

Regular People,



Spectacular Results

Here's an ingenious way to get the right people doing the right things.

By Paul Lemberg & Tom Matzen

A constant challenge in the nonprofit sector is to find enough good employees. Here's how to craft your solution:

1. Know what you're looking for.

Create a position results description for each job in your organization. This is not a job description. Position results descriptions focus on the *results* for which each person is accountable. A job description for a receptionist would include the duty "answering telephones." A position results description might say, "answering phones in an enthusiastic way, enhancing the caller's first impression of our organization and indirectly communicating our values." See the difference?

The problem is that it's almost impossible to teach grown-ups new values.

What's the process for creating a position results description? Begin with the purpose, and then describe the specific outcomes that lead to the purpose. Then define the parts — specific daily, weekly, and monthly tasks that must be accomplished to reach that outcome. When you're done, you've created a word picture of a great performance.

For each component in the position results description, establish a tracking and performance measurement system. This

system will keep the person on target during a specified time period and will feed directly into the performance review process.

2. Develop methods to consistently find good people.

Hold a hiring seminar. The hiring-seminar approach was born out of frustration with the traditional hiring method, which is to write a job description, place an ad, review resumes, interview candidates, check references, and finally make an offer, negotiate, and hire. It's incredibly time intensive, expensive, and often doesn't work very well. The logic behind the traditional approach is to hire people with the desired skills and try to teach them your values. The

problem is that it's almost impossible to teach grown-ups new values. Thus, you may find yourself with a skilled employee whose behavior isn't consistent with your organization's values. The hiring seminar can eliminate this mismatch and save you a bundle of time.

Allow me to describe how we recruited our most recent marketing coordinator. We designed an ad based on the values of our organization: integrity, enthusiasm, authenticity, lifelong learning, focus, and commitment. The ad was also based on our three guiding principles: sustainable growth, systems thinking, and servant leadership. Our ad specified these nine components and described the "type" of person we wanted rather than a skill set. The ad specifically stated "no experience necessary." Our systems are duplicable and turnkey, and while for this position experience is an asset, it's not a requirement.

We received 132 inquiries from that small ad, which ran in the "Help Wanted" section of a daily newspaper. Ordinarily, that would mean a lot of people to screen, but we didn't screen them.

When applicants called, we told them about the hiring seminar and e-mailed applications to interested people. We received 28 responses from the 132 people. Those 28 respondents were invited to the hiring seminar at our offices. Of the 28 people who committed to come, 24 showed.

The hiring seminar comprised 90 minutes of formal content. For the first hour, we described our organization in detail. We talked about our mission, vision, values, and guiding principles. We also described key members of our team. Which left about 10 minutes to describe the job opportunity: the position results description, benefits, starting wages — even the performance review process. The final half-hour was left for questions. This is where we could observe and "get a feel" for our applicants.

Ask just one question. Before taking a break, we asked those people who thought this was the

most unbelievable job they could ever have to stick around: We'd have a short interview. We'd ask just one question, which we gave them in advance. That question was: Why would this be the ultimate job for you?

Those who were no longer interested were thanked for their time, and we wished them well. Of the original 24 people, 22 stayed.

We interviewed each applicant for approximately five minutes each. The rest of our team mingled and observed the other applicants in the common room. Some people were brown-nosing our team, some were conversing with other applicants, and others were avoiding all human contact.

Vision and values alignment are the keys to sustaining high performance.

Make a selection. Based on responses to our interviews, we immediately selected 12 perfect fits for the job. To choose one among them, we gathered the "observer" team and discussed the 12 people, playing a "rejection game." Had they done or said anything (or failed to say or do something) that would motivate us to kick them off the island? We narrowed the list to three candidates and conducted follow-up interviews. We checked references while the interviews continued. Let me stress: We had three *perfect* fits at this point. We could have hired any one of the three (their references checked out splendidly). *And* the entire process required, after placing the ad, only 6.5 hours start to finish—not days, not weeks, not months.

The critical distinction is that this process is based on values and guiding principles. We look for someone who isn't necessarily skilled, because our system is tailored so that anyone can follow it.

Customize the process. You can use the hiring-seminar format to recruit people for higher-skilled

positions as well — with some adaptation. You'll need a more detailed screening process up front, and you'll need to interview more carefully for relevant experience, since your systems will require a higher baseline level. But the seminar will accelerate your hiring process and help ensure a values and principles fit, which we believe is essential to building a systems-based, scalable, low-stress enterprise. It's simple, and an enormous time saver. And it guarantees that the people you hire want to be there and love what they're doing.

3. Orient newcomers.

You get only one chance to make a first impression. Everyone's heard that, but have you ever arrived for your first day on the job, only to discover you didn't have a desk, or your chair was broken, or you had no phone or e-mail address? Here are some ways to get people started on the right foot:

Prepare for new employees with a desk, lamp, comfortable chair, phone extension, voice-mail box, e-mail address, and business cards. Provide all the physical and electronic accouterments they need to perform the job. Make them feel you're ready and eager for them to start work.

Have their position results descriptions in place. Now, they have a workspace and know what's expected of them.

Introduce them to everyone in their department or (depending on your size) to everyone in the organization. At minimum, introduce them personally to everyone with whom they'll interact over the next month.

Provide all the training they need to fulfill their duties. Please, don't wing the training. Throwing someone into the lake to see if they swim is the lazy person's approach, and one that's liable to promote needless drowning. If you don't have the internal expertise to develop training programs, hire consultants. It's a smart investment.

continued on page 20

4. Communicate your vision and values.

Vision and values alignment is the key to sustaining high performance in your people. Your vision is an articulation of how you see your organization in the future. When people join your organization, they should see themselves traveling the same path.

Articulate your vision. Write it down, and make sure other people understand it. The acid test comes when you read your vision to other people. If they smile, light up in some way, you've done it right. If you get a blank stare, you have work to do. Ultimately, your vision must inspire people.

Share your vision constantly. Almost everyone makes this same mistake: After they've shared their vision once, they think, "Well, that's it." Not true. You have to share your vision continually. If you communicate your vision once a week, it wouldn't be too much. Hold regular meetings about your organization's vision, as well as its values, philosophy, mission, and objectives. Work your vision into all your communications — your speeches, meetings, memos, newsletters, Web site. Include it in your e-mails. Put it in your orientation. Inscribe it on your coffee mugs.

5. Use white-boarding to heighten ownership of ideas.

White-boarding is a continual optimization process derived from the work of W. Edwards Deming. For a white-boarding agenda checklist, see qgcdl.etambook.com. Here are the basics:

Once a week, gather your team, and decide on a topic for the day — it might be generating new support or handling customer service complaints. You can work on whatever's out of whack, or you can work your way through your organization's systems.

Whatever topic you've chosen, brainstorm ways to improve it. Put each idea on a white board.



Please, don't wing the training.

Winnnow out the ideas. Shift from blue sky or green light thinking to action items, because the game now is about taking action. Pick a handful, or focus on just one. What is the team going to execute this week or at least begin working on this week?

Create a game plan. Give each action item a corresponding measurement, some kind of metric, which itself translates into a goal, which becomes a time line, which ends up as someone's responsibility — from idea to game plan to one individual owning the time line and being accountable for realization of the goal.

6. Measure personal performance.

Start with a set of clear and agreed-upon goals and their measurements. The evaluation of how well someone is performing is simple. Have they delivered on their purpose or not?

Be objective. Performance reviews are under fire today because they tend to tear people down. You can avoid that pitfall by making your reviews neutral, saying, "OK, here are your goals. Did you meet them? If not, why not, and what can we do?" That's it. Download a sample performance review from Quantum Growth Coaching at qgcdl.etambook.com.

Get people to do what you want by helping them get what they want.

This article started by addressing the issue, "I can't get good people"

and ended up with ordinary people producing extraordinary results. You now know how to develop position results descriptions and create a system to recruit super-qualified candidates almost begging for the job. You know how to get them started, train them, and inspire them with a powerful vision, a strong set of values, and the same passion and fire that you have for your organization. And you know how to engage them in a process that continually enhances your systems and makes them feel that they're part of a team.

Regular people, spectacular results. ■

Resources

Jenson, Donna, "Sharing the Vision: Every Leader's Obligation," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 8, No. 5.

Kleiner, Brian et al., "How to Hire the Right Person the First Time," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 21, No. 2.

Lemberg, Paul, "What Not to Do, and How Not to Do It," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 19, No. 6.

Tschohl, John, "Training Programs Need More than Good Information," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 21, No. 2.

These resources are available at www.snpo.org/members.

*Paul Lemberg (www.lemborg.com) and Tom Matzen co-founded Quantum Growth Coaching (P.O. Box 676173, Rancho Santa Fe, California 92067, www.quantumgrowthcoaching.com), and co-authored the e-book *Earn Twice as Much with Half the Stress* (www.earntwiceasmuchwithhalfthestress.com), from which this article is adapted. This e-book is free, although the authors ask that you make a small donation to the Cras Tibi Foundation to help finance first-stage entrepreneurs in developing countries through a program called entrepreneurial micro-lending. To find out more about Cras Tibi, micro-lending, and how to make a donation, visit the foundation at www.crastibifoundation.org.*