Power Hiring in a Competitive Marketplace #040
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After 25 years of recruiting, I have never seen more chaotic, haphazard hiring than what we have now in the employment marketplace. We all are aware of the difficulties in hiring, but what's the answer? Is there a magic bullet? Yes! You actually have several magic bullets in your holster; you just need to use them!

This interactive session will discuss some new and innovative ways (magic bullets) to increase your chances of hiring a good match for your company, who will then stay in the job more than the average 1 ½ years tenure! We'll also discuss ways to improve the entire hiring cycle, how to create an effective job description, and the pitfalls to watch out for in an interview.

To start out this session, I want to read a powerful quote from Lou Alder, CEO of Powerhiring.com. "There is more to hiring great candidates than just attracting their attention. The key is a completely integrated hiring process. The job, the company, the interviewers, the line manager, the recruiter, and the process used to attract and hire the top candidate must all be in harmony. One misstep and the process will fall apart". Truly understanding the importance and significance of this statement will impact your success in hiring and *retaining* your top candidates. With only a 40-60% accuracy rate for most companies, let's address the issues that can help us improve that statistic.

Job Description

The old saying of "if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you got there" applies here. The interviewer should begin by *reviewing and updating* the job description. Identify the previous employee's successful attributes. Decide if the demands of the position have changed. Job descriptions should always include duties/responsibilities, appropriate behaviors and attitudes, soft-skill competencies, experience, performance expectations, education requirements and any special considerations (i.e. ability to travel, heavy lifting, etc.)

Magic Bullet #1: To hire superior people, first *define* superior performance.

Define the key results you want accomplished. Focus your job description into deliverables (the doing), rather than skills (the having). It's what you **DO** with what you **HAVE**, not what you **HAVE** that determines success. Make a list of the top 5-8 things a

person must DO to be successful in the job, called Performance Objectives. Focus only on major objectives and the interim steps necessary to achieve these objectives. These could include problems to solve, changes to make, team/management objectives and technical objectives. Take your current job description and convert each HAVING requirement into an action oriented DOING task. Ask yourself, "what will the candidate do with this skill or experience that determines competency?" For example, convert "Have HP-UX experience" into "Upgrade HP-UX 10.2 to 11.0 by October". Put these deliverables into priority order. Tasks are easier to prioritize than arbitrary lists of skills and experience. Take each task and turn it into an Objective which should be Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Result-based, Time-bound. Be careful not to over specify, or you'll lose the opportunity to attract candidates looking for growth.

Magic Bullet #2: Define your company *culture* in your job description.

Company culture can be measured and quantified. One of the best ways to describe the culture of any position is to focus on soft-skill competencies, work-related behaviors, and attitudes. Recently, a company president used these terms to explain to a candidate the culture of his company and the job. After a discussion about how this person's style might fit the job, the candidate realized that her personal style was the opposite of that appropriate to the culture and company. A huge mistake was avoided because the president invested time in measuring the job "culture" and comparing the job to the candidate. He used behavioral interviewing techniques and sophisticated personal assessments to match the right person to his position. Many of my clients use these assessments today with excellent success.

The Interview

Magic Bullet #3: Past performance is the best *predictor* of future performance

Some candidates are excellent interviewers and can mislead a company as to their true competency or character. Other candidates are excellent employees but do not have the gift of strong interviewing. It is YOUR job to determine the difference and get beneath the surface for the truth about a candidate, and to get the candidate to give you the correct information. Asking the right questions will help you to do this, and get in the habit of asking, "give me an example of…" for everything you ask. This will validate the answers you receive. (And don't forget to LISTEN 5 times more than you talk).

These 4 questions form the core of any good interview. They'll reveal motivation, team leadership, comparability of past accomplishments, and vision/adaptability:

1. What is the most significant thing you have done? (their talent/energy)
2. Give an example of a significant cross-function team project you've led or participated in? (team orientation/leadership)
3. One of our key performance objectives is _____(describe objective). What have you done that's comparable? (past performance)
4. How would you do this here? (adaptability/vision)

In addition to these 4 core questions, time should also be spent on matching the culture of the job to the candidate's mindset. 85% of job failures are directly related to mismatches of cultures, (attitudes, behaviors, and soft-skills), so as I stated before, a focus on this area is critical. A good question is: "What three or four adjectives best describe your personality? Give me examples of when these have aided in the performance of your job and when they have hurt."

Magic Bullet #4: Wait 30 minutes before making **any** decision about a candidate's ability to do the work.

Why? Because first impressions (based on emotion, bias, chemistry, personality and all sorts of stereotypes) cause most hiring errors. First impressions are largely about style. Style, or the lack of it, has more impact on hiring than substance. We hire people whose style we like –and are often disappointed. We reject people who don't seem to have any style – and then never know what we missed out on. (A good example of this tendency is a placement I made of a VP of IT, where the HR interviewer told me he initially didn't have a good impression of my candidate because she seemed frumpy because she was overweight. His good sense caused him to continue the interview whereupon he discovered her incredible abilities and drive, hired her and later said it was the best hire he'd made.)

The majority of interviewers are intuitive. You fall in this category if you judge candidate competency based on good communication skills, intelligence, self-confidence, and strong interpersonal skills. We assume this profile means the candidate has initiative, is a good team leader, and has vision. While these traits are important, their mere possession does not indicate job competency.

The Offer

Magic Bullet #5: Recruiting is *Marketing* not Selling

The best candidates want to earn the job and be put through an intensive interview. They value more what they have to reach for. Paint a visual picture of what the candidate will learn by taking this job. How will they improve their skills and grow in their profession? How will the job meet their career goals?

To ensure an acceptance to your offer, test all offers before making them formal. Ask (or have your recruiter ask) "What would you think about an offer of $___?" Prepare a preliminary offer and test every aspect before making it formal. The worst thing you can do is to extend an untested offer and then wait for a response. You've lost control and prevented open communications. If you hear "I have to think about it", it means you've moved too fast.

In summary, by using these hiring tools of an effective job description, thorough interview and offer process, your hiring accuracy should rise to 80-90%, which will ultimately save you time and money. And there's nothing MAGIC about it. Good luck!

References: POWERHiring.com, Suzi and Will Helmlinger (yourhireauthority.com)