



Hiring a Concern? Learn What Talent Magnets Do

Here are the five most powerful keys
to hiring the best people.

By Carol Bergeron

Attracting top talent is a challenge. To be successful, try these strategies used by talent magnets — organizations that attract the best people time after time:

The First Key: Create a Value Proposition

Knowing why employees want to be part of your organization is the first step to developing a compelling employee value proposition. Start by seeking answers to these questions:

- Why do employees choose to join your organization?
- Why do employees stay with your organization?
- What do your employees get from their work experience that allows them to be and feel successful?
- What do employees gain from their work that helps them thrive and grow?
- What experiences have resulted in employees who are committed?
- What environment provided by your organization encourages people to do good work?

To find answers, ask your employees. Use the approaches that make the most sense for your organization, such as one-on-one casual conversation, focus groups, or surveys.

The primary goal in asking these questions is to identify what your organization has going for it. What value do you provide, from the perspective of employees, that prompts them to join your organization and keeps them from leaving?

The next goal is to recognize value that employees want but currently don't get from your organization. Can you do something about the gaps? If so, then what's stopping you?

Your research will lead to many discoveries. While you'll benefit from confirming what you thought to be true, expect surprises. For instance, responses may

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vary by employee group. Part-time employees may value different things than people nearing retirement. Look for trends common to your whole workforce and those common to specific segments. The data you collect won't all point to compensation and benefits as the most compelling reasons employees choose to be part of your organization.

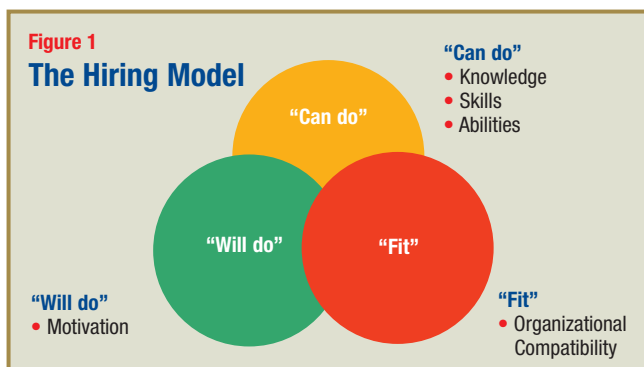
Think broadly and listen carefully for the intangibles favored by employees. These intangible factors are often the ones that you as a leader can influence easily and inexpensively.

The Second Key: Use the Hiring Model

The hiring model defines requirements for each position. As Figure 1 shows, this model has three dimensions:

"Can Do" — What Skills Are Needed?

For each position, decide what abilities, skills, and knowledge are needed for success. Look beyond your job descriptions to find answers. For the best insights, observe your star performers. What do they do that's different from employees who simply get the job done? Prioritize these behaviors, and make them part of your hiring qualifications. *continued on page 28*



“Will Do” — Is the Applicant Motivated?

Motivation has two facets: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic has to do with what makes this particular person tick. What’s behind the applicant’s desire to join your organization? Extrinsic has to do with your organization’s ability to provide the environment and challenges that appeal most to this person. Be sure both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are sufficient to keep the applicant inspired and passionate about your organization’s work.

“Fit” — Is the Applicant Compatible with Your Organization?

What behaviors work best within your organization? To answer that question, you need to understand your organization’s culture, climate, and values. It’s no secret that values drive attitudes and attitudes drive behavior. This is true of people and organizations. You’re doing your team a great service when you select someone who can be productive in your environment. Prepare by answering these questions:

- What are your organization’s values?
- What behaviors and results are recognized and rewarded?
- How does your organization set goals, evaluate performance, make decisions, resolve conflict, and build alliances and relationships?

Convert the answers into hiring requirements.

The Third Key: Interview with Behavioral Techniques

The premise behind behavioral interviewing is this: Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Create interview questions that capture knowledge, skills, abilities, organizational compatibility, and motivation while gaining insights into people’s

past behavior. Ask all candidates the same questions. For example:

- Please describe an experience when you _____.
- What was the objective?
- What did you do? What action did you take?
- What prompted you to do that?
- What happened? What were the results?
- If you had to do it again, what would you do?

Inquiring about “lessons learned” is pivotal, since such lessons will influence performance in future situations.

Remember what every talent magnet knows: Organizations are only as good as the people they hire.

The Fourth Key: Transform Your Employees into Talent Scouts

Boost your recruiting efforts by making talent scouts out of all your staff members. Don’t wait till you need a new employee to start looking. Here are some ways to keep a constant lookout for good people:

Enlist educational institutions.

Start with the alma maters of people on your leadership team. Encourage these employees to become guest speakers in educational forums. Ask them to create an ongoing dialogue with professors and instructors. Help them establish relationships with career development personnel and other alumni.

Re-ignite your employee referral program.

- Educate employees on how to develop networking skills and build relationships from which to make referrals.
- Make it worthwhile for employees to refer potential employees to you. Offer referral bonuses. From time to time, run special campaigns that provide more generous rewards for the toughest-to-fill jobs.

• Make your Web site easy to use as a referral and hiring tool.

• Give the referral program ongoing visibility. Market your program at new-hire orientations. Generate results throughout the organization.

• Provide all employees with business cards so they’re prepared to exchange contact information at a moment’s notice.

Build your network before you have a need.

Create a network of applicants by providing low-pressure, convenient opportunities for potential employees to get to know your organization.

• Routinely host casual forums or social gatherings and ask employees to invite guests.

• Create a community presence by offering an information booth staffed by employees at events such as town fairs.

• Encourage employees to build organizational recognition by participating in sponsored events, such as road races, while wearing T-shirts and caps with your organization’s logo.

• Introduce yourself to speakers at conferences and professional association meetings. While the speakers may not join your organization, they may know of others who could be the right fit.

• Identify experts in your field by reading. Contact authors and experts mentioned in publications, and introduce yourself.

• Collaborate with other organizations when planning events.

• Don’t overlook former employees as great sources for future applicants.

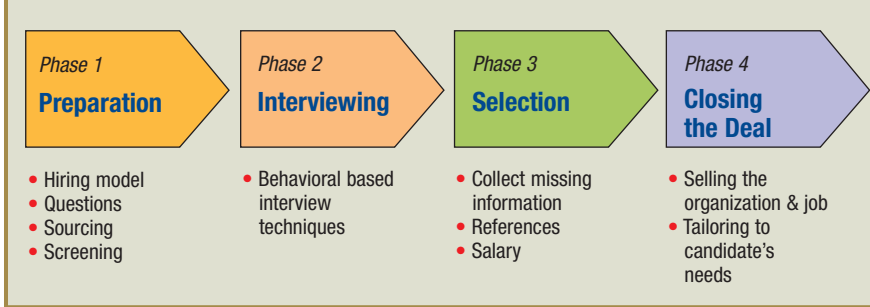
Stay visible and connected to your growing network.

• Add new contacts to your organization’s newsletter distribution list.

• Invite prospective applicants to educational sessions hosted by your organization.

• Know what’s happening in the world. Some events, such as mergers or layoffs, may prompt people to start a job search.

Figure 2
The Hiring Process



Measure what counts.

- Leverage technology so you can measure leads, interviews, and new hires resulting from your recruiting efforts. Be sure to track the sources of your new hires so that you continue to invest in successful approaches.
- Set hiring targets for your talent scout program. Communicate results to build momentum and celebrate success.
- Reward your employees for delivering results in their talent scouting activities. Thank your recruiters for their help!

The Fifth Key: Cease the False Starts and Stops of the Hiring Process

Without a game plan for hiring people, each activity can come across as just one in a series of choppy events. When hiring is a holistic process, the feeling of disjointedness is minimized, giving candidates a positive experience.

In the hiring process mapped out in Figure 2, each phase is integrated with the next. The hiring model you prepare in phase 1

inspires the questions you ask in phase 2. The answers to these questions helps you gather information in phase 3. Closing the deal in phase 4 requires linking your offer to the candidate's wants and needs.

When evaluating the effectiveness of your hiring process, look at it through the eyes of prospective employees. And remember what every talent magnet knows: Organizations are only as good as the people they hire. ■

Resources

Brinckerhoff, Peter, "Using Surveys & Focus Groups to Gather Market Data," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 13, No. 3.

Lauer, Larry, "Using Your Organization's Culture to Build Productivity and Reputation," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 11, No. 6.

Mitchell, Mark & Donald Yates, "How to Use Your Organizational Culture as a Competitive Tool," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 20, No. 2.

These resources are available at www.snpo.org/members.

Talent-Magnet Secrets to Hiring Top Talent

- **Understand and improve** your organization's value to employees. This action alone will help attract the best people.
- **Realize that it's not just about money.** The best employees are likely to be motivated more by intangible factors than by salaries.
- **Define hiring requirements** so you know what you're searching for. Give managers and supervisors the tools they need to do this well. Start with a hiring model for each position, and use behavioral-based interviewing techniques.
- **Make every employee responsible** for scouting out talent.
- **Once you have an overall process,** tools, and a top-talent mindset, then it's all about execution. Practice makes perfect and positions your organization to soar.



Carol Bergeron (carol@bergeronassociates.com, www.bergeronassociates.com) founded Bergeron Associates in 1998 and has over 20 years of experience in workforce effectiveness consulting. She works with leaders to optimize organizational results through people. Carol accomplishes this through the design and implementation of customized workforce strategies and solutions.

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