

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWING AND RECRUITING

Getting It Right The First Time

Isn't it fascinating that someone will invest many more hours researching and purchasing a \$35,000 car, than s/he will dedicate to recruiting a new employee?

You also should note that in most instances, the section of a company's manual dealing with progressive discipline and terminating an employee is much more extensive than the section pertaining to recruitment. Needless to say, managers and owners become frustrated with activities which fail to add value to their operations, especially when following a turn over, the entire cycle is repeated. This is a terrible and needless waste of time, money and energy.

But the recruitment process need not be costly and time-consuming, and thousands of dollars can be saved by *getting it right the first time*. There are three critical factors to follow in successfully recruiting a new employee:

- ◆ properly define the requirements for the position
- ◆ ask behaviourly-based questions
- ◆ invest the necessary time

Defining The Position

You cannot manufacture a product or provide a service, unless your customer's requirements have been defined precisely and thoroughly. Similarly, you must ensure that when recruiting a new employee, the requirements for the position have been articulated properly. This involves identifying the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), plus any additional attributes, necessary to achieve the minimum acceptable standard of performance.

For example, let's say you are recruiting a manager for a department in your company. You would begin by defining the technical skills and knowledge for the position. These can be tested and verified. You also require the manager to be proficient in Microsoft Office. Again, these proficiencies can be tested and verified. The culture of your company honours risk-taking, customer service and teamwork. These attributes, therefore, are integral to the requirements of the position and also need to be tested and verified. This is accomplished through behaviourly-based questioning.



Asking The Right Questions

I know of a recruitment situation where the interviewer spent twenty minutes describing the position and then turned to the candidate and asked “*Can you do that?*”. This approach is guaranteed to elicit a one-word, right or wrong answer.

Behaviourly-based questioning, begins by describing a *type of situation* and soliciting the interviewee to “*tell me how you dealt with something like that in the past?*”. This interviewing approach is open-ended and encourages the candidate to reveal deeper and more significant aspects of her/himself. Use a probing style and allow moments of silence to occur, if necessary.

Behaviourly-based questioning will enable you to surface the types of attributes mentioned earlier, where they have been determined to be critical components of the job. In our example, if the candidate is unable to recall instances of risk-taking, teamwork and customer service (and satisfy you that they were conducted in a manner consistent with your organization), then it is unlikely that the individual will be able to perform the job to your standards in the future. ***The premise is that past behaviour is the best determinant of likely future behaviour.***

Investing The Time

Hiring a new employee is one of the most important business decisions there is, because, like marriage, you have to live with that person for a long time or pay for the costs of separation. *Getting it right the first time* means you avoid the costs of separation, the costs of a second recruitment exercise and the costs of training a second person for the job.

Equate a recruitment effort with a financing initiative or a capital acquisition. You wouldn’t rush those business decisions and you shouldn’t short-change the process of recruiting a new employee. Be deliberate and methodical. If you need to extend your time-horizon or geographic reach to attract the *right* candidate, so be it.

In the end, you’ll be glad you thought through the job requirements, asked the right questions and took your time in recruiting that new employee. By ensuring a *proper fit*, everyone will be happier and more productive, and you’ll have more free time to drive around in that new \$35,000 car.

Bill Fields, President bfields@diamondmanagementinstitute.com 905-820-8308

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