

# Hiring Right the First Time

## SELECTING A 'DREAM' EMPLOYEE VERSUS A NIGHTMARE

by BRADLEY P. SMITH

**H**IRING A NEW EMPLOYEE is a task most executives look forward to with great anticipation, but also with a certain amount of apprehension. You now have an opportunity to bring in “fresh blood”—someone with new ideas, an enthusiastic approach and the ability to help make possible even more growth. Bring in the right person for the job, and all of this may transpire. But hire the wrong person, and you might be in for a real nightmare.

From a cost standpoint, it's difficult to put an actual figure on a hiring mistake, but by some estimates, it can amount to as much as two or three times the person's annual compensation. Consider some of the numbers you can verify: the cost of advertising the position, the time wasted on screening and interviewing potential candidates, the money and time wasted on training and re-training, and the salary and benefits paid to an individual who is not performing up to expectations. And even these costs may be minimal compared to what may come next.

An employee who's wrong for the job probably isn't going to provide the productivity you need or the level of service your customers expect. You may lose business as a result. It gets worse. Morale may drop among other employees forced to work with the new hire and their job performance may also suffer, which may mean an even further loss of customers and business. Finally, it may be more difficult than

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you realize to get rid of the person who is not a good fit for the job.

So, considering that we're in an “employer's market,” with lots of potential employees available to help fill the open slots occurring at some companies, how do you go about finding the right one for your company?

One solution is using systems that assess “soft skills” and workplace behavior (personality, values, team orientation) that can correlate to actual job-specific traits necessary for optimal performance. Some of the better systems are designed to accomplish a variety of tasks, including everything from pre-screening applicants to assisting in developing the interview questions that target key areas that will most likely be the cause of the greatest stress in the new work environment. Even if you hire a candidate with less than a perfect match, targeted training areas can be identified that can be addressed during the first few months of their employment.

Different companies offering workplace behavior or soft skills assessment systems for hiring have different approaches to the procedure, but a basic analysis probably will include the following steps:

### Step ONE

The assessment provider works with the company to identify key positions to be filled. Job descriptions are developed or reviewed for the positions. It is important that every position has a complete and updated job description so that job skills and competencies can be matched for each of the key tasks the employee will be expected to perform.

### Step TWO

Since hiring assessments must be designed to measure traits specific to job performance, the next step is to correlate the soft skills and behavioral traits necessary for optimal job performance.

For instance, an outside sales rep developing a new territory may need to be very comfortable thinking “outside the box,” be self-motivated, driven, flexible,



outgoing, solution-oriented, etc. However, a new hire for a telemarketing position may need to feel comfortable following scripts, using predetermined processes and procedures, be consistent, and stay within certain parameters for providing answers and solutions. Both positions fall under the broad heading of sales, but the behavioral and soft skills traits that will make each person effective and successful are diametrically opposite each other.

### Step **THREE**

A test group is assessed to validate the job skills defined and establish a benchmark for the behavioral traits and soft skill requirements that were defined for the positions needing filled. Soft skills consist of items such as teamwork, interpersonal skills (behavioral attitudes and motivators), work ethic/attitude (values-based motivators), time management and conflict management.

### Step **FOUR**

Once benchmarks are determined and actual job-specific behavioral traits and soft skills are confirmed, highly validated assessments are used to determine the

applicant's responses to questions that will allow the employer to pinpoint the candidate's strengths and limitations in key areas of job performance.

### Step **FIVE**

Potential candidates that meet all other job requirements may now be interviewed with highly targeted questions that address the ability or willingness of the candidate to complete certain key components of their job duties. The employer essentially goes into the interview process having information that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible to ascertain without using the hiring assessments specific to the workplace behavior and soft skills. These two areas of hiring cause the highest turnover ratio, but are the areas least identified during normal screening and interviewing processes.

### Step **SIX**

The employer may wish to review the final hiring decision with the consultant, analyst or firm from whom they purchased the hiring reports/system. This will assure the proper selection process and target areas of training the new candidate might need to

receive to ensure their potential is reached.

New online systems have been developed to take the complexity of these steps and reduce the process into a very manageable system that can be done remotely via phone and Internet. The better systems can be implemented in a matter of days or weeks, since companies offering these services typically have large databases of workplace competencies and are well versed in all aspects of hiring and assessing personnel for job selection.

One more thing to look for when deciding on which behavioral and soft skills assessment system is right for your company: the better systems minimize the need for outside personnel to come onsite and assist with the hiring. They make it feasible for any company to go online and quickly and effectively hire right the first time. ■

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