jobs change constantly, and work is likely to be organized around roles and processes. The job you hire someone for today may not be there tomorrow, so consider hiring a tri-athlete, not a marathoner. You will still need people with specialized skills, but if you screen for candidates who have a strong desire to learn, are flexible, and have a wider range of experience, you'll increase your long-term options. For example, you might be able to turn a good learner who has some programming skills into a first-rate software designer.
9. **Give recruiters and hiring managers the new skills they need to land talent.** To win the talent war, your hiring staff needs a new arsenal of weapons. They need technical skills so they can use the Web for sourcing, or their desktop computers for online interviewing. They need skills for making a positive impression on candidates. And perhaps most important, they need to know how to sell the job and the organization. Selling in this sense isn't merely "pushing the advantages." Instead, selling is exploring what's important to candidate and showing them how their needs match what the job and organization offer.
10. **Build and manage your candidate pool as a precious resource.** A "candidate pool" is a group of individuals who have shown interest in working for your company and are qualified for and ready to fill certain positions. Rather than undertaking the time-consuming process of filling one job at a time, you draw on the candidate pool and fill jobs as they become available. How do you keep a pool active? Some companies send their newsletters to pool candidates, give them product coupons, and keep in touch through e-mail. Pool management is not easy in a tight labor market --good candidates often go elsewhere. But many organizations, especially those with a reputation as a great place to work, are able to fill positions quickly using the pool concept.