

Hiring the Best!!

In today's highly competitive environments, attracting, hiring and retaining the right talent is critical for organizational success. There are five important steps in hiring successful employees: sourcing, screening, designing and conducting interviews, rating candidates and reference checking. Sourcing of candidates can be particularly challenging, particularly for specific jobs or tight labour markets. To increase your odds of having a solid pre-qualified pool from which to choose from, utilize various such as: resume file; internet posting sites (workopolis and monster are popular); career planning fairs; professional or trade organizations; advertising; trade shows and conferences; post secondary institutions; competitors; friends and family (some organizations pay employee for qualified referrals that get hired) and HRDC (Human Resources Development Canada).

Next, applicants should be screened. This can cover a variety of factors including: technical skills required; industry experience; educational backgrounds; similar job experience; quality of resume/application and even information obtained through the use of assessment tools. The intent is to narrow the pool of candidates for a manageable number to consider for the interview process.

The interview is the most widely used selection tool in most industries. Although traditional interviews are a very popular approach to hiring and selection, they are not good predictors of job fit. They often ask hypothetical, rating and telegraphic types of questions. More organizations are now utilizing behaviour based interviewing (B.B.I) which is based on the fact that past behaviour is the best predictor of future performance. Generally, open ended questions about past experiences are asked. The key is to identify 5-8 key skills or competencies and then develop 1-2 behavioural questions for each competency. It does make it easier to rate candidate's experience if each one is asked the same questions based on the same competencies. They are often enclosed as part of an "interview guide" with job description, key competencies and room for notetaking under the questions.

Before conducting the interview, one must decide on the interview process itself. Will the hiring manager conduct interviews alone or will other team members or Human Resources be involved? Factors which will influence choice include time constraints; defensibility legally; logistical details; individual biases and timing.

The process of conducting the interview itself can be challenging. When opening the interview, it is most important to build rapport with the applicant. For some, having some prepared questions may be helpful in breaking the ice. If the job description has not already been sent in advance, the candidate should be given an opportunity to review it at this time. The interviewer at this time may explain the interview process, describe the type of questions and how the candidate could best answer them. The interviewer may often have to probe for more specific information. If both the interviewer and the candidate follow the process of answering who, what, where, when, why and how for each question, the process will flow more smoothly. Another way some interviewers look at it is to ask for a description of the situation, the task at hand, the action steps taken and the final result. Prior to the close of the interview, it is always advisable to ask the candidate if they have any questions. Furthermore, one should describe the organization's culture and values as this helps the candidate determine if the position will be a good fit for them as well!

After all interviews are completed, the challenge may become one of assessing the candidates and rating their performance examples. Whether all interviewers meet to discuss the candidates, or rating scales are used to rank performance examples, one should ensure that the most significant performance competencies required for the position are met since training opportunities may help individuals who need development in other areas. Once an agreed upon candidate is selected, most organizations typically offer a conditional letter, dependent on skill testing or reference checking and one that states salary and benefit offers. Reference checking is really a formality. The BI interview should tell you whether the candidate is appropriate or not. Reference letters are usually positively written and may not provide any valuable information. Reference checks can be used to clarify information, employment dates and title. This process may be done by external organizations that specialize in this. Many organizations however do not allow their supervisors/managers to provide reference information and merely confirm employment dates and titles. Some may even direct you to 1-800 numbers. Once the candidate signs the letter and all conditions are met, you have successfully selected a new member of your organization!

The most often asked questions regarding screening and selection in employment relate to legal issues. When designing your applications, advertising for candidates and conducting interviews (including note taking), there are several subjects where you must be careful of what type of information you are seeking. They are: name, addresses (those outside of Canada); age, sex, marital status, family status; national or ethnic origin, military service; language; race or colour; photographs; religion; height and weight; disability; medical information; pardoned conviction; sexual orientation. For more specific information, please contact the Canadian Human Rights Commission. For the most part, if the question does not provide information that relates to that person's ability to do the job – don't ask it! Preparing for the selection and hiring process can be challenging and demanding – but attracting and selecting the best employee for the position is well worth the effort! Ask anyone who has recently had to fill the same position for lack of good job fit between the organization, the position and potential employee!