

## **Hiring Employees**

### *It's not just luck*

This is basic information concerning the importance of planning and knowing what kind of employee you need before beginning the recruitment process. You will learn how to conduct a simple job analysis, establish minimum requirements, screen candidate resumes and about the importance of using tests, structured interviews and reference checks.

### **Qualifications**

What kind of experience and education should be required? The answer to this question is important because it forms the basis of recruitment and signals to employees what they must do to prepare for promotion.

It is essential to have a list of duties or work to ACTUALLY be performed and to define the level of responsibility related to each task or duty. Of course, the selection of duties should be fine-tuned to the future needs of the organization as seen in the organization's strategic plan. However, unless these future needs are clearly defined and specific it is best to remain with actual duties being performed. Make sure to include decisions made by the person in the course of their work, supervision responsibilities, and communication responsibilities. When you get this listing compiled then rate the importance (a ranking is good) of the tasks and the frequency (a percentage of the day, week or month is easy to work with) each is performed. Look at the top 10 to 15 most important along with any very frequent tasks, which did not get listed, in this top group of most important tasks.

Next, list the knowledge, skills and abilities it takes to perform each task well. Count the number of times any knowledge; skill or ability is repeated. Make a list of these starting with those which occur most often. Also include any which are associated with the top 2 to 5 most important tasks. Then cross out any, which can be learned in a week to 6 weeks. When recruiting from outside the organization cross out those, which are specific to the organization such as knowledge of personnel policies or specific work practices. Be careful not to require anything, which would form a barrier to your considering a top-notch candidate. The remaining top 5 to 10 should be looked for during the selection process.

This information forms the basis for determining the education and experience qualifications. Look at each of the 5 to 10 knowledge, skills, and abilities in turn. Consider the desired end result, level of responsibility and criticality of performing correctly when applying the knowledge or skill and when using a given ability. To help you with this analysis, it is good to refer back to your original list of tasks. Decide the level of training and education needed to gain this knowledge, skill or ability. The highest level of training or education necessary to perform ACCEPTABLY is the educational minimum requirement. Then double check by looking again at these same skills and knowledge in congress with the 10 most important tasks, level of responsibility and criticality of performing correctly. Only this time determine the kind of work, if performed, which would cause a person to learn this skill on the job and the amount of time (amount of practice) it would take to perform the associated

tasks at an ACCEPTABLE LEVEL. The highest amount of time and the highest level of experience (analyst, management, supervisor, and etc.) form the minimum experience you should require. These are the minimum qualifications needed by any new employee and should be placed in your flyer and advertisements. Keep in mind that these requirements form the bottom and that you should not accept any candidates below this level. If your recruitment is successful you can screen for greater experience and education. Knowing what the minimums are will keep you from making mistakes.

An analyst who is used to this kind of decisions making working with a person who understands the nature and kind of work to be performed is best. The quality of the results depends on the careful consideration of each step, the quality of analysis and the thoroughness of the thinking involved. This is hard thought provoking work and will take some time and lots of patience. Getting a group together to brainstorm is a good approach. However, it is the most important step in the hiring process because knowing what is needed is the best way to assure the organization gets staffed appropriately. If the qualifications and selection characteristics are not appropriate then recruitment will not be written properly and selection decisions will be inappropriate. In a well run personnel function this analysis forms the basis of several personnel decisions such as pay, organizational analysis, and evaluation.

Conceptually the process of conducting a job analysis is simple. However, in practice it is difficult and takes a lot of discipline and fortitude. Be patient with yourself. For a more through understanding please see hrzone's job analysis.

### **Choosing candidates to interview**

The only way to do this is to trudge through the resumes and to begin making stacks. It is easiest to start by choosing the most concrete requirement, usually education. If you have decided that a B.S. degree is necessary then start out by placing all of the resumes indicating possession of a B.S. degree in one pile. Then analyze these for the other basic requirements. If you still have too many to interview in one day or the allotted time, then begin analyzing these to see which persons have some of the more desirable abilities. (The desirable abilities can be determined by going back to your job analysis. Look at the top tasks and at the abilities needed. Determine what level of experience and training is needed to perform very well.) Or another way of doing this is by choosing persons who have experience performing any of the top 3 to 5 duties. Consistency is the key to this. Always look back through the stacks to double-check your sorting. It is easy to make a mistake in this process because of the unique nature of resumes. No consideration of race, sex, or national origin is appropriate. Just be consistent and choose the best qualified.

### **Salary**

Salary is a sticky matter. It can be a matter of any or all of the following: the going rate paid other similar positions at relevant organizations; what the going rate is perceived to be; the internal relationships among positions in the organization; the perceived relationship among positions in the organization; the cost of living; the perceived cost of living and housing in your area; and what you have to pay to get the person you want.

It is a good idea to get some understanding of what salaries are paid in your area for the same similar position. This can be difficult because some companies do not like to tell others what salary is paid. Indeed, sometimes they do not want their employees to know this information. Pick about ten companies who hire similar positions within driving distance from you (or where you would be able to recruit employees from) and do a survey. If you wish to be equal to the other organizations in your area set your salary at the mean of this distribution. If you want to be able to steal employees more easily set your salary 10% to 15% above the mean (higher is even better). Make sure to maintain the internal salary relationships. Disrupt this relationship if you must, but be careful. If you are not careful you may lose some people who are upset over the new higher pay given to this new position.

### **Do the candidates meet the basic requirements?**

It is best to determine who are the most qualified candidates and who seem to fit best in the organization before verifying the basic requirements such as years of experience and education. You can require written documentation such as a college or high school transcript to verify education. However, to check years of experience and kind of experience always conduct a reference check and while conducting the reference always talk to at least two former supervisors. In other words, talk to the people who actually reviewed and saw the quality of the work performed. A second choice is an administrator or a person who has seen the results of the work performed. When conducting the reference always prepare ahead of time. Know what you really need to find out before you start. ALWAYS GET THE PERMISSION OF THE CANDIDATES BEFORE BEGINNING. (You do not want to be responsible for the person being fired or missing a promotion over your reference check questions.) Most of the questions you need to ask will be easily generated from the minimum requirements you have previously established. For instance in the case you decided supervisory experience was important you would likely ask the following questions:

- Has Joe been a supervisor with your company?
- How long did this last?
- How many people was he responsible for?
- What did these people do?
- Did he evaluate them?
- Was he able to organize, plan and direct the work of this group well?

If the answer to this question is yes, then ask: What work process or problems did he improve or change? At this point you need to ask follow up questions until you understand exactly how well this person was able to direct the work of others and to problem solve for a group to improve efficiency or to improve a service.

Do you believe the people under this person did their best?

If the answer to this question is yes, then ask: What did you observe that draws you to this conclusion. At this point you need to ask as many follow up questions as necessary to understand what the person is talking about and to understand the point of view of the person you are interviewing. Caution, understanding the frame of reference of the person you are talking to is very important. Otherwise, you will not know what the answers to your question indicate about the person that you want to hire.

### **Tests**

After you have determined what you need to know about candidates, via the job analysis, then you must determine a way to evaluate the candidates, test them. Whether they know it or not, everyone uses tests. Interviews are tests because they are measuring devices. The accuracy of the test (interview) is dependent on how closely associated the test (interview questions) measure what the test is designed to measure (the important stuff you found in your job analysis) and how well the interview is conducted. Under the Uniform Guidelines everything including screening criteria and reference checks are a test of a kind.

So, make sure your advertised minimum qualifications, resume screening, tests, interview questions and anything else you use to determine who to hire are closely associated with your job analysis (the important knowledge, skills and abilities it takes to perform the job) and the job analysis is easily defended (can be shown to be a careful and fair consideration of what the job is and what the important duties of the job are).

To decide whether to use a test and what questions to place in the interview look over the important knowledge, skills and abilities. List these on a sheet of paper while leaving a lot of space to write off to the side. Immediately, write performance evaluation next to personality characteristics such as integrity, tenacity, and the like because; though they are important, they are very difficult to measure (find out about in the selection process). Unless you have the help of a well-qualified industrial or organizational psychologist it is best to stay away from these. Even with professional help the interpretation of results should be approached carefully. It is best to save these for the probationary evaluation period. If you insist on finding out about these before hiring, then attempt this during your reference check when you can ask an observer, a supervisor, about the person's working habits and ability to work with others.

## **The Interview**

An interview, like all selection devices, must be designed to measure important knowledge; skills and abilities as discovered in the job analysis you previously performed. A structured interview process designed to assess past behaviors and accomplishments is best. Center your questions on some well-defined important knowledge, which are needed to perform the most important duties. If you ask candidates to indicate how and in what way they perform duties that require the knowledge you want to assess, you may also be able to find out about the person's abilities. Ask all candidates the same 5 to 15 questions. Follow each of these with follow up questions designed to find out the person's level of knowledge and ability. Dwell on a few questions rather than ask a lot of questions finding out very little. You will find that you will understand the capabilities of a candidate better by finding out a lot about their experience in relation to one or two projects they worked on which are closely associated with the work you will assign.

Example of interview when finding out about knowledge of skilled trades work practices when hiring a maintenance director

Provide us with a general overview of your experience supervising trades persons. Tell us about the trades involved and what they were building or maintaining. Describe your responsibilities.

Tell us about at least two problems you solved that are related to skilled trades work?

During the answer to this question you need to ask a lot of follow up questions which will allow you to understand the problem involved, the quality of the solution, the reason for the solution, and the candidates point of view on the solution. From this you should gain a good understanding of the persons knowledge of skilled trades work, supervision of that work, and ability to solve problems.

Make sure to take good notes so that you can verify some of this information with this person's supervisor when you make your reference check. The notes will also help you compare candidates.

Of course you would have to ask additional questions to find out more information. It is a good idea to have another person help you interview so that perceptions of answers can be shared and analyzed. It is also a good idea to use a rating sheet on which you have written the knowledge and abilities you are measuring (finding out about) so that you can rate candidates and then use these sheets to help you make comparisons.

### **The best fit**

Hopefully this is a difficult decision to come to. It is always nice to have several top candidates to choose from. In this case, pick the person whose abilities are most closely associated with the problems or challenges of the organization; whose skills compliment/balance the abilities in the work group; or who seem to have formed working relationships in the past, which are best for the work group at hand. (Likeability is dangerous. Always tie your decision back to the important tasks of the position.) It is best to list out the strengths and weaknesses as discovered in the selection process and to consider each objectively. If several people have interviewed the candidates, then it may be best to gather these people together to discuss the matter.

Always remember to stay grounded in what you understand are the needs of the organization as discovered by the previously performed job analysis. Caution it is easy to go a stray at this point. Slow down and be as deliberate as possible.

### **Discrimination**

The definition of discrimination and what is illegal discrimination varies somewhat from state to state. Generally, it is illegal to discriminate against anyone because of race, religious preference, sex, national origin or physical disability within the meaning of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have conducted a good job analysis and know what the salient duties of the position are and what it takes to perform them, you are in a strong position to field discrimination complaints. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires you to be careful with inquires you make regarding the psychical abilities of the candidates. YOU MUST WAIT until you have chosen who will be best for your position before you inquire regarding the person's physical abilities. That means: do not send them for a medical or psychological exam until you make a conditional offer of employment. The only exception to this is an inquiry regarding any help needed to compete in the selection

process. Unless a well-qualified human resource person assists you, it is best to not attempt this. Just except applications and move through the process.

Occasionally during or before the selection process a person with disabilities approaches you with a problem. When this happens, make notes regarding what they tell you. Then attempt to assist them in the selection process by making concessions to their needs such as allowing a reader for a blind person to take a written test, allowing a signing interpreter for a deaf candidate during an interview, allowing more time to take a written examination for a person who is dyslexic (accommodations). In this situation it may be best to seek assistance but if you cannot then meet with the person and directly ask them what they need to compete with the other candidates. If you can accomplish what they ask then do so showing as much sensitivity to the situation as you can. Alert everyone involved that the selection process is for the purpose of finding who is qualified and that the idea of accommodation will be addressed after the best candidate for the job is chosen. Document the entire selection process.

### **Reference check**

You should always do a reference check. You are liable for any problems, which may come along later. For example, if you hire an employee who becomes violent and who was violent previously with another employer you are liable for placing that person in the work environment. However, if you have done a thorough reference check then the courts have generally found that you have done your best and are not liable to a bad hiring decision. However, you are still on the hook for any workers compensation ramifications. So, make sure to keep the results of your check but not in the personnel file where the candidate can see what the references said. Never, never divulge what references say to you. If you do, then the reference will not give you a reference again and may not give the next person candid information. We must all stick together.

Make notes regarding the basic questions you asked and the answers you receive making sure to indicate whom you spoke to. Along with the questions you will ask concerning qualifications (make sure to read the section above regarding qualifications) you should ask how the person was to work with and if there were any problems. Make sure to inquire regarding their ability to follow instructions and receive comments regarding their work. Making up a simple sheet of paper containing the questions you will ask with places to write the answers will make things easier.

**ALLWAYS ASK:** Would you hire this person again; how do you see this person in the xxx job; and would you hire this person to fill a xxx position. Always find out the reasoning behind all of these answers.

**GOOD LUCK!**