

Welcome to the September 2004 edition of Bergeron Associates' newsletter. This month marks the one year anniversary of my electronic newsletter. I have enjoyed interacting with you over the course of the year whether answering questions or bantering back and forth on different approaches to your greatest challenges. I invite you to continue to share your ideas and challenge mine, ask questions and suggest future topics of interest.

This month's newsletter briefly outlines an approach for hiring right since talent needs are growing for many organizations. Hiring right involves planning from the perspective of the position, the organization and the person. When all three perspectives are designed into the selection process then better hiring decisions are made that position your organization to meet its business goals.

IMPROVE YOUR NEW HIRE SUCCESS RATE

By Carol Bergeron

Hiring a new employee requires investment. First, consider the direct hiring costs such as advertising, employee referral bonuses, search fees and relocation expenses. There are costs associated with others who pinch hit until the new employee is on board. Training investments may be made as part of the new hire's orientation. Don't forget the ramp up time, modest productivity gains and possibly missed opportunities encountered until the new hire is truly effective.

Second, consider the costs of a poor hiring decision. Start with your management time spent with the employee who is not working out. Factor in the time cajoling co-workers unhappy with the situation and adjusting project work, resources and deadlines given the circumstances. Should the new hire ultimately prove to be unsuitable, termination costs such as severance pay and outplacement may be incurred. Then the cycle begins all over again.

The main point is hiring a new employee involves investment and risk. The risk of making a bad hire can be expensive. Minimize your risk by using the following guidelines to hire right for the position, the organization and the person.



Hire Right for the Position

What are the abilities, knowledge and skills needed for success?

1. Review the job description. Go further and isolate the needs of the position. Get specific about the abilities, knowledge and skills needed for exceptional performance.
2. Prioritize abilities, knowledge and skills since not all are created equal. First identify the "must haves" then move onto the "nice to haves" keeping in mind that skills and knowledge may be learned.
3. Recognize what your star performers know and do that is different from employees who simply get the job done. Accomplish this by observing people in action and noting their thought processes and results.
4. Prepare behavioral based interview questions to determine the extent to which applicants possess the abilities, knowledge and skills seen in star performers. Open ended questions that probe how applicants handled past situations, which are most likely to occur in the new position, are best. Inquire about lessons learned with each experience. Past behavior and lessons learned are often strong indicators of future behavior and performance.

Examples for a Project Manager:

- *Please give an example of when you replaced a Project Manager during a critical phase of a complex project. What was the situation? How did you handle it? What was the outcome? What did you learn?*

- *Please tell me about a time when you realized you could have been more effective at communicating with project team members who were located in several time zones. What happened? What did you do?*

Hire Right for the Organization

What individual behaviors work within the culture and values of your organization?

Hiring right for the organization first requires an understanding of organizational climate. It is no secret that values drive attitudes and attitudes drive behavior. This is true of people and organizations. You are doing new hires, yourself and your team a great service when you select someone who operates and behaves in a way that leads to success within the organization. With a little preparation you can distinguish applicants who will thrive in your environment from those who will not.

- Be honest with yourself. Think about how decisions are made, conflicts resolved, goals established and relationships built.
- What are the values of your organization? at the team, departmental or company-wide level?
- What behaviors and results get rewarded?
- Do rewarded behaviors and results align with espoused organizational values?

Like the position specific capabilities, prioritize behaviors that are most effective within your organization. Reflect on the behaviors observed in your star performers. Prepare interview questions to gain insight into the applicant's past behaviors and the attitudes and values that may be driving them. Will the behaviors work in your organization? If not, then keep interviewing.

Examples for a Project Manager:

- *In your last job, please describe a situation when there was conflict between two of your most highly respected employees on the best technical solution for a critical project. How did you handle it? What happened?*
- *How do you define "Outstanding Project Management"? Give examples of employing it? What was the outcome? What would you do differently next time?*

Hire Right for the Person

Is the applicant motivated? What makes him or her tick? Will your organization's offerings be enough?

Discovering a new hire lacks internal motivation is one of management's greatest disappointments. Why? It is a long if not impossible journey to ignite internal motivation. Focus on the applicants who have it, release those who do not.

Assuming internal motivation exists, what makes the applicant tick? What gets her going in the morning? What is she passionate about? Can the organization support the driving forces of the applicant? If so, then for how long? If not, remember, unfulfilled promises are the quickest way to accelerate unwanted turnover.

Example: Please describe the most valuable work experience you have had to date. What did you accomplish? What made it so valuable?

Finally there is the issue of external motivation. As a leader you have lots of opportunity to enhance or detract from a productive work environment. Find out the preferences of the applicant which may include: challenging goals, professional and developmental opportunities, leadership and coaching style, risk/reward opportunities, good tools and equipment and talented co-workers. What can you do to cater to those desires?

Example: Given your previous employers, what environment was the most conducive to getting good work done? To what do you attribute that productive environment? What did you contribute to the environment?

In summary, the most effective hiring occurs when steps are taken to hire for the position, the organization and the person. Planning helps prevent time consuming and expensive poor hiring decisions. Improve your success rate by developing interview questions to gain insight into past behaviors that are often strong indicators of future performance.

RESOURCES

Additional resources you may find of interest:

2004 & 2005 Schedule for Educational Workshops at www.bergeronassociates.com/calendar.htm.

- Dynamic Coaching for High-Performance Organizations
- How to Develop a Talent Strategy: A Practical Approach to Building Competitive Advantage

Resource for Organizational Effectiveness Information

We publish articles and an electronic newsletter filled with practical tips on how to enhance the performance of people and organizations. Click here to explore published articles: www.bergeronassociates.com/publications.htm.

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