

Work with the Best:

How to Find the Employees You Need

To avoid staff turnover, try this proactive approach.

By Lee Froschheiser

Do you wait till a job opens up before you start searching for someone to fill that slot? If so, you're engaging in reactive recruiting at its worst.

Finding good employees must be rooted in proactive rather than reactive recruiting methods. That means you must develop a structured, multi-layered selection process well before you need it. The cost of frequent employee turnover is too high to leave recruiting till the last minute. Hiring the wrong person can lead to poor employee morale, low productivity, and lost opportunities. The impact on your organization's mission can be staggering.

A well written job description will drive your entire recruiting process.

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins stresses the importance of boarding the "right people on the bus" and in the right seats before you decide where to drive. Continuing this thought process a step further, it's also true that although a bus has many seats, only one seat is the driver's. Too many nonprofits think the board of directors is in charge of the bus, but that's a mistake. It's up to you, as the executive director of your organization, to decide who sits in which seats. Filling your bus is one of the most crucial parts of your job. As Collins

says, "People are not your most important assets. The *right* people are."

Fortunately, with a solid process of hiring, training, and developing new employees, you can feel confident that you've boarded the very best people for your needs onto the organizational bus. Here's how.

Start with a good job description

Before you begin the recruiting process, you need to have a job description in place. A good job description answers the following questions: What is the job's purpose? What responsibilities are integral to the job? Who does the employee report to? How will the employee's effectiveness be measured? What competencies, talents, and experience are required? What is the "personality" of the job? In other words, what behaviors, temperament, and communication style fit with this position?

Don't make the mistake of considering technical abilities alone and overlooking character. You can teach techniques, but you can't change a person's disposition.

The job description determines what questions you'll ask in your interview and how you'll orient the new employee. A well written job description will drive your entire recruiting process.

Interview well

Once you've attracted top candidates, the next step is a game plan for the interview. What is it that you're looking for? A well structured interview focuses on critical competencies the applicant should possess for the position. You want to find out if applicants' values fit with those of your organization

and if they have the right personality skills to thrive in a sometimes unpredictable environment.

Don't make the mistake of testing technical abilities alone and overlooking character.

Again, the right background and technical skills aren't enough. A good interview process seeks out the behavioral qualities you need. For instance, you might want a team player with a positive attitude who is able to think critically, lead others, solve problems, and communicate well. In behavioral interviews, you ask candidates to pinpoint specific instances in which they demonstrated such attributes in the past. You might say, for example, "Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision" or "Give me an example of how you completed a job by motivating others." Such behavior-based interviewing is the best way to find people with the traits you identified in your job description.

Focus on the first 90 days

After you've hired someone, the next phase in the recruitment process is to use coaching and skills development to help the employee grow. Implement a solid 90-day training plan to secure new employees' place in the organization and facilitate their growth. A key part of this plan is to provide each new employee with a mentoring team composed of a peer, a manager, and a support person.

This team should meet at least

How to Board the Right People onto the Organizational Bus

Focus on creating a systematic, proactive recruiting process.

Formulate a good job description to serve as a blueprint for the job.

Create a solid business plan that tells you how many and what kind of people you need to hire.

Conduct behavior-based interviews, using candidates' past behavior to forecast how they will behave in the future.

Get new recruits on board with a 90-day mentoring plan, 90-day goals, and 90-day training.

Assign new employees a mentoring team that meets with them at least monthly to make sure they're successful.

Have a development plan ready once employees complete their 90-day training plan to help them develop over the next year.



once a month to give feedback, acquaint the new person with the organization, and make sure the training plan is on track. The team should help the new employee understand the organization's vital factors—the unique set of elements that can either hold the organization back or propel it to success. Vital factors may include, for example, the quality of service provided to recipients, percentage of donations that go toward recipients, amount of service overhead, total contributions, and number of people served.

Employees should also be assigned their own set of personal vital factors that support those of the organization. Using vital factors to measure employee performance will ensure that your mission is firmly aligned with the people you've chosen to help execute it.

The first 90 days of employment are vital to long-term success.

It's critical to set clear, results-oriented goals for employees during the first 90 days. The purpose is to establish your expectations and accountability for results. Make sure employees understand their priorities so they can help you measure how well they're progressing.

Have a long-term plan to develop employees

Once new employees complete their first 90 days, the next step is ensuring you have an ongoing development plan to help them continue growing. This plan should emphasize consistent improvement and strengthening of job performance.

With such a plan in place, you'll optimize the performance potential for every aspect of your organization. The right strategies will dramatically increase your organization's odds of success. ■

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