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# Beyond Experience

## Five ways to hire good employees

"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 team members. He missed the part about Excel and hired her anyway, because her resume showed even more experience in his industry than he thought she needed. Six months later, he let her go.

What happened? Bill, like many managers, had conducted interviews for years, but after a day of back-to-back sessions, he had missed a few key points during the candidate's interview. She had the background, was articulate (as are many during an interview), but did she have the right attitude? She answered 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" where they learn the answers to typical questions like "What are your weaknesses?" and "Why did you leave your previous job?" To look deeper, however, try the following techniques.

**1 HIRE FOR ATTITUDE INSTEAD OF SKILL.** If you are hiring a salesperson, for example, choose a go-getter with a love of people and a high self-esteem, not necessarily someone who has sold for years. Sometimes, a veteran in the field can bring a lot of old habits that are difficult to change. Skills can be taught, but teaching someone to overcome rejection and surly customers is much harder. Attitude is often what will outlast problems and allow someone to learn new skills.

**2 ASSIGN A TASK IN THE INTERVIEW.** Put your candidate on the spot. Ask them to do the job, right then, right there. If your vacancy is an IT support position, role-play a difficult end-user calling with a seemingly impossible problem that must be fixed yesterday. See what they say. If you are hiring for sales, have them sell you your own product. See how many questions they ask about it before just jumping into the sales process.

**3 PAY ATTENTION TO THE PAST...DIFFERENTLY.** Your candidate has had 10 years working with your competitor and has won every possible award for their position. Will they question your direction when you ask them to do something different from what they've been previously rewarded for? How quickly will they feel loyal to the very company they have competed

against for years? In this situation, perhaps a candidate from a completely different industry will demonstrate the right attitude toward hard work, learning and customer service and actually require less training.

**4 TRY STORYTIME.** 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 them to tell you a story. For example, say, "Tell me about a time when you and a coworker 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 coworkers or bad mouth their boss. Also, "listen" for creative storytelling and watch their body language. Much is revealed when a person tells you a story, which is almost always true, as most people can't make up that level of detail on the fly.

**5 ASK FOR PASSION.** But do so delicately. After you've asked your standard questions and tested for necessary skills, find out the passion of the person you are about to entrust with a job. Whether you provide them with a profile or merely ask the question, the results are immediately revealing. You may find that the candidate is perfect for another position. Many people don't know who they really are, but most do know what they like to do. Make sure it's what you're hiring for.

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

—Monica Wofford is president of Monica Wofford International, Inc. and a certified CORE coach and trainer who helps people to determine who they are, how to work with others and what their own true gifts are.