



## Hiring Best Practices

Hiring should not be an issue that you think about only on the day that an employee gives notice and you are faced with the immediate need to fill his or her position. Particularly in a tight labor market, attracting and retaining top talent requires a thoroughly thought-out hiring strategy that is tailored to the individual characteristics and needs of your company.

**Match your strategy to your company.** Before deciding what approach to hiring will work best for you, consider who you are as a company. For example, what is your overall approach to company growth? Are you looking to expand or merely to fill existing positions as they become vacant? Are you a rapidly growing company that can offer frequent advancement opportunities as operations expand?

Such companies often benefit from hiring strategies that focus on finding employees at the entry level with potential and willingness to learn the business and develop necessary skills and then training and promoting from within. Such a strategy allows the company to hire employees at the entry level, where costs are lowest, and develop and tailor their skills to company needs over time. On the other hand, a company that grows slowly and therefore cannot offer as many advancement opportunities is better served by a strategy that relies more heavily on outside talent at all levels.

**Determine what you are looking for in a candidate.** As a part of your overall hiring strategy, you may want to take a look at each of your company's job classifications and determine what makes a person a good candidate for that job. Go beyond essential job functions and consider the background and inherent characteristics that are likely to equip a person best to perform the job. You may wish to look at existing and past employees who have performed best in the job at issue, and determine what was responsible for their success as part of coming up with your own detailed profile of the ideal candidate. Be very careful, however, to be sure that your profile does not include, either directly or indirectly, any characteristics that might be viewed as discriminatory.

**Develop a budget.** Before embarking on a hiring effort, consider the cost involved, and decide how much you are prepared to spend. Ideally, HR and management should work together in planning an annual budget for hiring efforts. Consider the amount of hiring you project will be necessary to fill your needs, the hiring tools that are most likely to be successful, and the average or projected cost of each.

**Choose your hiring tools.** There are innumerable sources that can be used for locating qualified applicants. When hiring for a particular job, it is important to match the hiring tool(s) you use to the job being filled; for example, it does not make sense to use a costly professional search firm to fill an entry-level position in building maintenance, nor does it make sense to use the Internet to fill a position if the types of applicants you are seeking are not likely to be heavy computer users. Display ads in high-circulation daily newspapers can run in the thousands of dollars. Before deciding to use one, consider whether there might be other less expensive tools that

might work as well and whether you have the time to try other recruitment sources before using an expensive one.

Outplacement firms can fill positions for you almost instantly, but they are very costly. If you have an immediate, unexpected opening in an essential position that the company cannot afford to have vacant for any period of time, it may be worth the money to use the tool that will fill it most expediently.

The availability of qualified applicants is also an issue. Are you filling a position for which very specialized skills are required or a position for which a large number of qualified applicants exist in the general marketplace? Highly skilled positions may be better filled through trade association contacts (or in the case of computer trades, the Internet) than help wanted ads in the Sunday paper.

### **Internet Search Engines**

One in four hiring managers reports that they have used Internet search engines to research prospective job candidates, according to CareerBuilder.com. This statistic is one of several findings from a survey of 1,150 hiring managers in the United States by CareerBuilder.com in September 2006. What the hiring managers found during their research led 51% of them to decide not to hire a job candidate! Hiring managers also used social networking websites to learn more about candidates, and the majority (63%) did not hire a person based on what was uncovered about an individual.

These findings should cause concern for individuals seeking jobs. However, for employment recruiters and hiring managers who are not currently using the Internet to find out more about prospective employees, they may be missing a free source of information. Just "Googling" (searching through [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) a candidate's name may lead to information they may find of great interest.

However, be careful to note the source of the information before you use it to draw any conclusions. A malicious person could post negative information about someone else just because s/he does not like the individual or is angry because the individual received a project, promotion, or position that the other person wanted. Some of the negative findings that hiring managers discovered when researching information about job candidates on the Web included: possible lies about qualifications, poor communication skills, links to previous criminal behavior, bad-mouthing their previous company or fellow employees, posted information about drinking or using drugs, shared confidential information from previous employers, or inappropriate photographs.

On the other hand, researching candidates on the Web may also serve to confirm your positive impressions of a candidate from a job interview. For example, 64% of the hiring managers surveyed could relate an instance when a candidate's background information found on the Internet supported their professional qualifications for the job. Other positive findings included evidence that candidates were well-rounded and showed a wide range of interests, demonstrated good communication skills, a professional image, positive posted references, and receipt of awards and accolades.