

## We Hire for Good Skills and Fire for Bad Fit

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### The right assessments can help identify a "good fit" for any job and improve results in the hiring challenge.

As a small business owner, how do you hire smart and eliminate your risks when the research clearly proves current methods of selection are not working? Is there help, or will you continue to play the guessing game when hiring?

Finding the solution first requires understanding the problem. According to Harris Plotkin's "Building A Winning Team," over 90 percent of all hiring decisions are made by an interview. But a Michigan State University Study indicates interviewing is only 14 percent accurate. This mistake is caused by:

- Selection decisions made in less than an hour
- Emotions/chemistry/style
- Biases about education and experience
- Lack of understanding about the performance requirements of the position

An interviewer's personal biases and perceptions, along with a job that is not well defined, lead to hiring for technical skill and connection to the interviewer. What the

interviewer gets may not be what the job requires. Well-researched assessments can help analyze the position as well as eliminate the interviewer's personal biases.

As business owners, we often focus on the technical, or "hard" skills a job requires. You must also take into consideration a candidate's "soft" or non-technical skills.

#### **Benchmarking Skills**

To hire the best person for any job, benchmark the position. Benchmarking is a process that establishes success standards for the job. The key challenge with the benchmarking process is to eliminate bias regarding the position.

Those who work, manage and know the position need to do an objective analysis of the job itself and then write a clear job description that identifies the activities and outcomes of the job. And, importantly, what do those activities and outcomes require of the employee who will be successful doing them?

If the job could talk, what would it say? Does it require the employee to juggle several projects or tasks at the same time? Does it require quick decisions? Does it require learning many new things? What will the job require in terms of activity level, behaviors and motivation?

As part of your analysis, identify your current top performers and the least successful performers in that specific position. This will clearly tell you the key differences between the two groups, which will help you hire those who will be successful. If there are not enough employees in one position to perform that exercise, the second best thing is to match the person to the job description with the help of a professional.

Next, identify whether your top performers are only top performers in your organization or top performers in your industry. What are the industry standards? It is important to identify whether you have a staff of C-level employees in that position or whether your

staff is A-level. You can determine this through current research and your experience and knowledge about your industry.

Clearly define the guidelines for selecting and ranking the top performers. Carefully analyze environmental variables to weigh any differences. Consistency of systems and procedures across all employees needs to be considered in the benchmarking process and should be accounted for in the ranking process. It is important to make comparisons based on the same criteria with as few variables as possible.

#### **Assessing Soft Skills**

As mentioned before, the soft skills a job requires must also be matched to the candidate. When soft skills are mismatched, employees cannot be themselves on the job and must use their energy to adapt to the position. But when an employee's natural soft skills and values match the

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## **Hire for Good Skills**

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position, the employee can focus on the tasks of the job. For example, if you are hiring for a commission sales position, it is helpful to know whether the applicant is truly motivated by making money.

Because values (why) and behavioral styles (how) are part of who the person is and are not easily identifiable by the interviewer, assessments that identify the non-technical characteristics of a position and that evaluate applicants' values and behavioral characteristics can be helpful.

The appropriate assessments, when research-validated and used effectively, will provide unbiased views of both the position and the applicants. Good assessment tools must not only be based on solid research, they must also be convenient and meet legal requirements. The most important benefit is they are unbiased and more scientific than interviewing. Yet as accurate as an assessment can be, never use assessment results as the only criteria in hiring.

Using the tools of benchmarking and assessments, you can improve your odds of hiring the best applicant for a position. You may also save money, accelerate the hiring process and the employee's orientation process as well as the time it takes the employee to "get a handle" on the new job. Turnover may also be reduced and performance will improve.

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