

HIRING YOUR NEXT WING MAN (or LADY) IS ONE OF YOUR MOST CRUCIAL DECISIONS OF THE YEAR

Here's some things to do (and not to do).

Gallup found that only one in 10 people possess the talent to manage. Further, my 30-years of consulting shows that less than 5% of all Salespeople fall into the greatness category.

Is that good or bad? Yes. It's good if you are great at educating and mentoring your group to be more effective. And, it's bad if you keep hiring mediocre people who think they are fine just like they are and you let them be that way. Why do I keep hearing something is out of whack with our hiring? What is a whack?

Instead of being out of whack, I'll provide some ideas to give you greater chances of success with your hiring practices.

*Don't always look for industry experiences.

I first got into industrial sales at age 24. Several veterans, including my boss, told me I would not be successful as I didn't have neither industry experience nor experiences in the industries I would be selling to – nor sales experience.

Each of those people were tired, stuck-in-a-rut people. On the other hand, I was annually named Salesperson of the Year and Regional Manager of the Year. They had done the same things for 20 years, while I applied new methods, creativity, value-add and more. Those that told me I wouldn't make it? They were all fired as they were stuck with out-of-date skills. They were just going through repetitive motions.

When I joined a new employer as V.P. of Sales, I contacted a recruiter as I needed a fireball Salesperson on my team – I didn't have anyone like that. I told the recruiter, "I don't want experience in our industry. I want a track record and a 'can-do' attitude." One candidate

delivered a thank you note, after the interview, to my hotel the next morning. Then, he called to offer to drive me to the airport. Most people will follow-up with an email. That's not personal and it's actually a sign of laziness and being like everyone else. Chuck was different.

I hired him to cover 1/3 of Texas but as 3 other Representatives departed, Chuck took over the state and almost quadrupled our revenue. Like me, he started with no industry experience.

*Don't hire them just because you like them.

The world is full of salespeople who are likeable. But many don't accomplish much. A few years ago a client wanted me to meet a candidate I didn't want to hire for several reasons. I asked the 3 managers, "Why are you so insistent on hiring him?" Like parrots, all had the same response. "I like him." I knew, in advance, that the candidate wasn't a "Driver" and that he would be a poor listener and awful with details. I met him and the 3 managers and I said, "This is a 4-hour interview." I gave him about 6 assignments, both inside and outside of the company. "I'll see you back here at noon to see if we're right for each other." His score? Zero out of 6. He was liked, but my logical and intuitive sides of the brain told me he would fail at 4 or 5 of the 6 assignments. He surpassed my low expectations.

*Get assistance with your interviewing

If you're not getting top-notch talent to respond and/or you're not making great hiring decisions, hire a Consultant. Maybe you're not wording the ad properly. Maybe you're not asking the right questions. Maybe you're not hearing the responses well enough (2 sets of ears are better than 1). Maybe you didn't ask your Assistant to post you of any candidate who went above-board with him/her.

And if you hire a professional, listen to them. A client was going to hire a Division Manager and the chief was hot-to-trot with one candidate. I had run his personality profile which showed he would be a big talker. During the breakfast interview, I didn't have to ask anything as the chief asked just several questions and the candidate spewed on and on – and off topic. It was so bad,

I left the table as he droned on and on. He had never thought of the question – why is abbreviated such a long word?

Afterwards, the chief said, “I really want him as he has both sales and operations experience.” I replied, “So, you bought what he was saying?” The chief asked me, “Can you help him?” Me: “No.” He hired him anyway and he and his boss paid dearly for it. I suggested after he was hired the two chiefs let him go as the guy’s extra-marital affairs and late-night carousing were way over the line. I caught him twice (not fit for publication). I advised the two chiefs, “It’s a 2-minute termination. Don’t even entertain a response.” At the termination meeting, the guy started bawling and they let him yack about his AA meetings and the counseling he and his wife were getting from the church. They didn’t listen to me and they then became stuck. Why are a “wise men” and “wise guy” opposites?

*We will all still make hiring mistakes

While in corporate, I made several. One Salesperson was double-dipping (2 secret employers) and I wasn’t getting good productivity. Before we found out that he was double-dipping, I should have let him go. The only thing worse than turnover is when there is none when there should be some. In other words, hire slow and fire fast.

*You can give them “secret” tests

One of my favorites is to leave them alone in my office for a few minutes. Then, I call my own phone or extension and let it ring. Smart people would answer...“Bill Blades office”. Rejects just let it ring and ring. Very few show the initiative to answer it. It’s just one way to find the brightest crayon in the box.

*Don’t believe resumes as they are paid advertisements

CareerBuilder surveyed 2,188 hiring managers and found that 58% had found a lie on a resume. Do your homework and don’t trust. Just verify.

*Be more creative with calls to check references

Most firms don't tell the whole truths as they fear lawsuits. For my clients, I call the references and tell them who I am and what I do and then ask, "How can I help this person be more successful?" One respondent said, "Keep him off the golf course." He was hired and where do you think he went almost every week? I stopped that when I reviewed his expense reports. I also called a client who the representative stated he played golf with. After a bit of chit-chat, I asked, "When did you last see Jim?" Response: "I haven't met him yet." He was all done.

*Study all written communication

You are viewing their best stuff. Fortune Magazine listed these bloopers in actual resumes:

- Reason for leaving last job: maturity leave.
- Received a *plague* for Salesperson of the Year.
- Am a perfectionist and rarely *if if* ever forget details.
- I have lurnt Word Perfect computer programs.

I'm not suggesting you totally discount someone for a cover letter typo, but I do suggest you email/write them with detailed questions to see if they again have an error when they reply. If so, give pause.

*Update position descriptions and measurement devices

Smart candidates will, at least, ask for a position description. Otherwise, what are they applying for other than a Sales Representative position? Once you show them to a candidate, the individual must ask intelligent questions about the documents. No questions = no hire.

Most of the position descriptions I see are weak. And, very few organizations have a measurement at all. Too bad, as they are great tools for evaluations (which aren't just for year-end!) Another tip: I customize the documents based on the weakness I want someone to focus on. If you've got 20 Salespeople, all have the same information on the position descriptions e.g. items 1 to 20. But, I add numbers 21 and 22 just for Joe and a different number 21 and 22 for

Mary. They are not just all different, but all of them have specific weaknesses to address. Customize for all new hires as everyone has strengths and weaknesses.

*Watch your talk/listen ratio

Some interviewers dominate the conversation by selling the candidate on the company. That's not a quality interview. I suggest you follow the 90/10 rule which is 90% asking great questions, listening intently and take great notes – and only 10% talking.

If you talk too much, it's a slim chance you won't learn enough about the candidate. And ask other questions like why do "slim chance" and "fat chance" mean the same thing?

Good questions to ask: What is the last book you read on your profession? What did you learn?

*Personality profiles can help you in several ways

They can help you determine if the candidate is right for the position. Maybe the person is not right for one occupation such as sales, but would be a great fit for engineering. Many people do career shifts – maybe you can assist a few. Personality "tests" area also excellent for developing interview questions. The "test" results can also be used as a developmental tool if he/she comes onboard as most people have never been told the truths about their strengths and weaknesses.

*Hire part-time interns

Interns and the employers both gain from the experience. The intern not only learns, but a great mentor can fill their brain with good skills, habits and traits at the outset. And, the employer can gain by "growing" the individual into a full-time keeper. Both parties get to date while determining if an engagement is a good path to follow.

How much does the intern appreciate the afforded opportunity? I have former interns from over 20 years ago that still send gifts and notes of appreciation for jump-starting their careers.

*Humor is not used enough in interviews.

I suggest that interviewers invoke a bit of humor to see if the candidate has an appreciation for it. And, learn if the individual can add something humorous as a follow-up. You are, after all, seeking employees that can be fun to be around for the sake of teamwork.

Henry DeVries contributed a column to Forbes and he shared a true story: “I was waiting in a hotel lobby to meet a client. I had a name but not a face. A man hurried into the lobby, scanned the room, and came up to me. Obviously, he had a name, but not a face. “Are you rich?” he asked. I shrugged. “I make a good living”. He did not see the humor.

I would probably hire one of them, but not the other.

Just like ending an interview on a high note would be smart for a candidate, it’s also a good way to end an article.

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