

Reducing Those Mis-Hires

Costly mistakes can be prevented

By Tom Kosnik

Inefficient and ineffective hiring is a costly mistake. Bradford Smart, in his study titled "Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching and Keeping the Best People," shows that bad hires can cost a company 14 to 28 times their base pay. For a midlevel position — perhaps a contingent project manager — that could be a million-dollar mistake.

There are very specific techniques and practices that can save significant time and money in acquiring human resources. Staffing companies that have well-defined processes, tools and trained employees have become masters of these hiring techniques and practices. Many will pass such expertise on to their clients in an effort to gain a strong partnering relationship. As the labor market tightens, hiring managers, too, need to sharpen their skills. When vendors and their customers work together, efficiency increases and risks diminish.

Exchanging information — communicating well — starts the process moving down the right road. Many hiring managers have had the experience of giving a job order to their contact at a staffing firm and quickly receiving candidates. But they might not be the right ones. In order to acquire human resources effectively and efficiently, a staffing firm needs to obtain information on several levels.

A well-defined job description is critical for suc-

cess. They will typically include job title, the function of the job, the reporting relationships, the job duties and responsibilities, the job requirements in terms of education, work history and particular competencies and compensation range.

Most important, a job description will articulate why your company is a great place to work and why this is a great opportunity for prospective candidates. That additional information can help attract the best of the best.

The communication of the hiring process is also critical to success. Because it is common for companies to have several kinds of hiring processes, as well as various people driving the process, a staffing firm will need to know the hiring process as well as the various drivers within it.

Every job in every company has certain "informal idiosyncrasies" that go along with the job. These are the cultural dynamics that surround the job. They may include things like informal reporting structures, the stress involved in the job, the management dynamics involved, the key players involved in the department

behind the bad resumes would be part of this) only the best-fit candidates are making it to the next level in the hiring process.

Screening questions are different from full interviewing questions. Early interviews are short and immediately get to the heart of the matter. The staffing vendor will be looking for the things

that a hiring manager must have in a candidate. To save time in this area, a staffing firm will need to know a client's absolute needs in a candidate versus its wish list.

Using a vendor in a consultative role to assist in the interviewing process will certainly save time. There are many conflicting theories about the best techniques to use.

Staffing vendors specialize in interviewing. A 15-minute call from the hiring manager to

the staffing vendor to make sure that the manager is asking the right questions and using best practice type techniques is a great way to increase efficiency.

Many staffing vendors will try to obtain immediate feedback on a specific interview or a specific candidate. A staffing firm needs to know if an interview was a success or more important,



or on the project, or some of the key performance metrics. More of this informal type information in the hands of the staffing vendor will only lead to fewer unfortunate hires.

Many staffing vendors will pre-screen candidates prior to moving them on to the next phase of the hiring process. Proper prescreening ensures (finding the gems

why a candidate did not fit. Debriefing the candidates that did not fit and understanding why will enable the staffing vendor to make a better placement.

Specialization is also important. Different contingent talent sources have different requirements and understanding them makes for greater efficiency and, therefore, a bigger return on investment.

For instance, posting to job boards has become quite a science. Additionally, it is difficult to deny how important boards have become in the whole hiring process. A posting that does not articulate your position as an attractive opportunity or

leaves out critical information can lead to a significant amount of wasted time on the part of your internal HR department.

Staffing vendors, which post to job boards almost daily, have learned how to get candidates to respond to certain job postings. Ask some of your staffing vendors about the do's and don'ts of posting jobs to the internet. A well-articulated job posting will attract the right candidates and assist in weeding out unqualified candidates.

Some electronic staffing tools can, in certain cases, make the hiring process more time consuming. Such tools consist of databases,

resume tracking tools, email tracking programs and candidate relationship programs. By using such tools on a daily basis, some staffing vendors have come to understand the best way to use them. Another prudent idea is to ask some of your staffing vendors how they fully utilize such tools. Incorporating such techniques into your company's practices could increase efficiency quite a bit.

Hiring, to a large extent, requires sales expertise. Qualified candidates have multiple opportunities and relationships with several recruiters. They probably also have a resume posted on a few key job boards.

As unemployment continues to drop, competition for these candidates will only increase.

A smart staffing vendor will know how to sell a customer's job to a highly qualified candidate. More important, staffing consultants can offer your company's hiring managers and HR department advice on particular techniques that will help them sell your company's jobs to prospective and qualified candidates they are interviewing. **■**

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