

Get it Right the First Time

Interviewing & Selecting Top-Performing Employees

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Hiring the right person for a job is one of management's most critical responsibilities. Making the right hire can increase an organization's productivity, profitability, and morale. Additionally, the process is a snapshot of how your organization conducts its business and how it treats its employees. It is a public relations process.

Making poor hiring decisions usually results in high turnover or unreliable performance on the job. If you continue hiring the wrong people, you face the costs of continuously recruiting and training new employees. This can substantially reduce the overall profitability of any organization. What follows is a brief summary of ten important steps that will make your hiring process more successful.

1. Know What You're Looking For

Successful hiring begins with reviewing the job description for the position you have open. If you don't have up-to-date job descriptions, you will need to create an accurate job description defining the essential duties, qualifications, physical demands, and work environment of the job.

It's important to know and understand what the job is all about. In hiring decisions, you will have to be able to make a judgment; not just about the person being interviewed, but about the fit between the person and the job. Well-written job descriptions help you hire the right people and make fair employment decisions you can defend in court.

Benchmark the position using the **Trimetrix Job Plus™** assessment. Benchmarking of behaviours, motivators and soft skill attributes tells you what the position requires for optimum performance and productivity. Current successful position holders and immediate supervisors can describe the position requirements and do the assessment online in about twenty minutes.

2. Find the Best Applicants

Various recruiting sources are available including personal recommendations, internal recruitment, employee referrals, college recruiting, employment agencies, and employment ads. Depending on the size and needs of your organization, you may use one, some, or all of these sources to find applicants. Many employers believe that employee referrals are the best way to recruit new applicants. Current employees are committed to the organization and understand the work environment. And, referrals are relatively inexpensive.

However, employment ads continue to be the most widely used recruiting source. To avoid drowning in a sea of resumes, it is important to write clear, specifically defined, and behaviourally targeted employment ads. Such ads will not only dissuade unqualified applicants, but will also make the recruiting process much more efficient.

3. Plan for Interviews

Once you've gathered resumes it's time to match them with your job description to screen out unqualified applicants. Review promising resumes and make notes of or highlight areas you'd like to discuss with applicants.

Call the selected candidates on the short list and carry out preliminary interviews over the telephone. Telephone interviews give you a chance to listen for voice character and intonation and provide valuable clues about the candidate's communication skills.

Ask the candidates to submit a piece of writing to check for literacy. A good exercise is to provide the job description and ask them to respond in writing with a two-page description of their experience as it relates to the job description.

Send the clients a hard copy of your company literature, products and services and ask them to review the material prior to interview. They will likely have visited your website. In the interview you will want to check to see if they read the material and find out their thoughts and feelings on the content.

Assess the candidates using the **Trimetrix Personal Talent** assessment. This assessment allows you to compare the applicant's behaviour, motivators and soft skill attributes with the position benchmarked. Use the **Trimetrix Job Plus Report™** benchmark assessment to compare the degree of "fit".

It is a good idea to prepare questions in advance that you want to ask of all your applicants. Ask specific questions about areas of expertise relating to the job to test actual knowledge. Avoid asking illegal questions that deal with the applicant's sex, race, age, marital status, disabilities, religious beliefs, national origin, and sexual preference. Such questions might be interpreted as being discriminatory. Focus on the applicant's qualifications, experience, abilities, and future goals.

You may wish to provide applicants with their **Trimetrix Personal Talent Report™** and ask them to comment on it. This can be a very revealing exercise for both parties.

Almost every applicant will have been coached or read about typical interview questions such as:

- Why did you leave your last job?
- Why do you want this job?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What did you like most about your last job?
- What did you like least about your last job?

Those questions will certainly provide valuable information, but you may want to come up with questions for which the applicant will be less prepared. Some examples might be:

- Tell me about the best boss you ever had. Why was he/she the best?
- Tell me about the worst boss you ever had. Why was he/she the worst?
- What's the most important thing a boss can do to support you?
- How do you solve problems?
- Describe a work conflict and how you resolved it?
- What are some things your last employer could have done to be more successful?
- What area of your skills do you want to improve in the next year?

The **Trimetrix Job Plus Report™** provides behavioural questions to ask candidates. Highlight in advance the questions you want ask.

4. Create an Appropriate Interview Atmosphere

Arrange for a quiet, private space to conduct your interviews. Clear your schedule and allow ample uninterrupted time. Interruptions are rude to the applicant, disrupt the flow and make it more difficult to elicit and evaluate information received from the candidate. An interview should not be less than one hour. For well-qualified candidates, the interview may be substantially longer.

In order to get an accurate picture of the applicant, you will need to ease any tension and establish a comfortable rapport. Interviewing can be a stressful situation, and it's up to you to put the nervous or uncomfortable candidate at ease. Putting the applicant at ease might include such things as greeting the person in the reception area, introducing yourself, offering coffee or tea, being courteous, and generally making them feel welcome. This is an ideal time to ask them about the company literature you sent them earlier and to talk **briefly** about the company. Remember this is also a public relations exercise. The candidates could also be future customers or influence other customers, depending on the experience they have with "your company". The business value of creating the proper atmosphere is that you:

- Get more and better data from the candidate

- Get a more natural response
- Give a positive impression of your organization
- Increase the “accept rate” of talented candidates

5. Make Your Purpose Clear

Even though it may seem obvious why the person is there, you should reiterate the purpose of the interview. Without yet getting into details about the job, confirm the position that is open and briefly explain your process for conducting interviews. Is this a screening interview? Will there be others to talk to? Will there be a follow-up interview?

Give applicants an approximate length of time for the interview and check to be sure that it won't conflict with their schedule. Explain to applicants up front that all references and work history will be checked. Ask for permission to contact current employers and for names of key players in their past work life.

6. Control the Interview Flow and Direction

It is your responsibility to use the appropriate techniques and ask meaningful questions to get all the information needed to make a smart hiring decision. To do that, you need to keep the interview on track and focused on job-related questions.

Refer to your list of questions if necessary. Don't get caught in the common interviewing mistake of talking too much and listening too little. Encourage the applicant to do most of the talking by asking open-ended questions.

Probe for details of the applicant's competence (experience, education, aptitude), work attitudes (enthusiasm, likes, dislikes, goals), and social attitudes (personality, integrity, character). Be prepared for moments of silence. Brief periods of silence are all right and may induce additional information.

7. Listen & Take Notes

Explain that you are going to take notes in advance. Write quickly and briefly to avoid distracting or disturbing the applicant. Your purpose is to gather job-related information about the applicant. To do that you need to actively listen and pay attention to everything being said. Applicants will be more at ease and talkative if you show your undivided attention.

Take brief reminder notes of key things the applicant says. You can use these notes and elaborate on them immediately after the interview. You may also want to jot down follow-up questions to issues that were raised or incidents you want to explore.

8. Allow Questions

Give the applicant time to ask questions about the job and the organization. If the applicant asks meaningful and thoughtful questions, you can gain additional insight into his/her thinking process and long-term goals. Be prepared to answer tough questions such as:

- How is excellent performance rewarded?
- What are the organization's values and ethics?
- How does the organization support career development?
- How secure is the position and the organization?
- What training and development is offered?
- What is the compensation package?

9. Provide Information and Closure

The end of the interview is the appropriate time to describe in detail the essential duties of the job and how they fit into the organization. It is also the time to talk about the organization's culture, how people and different departments interact, and what is expected of employees. Providing this information too early in the interview gives the applicant clues on how to answer your questions.

Be honest about the job and the organization. If there are negatives, bring them up and discuss them. Potential employees should have a good idea of what they are getting into and what they can expect on the job.

Discuss salary expectations, work schedule, and benefits offered by the organization. Explain the next steps in your hiring process. Close by thanking applicants for their time and interest in your organization.

10. Rate the Applicant

Allow yourself time after each interview to collect your thoughts and rate the applicant. This can include elaborating on the notes taken during the interview and your reflections on how the applicant answered job-related questions.

Avoid personal reactions to the applicant. Focus on the essential duties and requirements of the position. Based on the background and skills, how might the applicant perform in the position? Be prepared to justify statements that you write down.

The four most important questions you will need to answer to guarantee a quality hire are:

- Is the applicant able to do the job?
- Is the applicant willing to do the job?
- Is the applicant manageable, once on the job?
- What immediate training and learning is needed to orient the “new employee”?

Using the **Trimetrix Coaching Report™** and **RxCDS™** is a good first start. Hiring top-quality employees is vital to an organization. Employees are an organization's most important resource and the greatest contributors to its success.