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better work, better life



# Hiring great employees

Proven techniques you can use to make the most informed hiring decisions possible.

## People - your greatest asset



As a hiring authority in your company, you undertake considerable responsibility. Your hiring decisions will have a direct effect on your company's productivity, morale and overall effectiveness. Not to mention your job security.

So how do you know for sure that you are hiring the right people for the job? You don't. But you can use some proven techniques that will help you to make the most informed hiring decisions possible.

The following guidelines are used by the workplace experts at Adecco to better evaluate candidates and attract the most competent professionals to our client companies. Of course, you should customize these guidelines to suit your own specific needs and use those methods which you feel will work best for you and your company.

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## Understand your needs.

First, you need to develop a needs analysis for the particular job you are trying to fill:

- List the five major responsibilities of the vacant position - those areas in which the employee will be spending the majority of time every day.
- List the critical skills or special knowledge necessary to perform each responsibility.
- Review your performance requirements and separate those that you "must have" from those that would be "nice to have."
- Determine what educational background is necessary to do the job and what educational background is desirable. Be sure that you differentiate between the two. Use education as an indication of the candidate's determination and ability to learn. But don't rely too heavily on academic criteria for your ultimate decision making.
- Decide what depth of experience you need. Give yourself a range, but be prepared to consider promising candidates from outside that range.
- Make sure candidates have the skills and experience to do the job well.
- Ascertain if the candidates are willing to do what it takes to succeed.
- Be comfortable that you can manage them.



Hire candidates  
who you can  
manage effectively.



## Hiring great employees

### **Always be recruiting.**

There are many ways to seek and find qualified people. Using a combination of all of these methods is usually an effective approach to recruiting the best:

- Recruit from within.
- Encourage employee referrals through bonuses.
- Create and place effective classified advertising in appropriate publications.
- Post jobs in appropriate forums on the Internet.
- Recruit on college campuses, from professional associations and community/civic organizations.
- Maintain a professional network.
- Use a staffing firm with the resources to find the types of employees you are seeking.
- Audition temporary employees for permanent positions, unless the candidate pool is too competitive.

Each of these techniques, when done correctly, can provide you with a broad base of qualified candidates from which to choose for interviews. You never know when you will have a job vacancy, or when new needs will crop up, so you should always have a base of candidates with diverse skills readily available.

Once you have a specific job to fill, however, the key is then to focus your efforts - and/or the

efforts of a reputable staffing service - on identifying particular types of individuals who possess specific skill sets and experiences. Receiving reams of resumes is not the goal when you have an open position - you want as many qualified prospects as possible to apply.

### **Separate fact from fiction on resumes.**

The most important thing you should know about resumes is how to see past the hype and uncover the truths that lie within. Resumes have long been regarded as worth little more than the paper they are printed on, but by learning how to decipher them, their value increases. Here's what to look for - and look out for - when reviewing resumes:

- Pay careful attention to functional resumes which focus attention on major skills and specific accomplishments, but provide no chronological record of employment. Often, job seekers who use this type of resume are trying to hide gaps in employment.
- Achievements featured on resumes are often embellished. Many candidates use dramatic action verbs such as managed, streamlined, achieved, etc., on their resumes - examine them further during the interview process.
- Beware of "resume fluff." Too much detail about degrees, interests and hobbies can mean that space is being filled up for lack of anything better to say.

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- Pursue candidates who communicate on their resumes that they understand companies exist to make money. These candidates make it a point to include accomplishments on their resumes that benefited their employers' bottom line.
- Reading resumes takes a tremendous amount of focus. Be sure you review resumes in small doses, reading a few at a time. That way you won't overlook a potentially outstanding employee because your eyes have glazed over.

### **Conduct telephone interviews to save time & money.**

Another effective way to screen out unqualified candidates is to conduct initial interviews over the telephone. By asking focused questions on the essentials, you will be able to make a prudent decision quickly about a face-to-face meeting.

Using the telephone as the front-line of your screening process is helpful in other ways, too. You can interview out-of-town applicants without incurring travel costs until you are more certain of their potential. The telephone interview also solves the problem of having an enormous number of applicants to choose from. It reduces a long list of applicants to a short list of viable candidates.

As much as you possibly can, bunch all of your telephone interviews together over a day or two, so that you are able to compare candidates objectively with one another. To eliminate this step and save even more time, you can utilize a professional staffing service to screen candidates for you. In many cases, a reputable staffing service will conduct extensive testing and pre-interview candidates face-to-face to determine if any are viable for your opening.

### **Control every aspect of the interview.**

From the time you go out to greet a candidate, to the time you escort him or her to the elevator, you are in charge. It is up to you to make candidates aware that you will be asking focused questions and expect focused answers. It is up to you to probe for the information you will need to make a good hiring decision. And it is up to you to sell your company and yourself as a manager to candidates that you're interested in.

One approach to interviewing is to take the best aspects of each interview style you have heard about and used - behavioral, stress, situational, etc. - and combine them to produce a comprehensive strategy. Evaluate behavior, weigh emotional maturity and judgment, and determine manageability. Your approach should allow time for the inclusion of situational techniques and the opportunity to test poise with some tough stress questions.

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Probe for the information you will need to make a good hiring decision.

Once you have reviewed your needs analysis, conducted phone interviews and prepared your questions for this next round, it's time to start the face-to-face interview process.

- **Make a good first impression.**

First and foremost, make candidates comfortable and relaxed as early and as quickly as you can. Go out to the lobby and greet them, ask if they would like coffee or water. Start to build a rapport right away. It's more likely that a person treated in a warm and friendly manner from the start will respond to questioning openly and honestly.

Arrange your office (or the room in which the interview will be held) and do whatever housekeeping needs to be done. Your desk doesn't have to be cleared of all papers, but should be neat. Remember that candidates will form opinions about your company based partly on how this room, and you, appear.

- **Take detailed notes.**

Tell candidates that you have a lot of questions to ask. Explain that you will be taking notes to be sure each candidate stays fresh in your mind. Your notes need to summarize each candidate's key responses to your questions. Write enough detail so that you can compare candidate responses later and make an informed evaluation.



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- **Remember the 80/20 rule.**

During the interview, ask questions 20% of the time and you will be able to listen 80% of the time. Each moment you are talking, valuable evaluation time is lost. Know in advance what you are going to say and ask, and you will be able to dedicate the greater part of your time to listening.

- **Keep candidates on track.**

Remember that the person asking the questions in any conversation controls and directs its flow. As the interviewer, and potentially the candidate's future manager, you should establish control from minute one of the interview. Handle flustered candidates by explaining to them that they can pause and take their time to answer. Handle talkative candidates by tactfully redirecting the flow of the conversation. Say something like: "Megan, that's interesting - and maybe we'll touch on that later - but right now I'd like to focus on..."

- **Beware of the "halo effect."**

There are times during an interview where you begin to feel really good about an applicant. When this happens, it is time to get a grip on yourself and purposely seek out negative information. In fact, when interviewers begin to get a one-sided impression - whether it's good or bad - they tend to ask questions that will confirm that impression. Sometimes all that is needed is to step back, regain perspective, and ask for contrary information.

For example, if all of your interview questions have focused on situations that turned out well, you should ask a few questions that focus on situations in which things didn't work out well. Another way to diminish the "halo effect" is to utilize multiple interviewers to gain additional perspectives on each viable candidate - see page 22 for more information.

- **Be consistent with candidates.**

Make sure that you ask each candidate as many of the same questions as appropriate - you want to be able to compare apples to apples and judge candidates based on the same criteria.

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## Evaluate ability first.

At the heart of every interview is an honest reading of employment history. You should start off with questions that are easy both to ask and answer- it helps the interviewee to relax and helps you to hit your stride. Here are some basic questions you can ask to evaluate ability:

- What were the three most important responsibilities in your previous job?
- What special skills or knowledge did you need to perform these duties?
- What achievement are you most proud of?
- What was the most important project you worked on at that job?
- What have you learned from the jobs you have held?
- In what way has your job prepared you to take on greater responsibilities?
- What are your long-term goals and how will this job help you reach them?

In addition to interviewing, many employers conduct comprehensive skill evaluations to further determine ability. If appropriate for the open position and level of candidate, these tests can provide hiring authorities with objective evaluations of a wide range of critical skill sets.

## See if candidates are willing to do what it takes.

Those candidates who appear to have the ability to do the job at hand have passed the first test - you should end the interview process now for those who did not. Now it's time to determine if the remaining candidates actually want to get the job done and can work smoothly with the rest of your department.

The following questions will help you find employees who are willing to go the distance to do a great job:

- How would you define a productive work atmosphere?
- Tell me about a project that excited you.
- How do you organize and plan for major projects?
- Describe a project that required a high amount of energy over an extended period of time.
- What did you do to keep your energy up?
- Do you set goals for yourself? Tell me about an important goal you set recently. What have you done to reach it?
- Do you always reach your goals?
- Tell me about a time when you failed to reach a goal.
- Tell me about an occasion when your performance did not live up to your expectations.



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- How do you plan your day?
- Describe a typical day. What challenges do you normally experience in getting things done?
- Do you consider yourself successful? Why?
- Which book has had the greatest effect on your business life? Why? How has it changed you?

### **Make sure you can manage them.**

Now that you know a little more about how to differentiate the willing from the able, it is time to find out whether the candidate will be manageable once on board.

Your first responsibility as a manager is to get work done through others. In this stage of the hiring process, it is important to make a candid analysis of your own management style. Remember, we should hire only people who are manageable by us, not by an idealistic “super manager.”

The following questions, when customized to your needs, will tell you what each of your short-list candidates will be like to manage:

- Define a good manager.
- Describe the worst manager you ever had.
- How did your boss get the best out of you?
- How did you get the best out of your boss?
- What are some of the things about which you and your boss disagreed?

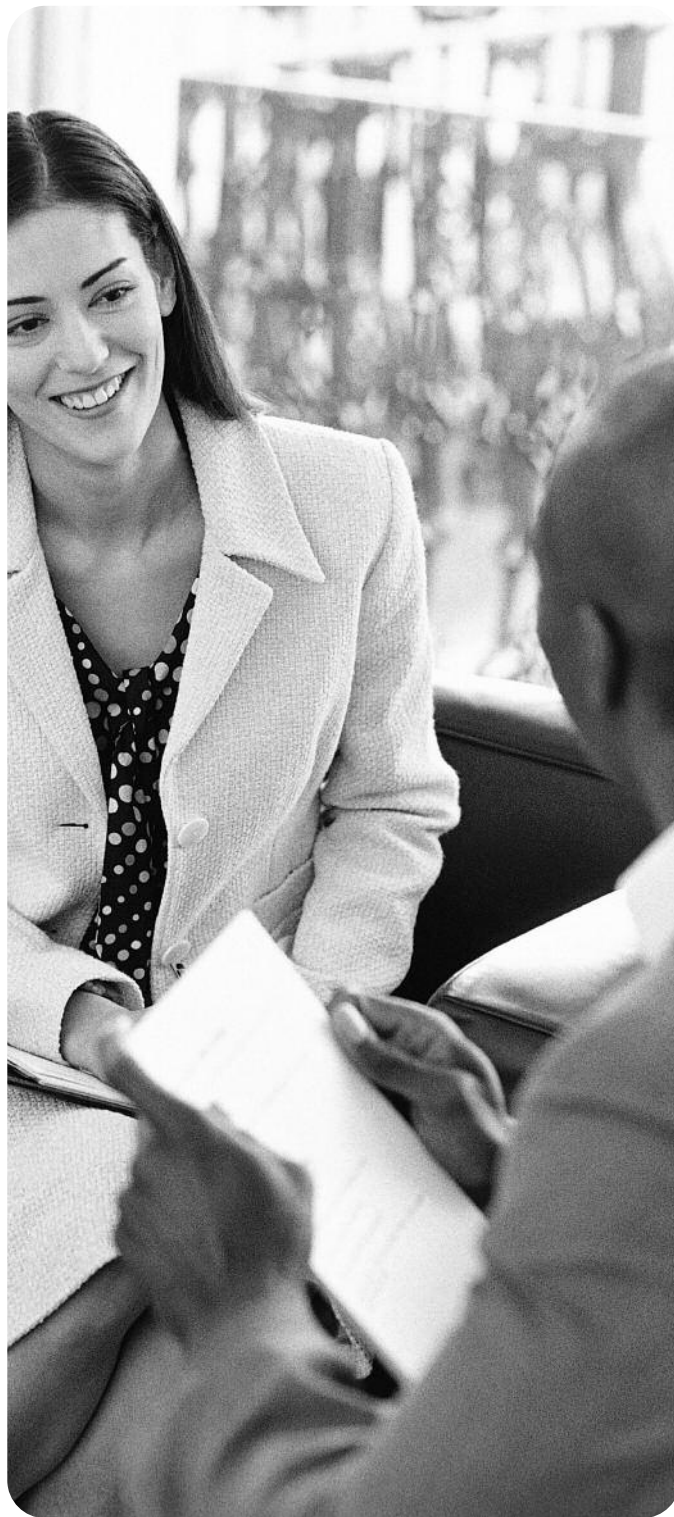
- What are some of the things your boss did that you disliked?
- I would be interested to hear about an occasion when your work or an idea was criticized.
- If you could have made one constructive suggestion to management, what would it have been?
- Tell me about a time you felt adequately recognized for your contributions.
- What kinds of rewards are most satisfying to you?
- Would you like to have the job your boss has?
- In what ways did your manager contribute to your decision to leave this job?

### **Turn the tables at the close.**

How you close the interview is just as important as how you opened it. You still need to maintain rapport with the candidate, and leave the person with the clear impression that your company is one of the best they might ever work for.

To close the interview, you must recap the areas you’ve addressed and then give the candidate the opportunity to ask questions, ask for the job, or promote his or her candidacy. The interview is a two-way street, and the candidate needs the chance to get information from you. After all, you might be trying to hire the best, but the candidate is trying at the same time to join the best company.

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Be sure, however, that you get certain closing questions answered, so that you can increase the odds of your job offers being accepted:

- How do you feel about this opportunity?
- What interests you most about it?
- What are your concerns?
- Should you be offered the job, how long will it take you to make a decision?
- Where else have you interviewed?
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- If you accept this position, what will your boss say when you resign?

## **Pick the top three and pursue your #1 with vigor**

You've conducted your interviews. You've taken good, detailed notes. You've checked references and verified degrees, certifications and salaries. Now it's decision time.

As you review your notes, look for any possible warning signs you may have overlooked. Be especially aware of candidates who quit jobs without giving adequate notice, or who showed up late for the interview without an explanation, or if you are unable to verify any references.

What constitutes the right hire? A person who is able to do the work, someone with team spirit and who is manageable, a professional who fits the corporate image and who is personally compatible with your company, and an emotionally mature adult with sound and rational judgment who will be a tremendous asset to your department and your company.

Unfortunately, there isn't always one perfect choice so sift through your notes and observations, evaluate the remarks of your interview team, and rank the top three contenders - just in case your top choice does not feel a mutual attraction.

The better the candidate, the more competitive you will have to be. When you feel strongly you have identified the right hire, go after them. Don't delay the offer, set as early a start date as possible, keep in touch and cross your fingers you don't lose them to a counter-offer or a change of heart.

If you do run into a counter situation, remind your candidate that more than 80% of those accepting a counter-offer leave or are terminated within six to 12 months. Of those who accept, 50% are aggressively job hunting again within 90 days. The fact is that accepting a counter-offer can have numerous negative consequences to one's career and it is up to you to clearly communicate that to your top candidate.

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Congratulations! You've done all you can to make the most informed hiring decision possible and are well on your way to staffing your organization with great employees!

### **A word about multiple interviewers.**

Multiple interviewers can be extremely valuable in the hiring process if handled correctly. The following guidelines will help you use multiple interviewers to make better hires and build a better team:

- Give colleagues adequate notice that you need their help to interview and see how much time they can invest. If you are told 10-15 minutes, look for someone else to help you out.
- Pick an interviewing team that you can use for all of your department's hires.
- Give each member of your interviewing team a job description and a short briefing. Provide copies of resumes, applications, etc.
- Assign each member specific tasks and go so far as to provide the questions. That way everyone will cover different ground. Of course, there will be times when you will want your team to repeat certain questions to see whether you are all getting the same answer.

**To learn more about how Adecco can help you hire the right employees for your company, please contact your local representative at 877.8.adecco or visit [adeccousa.com](http://adeccousa.com).**



Pick an interviewing team that you can use for all of your department's hires.



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