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Tips to hire employees who'll stay longer, complain less, produce more

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"Yes, sir. I have a great deal of experience using Microsoft Excel. In fact, I created my resume using that program."

The interview was going well. She had the look, spoke well and Bill thought she would get along with the other maintenance team members. He missed the part about Excel and hired her anyway. Her resume sure showed even more experience in his industry than he really thought she needed. Six months later, with hours of training, coaching that went on for days and a ream of documentation, he was letting her go.

Bill, like many managers, had conducted interviews for years, and after an all-day session of "back to backs", he had missed a few key points of this employee's interview. She had the background, had the way with words that so many do in an interview, but did she have the right attitude? She came up with an answer to all of his questions, but how would she perform and how could he possibly know. Simple. Well, sort of. All interview candidates seem to go to "interview school". They have the answers to "What are your weaknesses?" and "Why did you leave your previous job?" down pat. You have to look deeper. The following techniques will help.

Hire for Attitude Instead of Skill

You can teach skills. You cannot teach someone to overcome rejection and surly customers, nearly as easily. It is the attitude that will outlast problems and the attitude that will readily learn new skills.

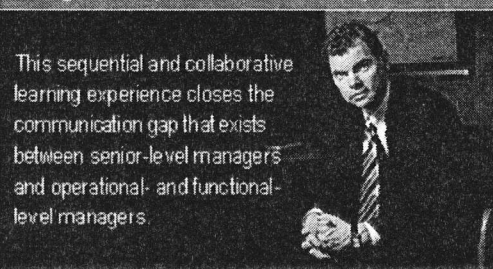
Assign a Task in the Interview

Put your candidate on the spot. Avoid the same old questions; ask them to do the job, right then, right there. If your vacancy is a maintenance planning position, role-play a difficult end-user calling with a seemingly impossible problem that must be fixed yesterday. See what they say.

Pay Attention to the Past ... Differently

Your candidate has had 10 years working with your competitor. She has won every honor for this type of position possible. So, how much do you think she will question your direction when you say to do something different than what she has been rewarded for? How quickly do you think she will be loyal to the very company she has competed against for years? Perhaps that candidate who has worked in a completely different industry but can demonstrate to you the right attitude toward hard work, learning and customers would actually take less training.

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Try Story Time

Asking closed questions in an interview limits creativity and gives candidates a 50/50 chance of getting the right answer. Do you only want a 50/50 chance that they'll stay and be productive? Try asking him or her to tell you a story. "Tell me about a time when you and co-worker completed a project and received recognition." Then listen to the story for hints on how they prefer praise, get along with others, share credit with co-workers, or bad-mouth their boss. Also, "listen" to their body language and for creative storytelling. Much is revealed when a person tells you a story and, almost always, the story will be true since most can't make up that kind of detail on the fly.

Ask for Passion

This one must be done delicately. After you have asked your standard questions and tested for skills that you need, find out the passion of the person you are about to entrust with this job. Whether you provide them with a profile or merely ask the question, the results are immediately revealing. For example, Melissa was hiring a maintenance technician. She thought she had found someone. All the questions had been answered with ease. The candidate's background suggested she had the attitude and making of a great technician. Yet, when Melissa casually said, "What is it that absolutely lights your fire? What is it that you absolutely LOVE to do?" The candidate looked her straight in the eye and said "I absolutely love to do planning and scheduling work." Now this candidate doesn't perform technical work for Melissa, but he is one of the best planners and schedulers she has ever seen, and both Melissa and the candidate are extremely happy. Many don't know who they really are, but most do know what they like to do. Make sure it is what you are hiring for.

Hiring is tricky, and getting the right person in the right job can be a downright complicated gamble. We make matters worse by using the same old formula that even the candidates know and by looking at experience that may or may not matter. Try to keep in mind that finding the right person for the job is far more important than finding a person to fill the job. Want more work? Keep filling jobs with those who think they know it all and tell you what you want to hear, but know little of themselves. Want more productivity and a long term team? Spend more time learning about the person rather than reading their resume.

About the author

Monica Wofford, president of Monica Wofford International Inc., is a certified CORE coach and trainer. She and the 12 coaches she leads help hundreds to determine who they are, how to work with others and what their own true gifts are. She is the author of "The Type A Myth", "Contagious Leadership", "Contagious Confidence" and "Contagious Customer Service", and can be reached at www.monicawofford.com or 866-382-0121.

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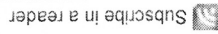
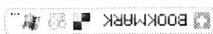
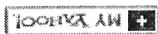
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