

Now Hiring, Requiring No Experience


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Now Hiring, Requiring No Experience

Five ways to hire employees who will stay longer, complain less and produce more

By Monica Wofford

The interview was going well. Sally had the look, spoke well, and Bill thought she would get along well with the other team members. Her resumé showed even more experience in the industry than he really thought she needed. He hired her. Six months later, after hours of training, days of coaching 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-back interviews, he had missed a few key points from Sally's interview. She had the background, had a way with words, but had she displayed 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 down pat to questions like, "What are your weaknesses?" and, "Why did you leave your previous job?" You have to look deeper, and you need specific techniques to do so.

1. Hire for attitude instead of skill

Paul owned a PR company and had been in the business for 20 years. He could teach almost anyone how to call a radio station. What he had also learned is that, when hiring representatives from other agencies, he had to spend hours un-training all their old habits. If you are looking to hire a skilled worker, hire a person with the kind of personality you think that position will need. Do you need a go-getter with a love of people and a high self-esteem? Look for these characteristics, rather than someone who has years of specific experience. You can teach skills, but you cannot as easily teach someone to overcome rejection and surly customers, for example. It is the attitude that will help someone outlast problems; it is the attitude that will cause a person to readily learn new skills.

2. Assign a task in the interview

Put your candidate on the spot. Avoid the same old questions; ask him to do the job right then and there. If your vacancy will be answering the phones or accepting payments, role-play a difficult customer and see how your candidate responds. If you are hiring a service writer, have him greet you as if you were a customer. See how many questions he asks before just taking your order.

3. Pay attention to the past

Maybe your candidate has had years of experience, and has even received many awards for her work. But how much do you think she will question your assignments if they are different from what she is used to? Perhaps the candidate who has worked in a completely different industry — but who can demonstrate to you an open and willing attitude toward hard work, learning and customer service — might actually need less training.

4. 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

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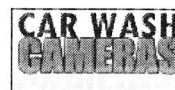
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a 50/50 chance that they'll stay and be productive? Try asking interviewees to tell you a story: "Tell me about a time when you and a team of coworkers met a goal and received recognition." Then listen to the story for hints on how they prefer praise, how they get along with others, how they share credit with co-workers, or whether they bad-mouth their boss. Also, "listen" to their body language and look out for creative story telling. Much is revealed when a person tells you a story, and the story will almost always be true; most people can't make up those kinds of details on the fly.

5. Ask for passion

This one must be done delicately. After you have asked your standard questions and tested for skills that you need, find what this person — whom you are about to entrust with a job — cares about. Whether you provide her with a profile or merely ask the question, the results are immediately revealing. For example, Melissa was hiring a salesperson. She thought she had found a match. All the questions had been answered with ease, and the candidate's background suggested she had the attitude and make of a great salesperson — until Melissa casually asked, "What is it that you absolutely love to do?" The candidate looked her straight in the eye and said, "I absolutely love to type."

I love to see if I can beat my own typing speed record and enter more information than anyone else can." Today, this candidate doesn't do sales with Melissa, but she is one of the best administrative data clerks she has ever seen, and both Melissa and the employee are happy. Many candidates don't know who they really are, but most 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 formulas 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 the job is far more important than finding a person to fill the job. Want more work? Then keep filling jobs with people who think they know it all or just tell you what you want to hear. Want more productivity and a long-term team? Then spend more time learning about the person rather than reading his or her resume.

Monica Wofford, president of Monica Wofford International Inc., is a certified CORE coach and trainer. She, along with the 12 coaches she leads, helps people determine who they are, how to work with others, and what their gifts are. Wofford has more than 17 years of leadership experience, and she provides training in leadership, service and confidence that helps business owners impact their bottom line. She is the author of "The Type A Myth," "Contagious Leadership," "Contagious Confidence" and "Contagious Customer Service." She can be reached at 866.382.0121 or www.monicawofford.com.



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On August 1, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to passed an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP), despite objections from Republicans and a veto threat from President Bush. The expansion would provide an extra \$47 billion to the program during the next five years. The funding would come from a cigarette tax, among other things —

08/03/2007

WCA 2007 Expands to Include Detailing

This year, the Western Carwash Association will include a detailing pavilion and detail workshops on the show floor of the upcoming expo — for the first time ever. The pavilion will include some of the major manufacturers and suppliers to the detail industry, according to Bud Abraham, WCA director and chair of the detail program. An all-day detail educational program ...

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