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Global Consulting Group Recommends Recovery Hiring Practices

The Society for Advancement of Consulting® (SAC®) asked its global membership to describe the best practices in hiring for the next year, since the recovery is clearly underway in most of its clients' sectors. Hiring skills and mechanisms may well have atrophied in the past years, says SAC CEO Alan Weiss, PhD. "Many of our members are doing remedial work to help organizations regain hiring expertise."

Risk mitigation consultant Scott Simmonds moves back to basics on the employment process. Says Simmonds, "I'm not sure when it happened, but there seems to be a diminution of the value of honesty in hiring and employee retention.

"Twice recently I have heard tales of people who are known to be dishonest who go on to hurt their employer in more substantial ways.

"A person who stretches the truth on their resume is being dishonest. With that fact established, why would you retain an employee caught in the embellishment? In this case, the erstwhile employee later lied to a key customer and was caught, the result of which was the loss of an important account.

"If you have to remind someone that honesty is required I'm not entirely sure where you go next, other than to ask for their keys and company credit cards."

Pat Lynch, President of Business Alignment Strategies, Inc. (www.BusinessAlignmentStrategies.com), notes that organizations that have outstanding hiring practices recognize three elements that others often overlook:

1. Hiring is a process, not an event.
2. The hiring process is a critical success factor in achieving organizational goals.
3. Hiring is a two-way process.

Organizations with outstanding hiring practices ensure that all elements are aligned with and support their intended outcomes. For example, they ask questions like what talents, competencies, and skills are needed to provide our products or services? What quality or level of customer

service do we want to provide? Do we want to be competitive in our marketplace, or mediocre, or exceptional? The answers guide the development and implementation of the various elements in the hiring process.

At every step in the hiring process, organizations have an opportunity to communicate something about themselves to prospective employees as well as to the public at large. In addition, because legal and other constraints are making it more challenging for employers to fire employees, even those who are poor performers, creating and maintaining an effective hiring process is critical to organizational success.

Dr. Maynard Brusman is a consulting psychologist and executive coach. He is the president of Working Resources, a strategic talent management and leadership coaching firm in San Francisco, California www.workingresources.com. He offers a few insights:

“The first place to start when hiring someone is to do a job analysis. Identify the critical success factors or job-specific competencies by interviewing top performers in that position. The next step is to create a job description based on a candidate’s past performance. If you want to hire great people, first define exceptional performance. Effective job descriptions define what needs to be accomplished, not the skills and experience the candidate needs to have. Incorporate valid, reliable and job-related pre-employment tests.”

Key Points for Conducting a Structured Behavioral Interview:

- Successful work behavior requires a mixture of job and personal/interpersonal skills.
- The single best predictor of future behavior is a candidate’s past behavior.
- Stay focused and conscious. Overcome emotional reactions and remain in control. Listen 80% of the time.

Roberta Matuson, President of Northampton, MA based Human Resource Solutions, www.yourhrexperst.com believes that outstanding hiring practices are evergreen. They should be used in any economic climate. Matuson advises her clients to resist the temptation to hire people “on sale.” According to Matuson, “When you’ve got more applicants than jobs, it’s tempting to pay people *significantly* below market. This strategy will come back to bite you. These people will flee your organization the moment someone offers them what they are worth, taking with them the time and money you have invested in their training.”

Matuson notes that studies have shown that 80 percent of job failures are due to lack of proper work habits, not lack of technical skills. “In my practice, I’ve seen executives and hiring managers significantly reduce hiring mistakes after they have successfully completed behavior-based interviewing training (<http://www.yourhrexperthtml.com/workshops.html>). This approach to interviewing is based on the premise that past performance is the best indicator of future behavior and uses questions that probes specific past behaviors. If you do a great job of hiring on the front end, you are less likely to spend countless hours managing mediocre employees,” states Matuson.

Gayle Lantz is a leadership consultant and executive coach. She is the president of WorkMatters, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm in Birmingham, Alabama. www.workmatters.com.

She observes that companies with the best hiring practices don’t rely on an interview alone, or on one assessment to make their decision. They integrate a combination of tools, resources and stakeholders to aid the decision making process. These organizations also hire strategically by anticipating the future needs of the business as opposed to “filling a current slot.” Some companies with more flexible hiring practices seek the talent first, then create a role that fits the person, and serves the business.

“Excellent selection and hiring is more important than ever in tumultuous economic conditions,” says author, consultant and executive coach John Carroll. He is president of Unlimited Performance, Inc., a firm dedicated to emerging growth companies in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina www.uperform.com

Carroll offers six key ingredients found in highly effective selection systems:

- Use the Rule of Three—Consider at least three candidates, interview any promising candidate three times and hold those interviews in three different environments (in the office, with coffee, over dinner) to get a better feel for those you’re considering.
- Involve your people, especially your receptionist, in the selection process. How the candidate treats others outside of perceived decision makers should be important to you.
- Conduct full background checks through a professional to prevent unwanted surprises later.
- Dig down a level by asking provided references for other references to add insight to what your candidate would have you know.

- Weed out the whiners by putting candidates through a challenging process. Those who emerge still interested gain viable candidate status.
- Promote from within whenever possible. It speaks volumes about how you value people. Non-existent promotion = non-valued people.

Voss W. Graham, CEO of InnerActive Consulting Group, Inc. in Memphis, reports:

“The core element for making great hiring decisions is to first let the job talk. What I mean by letting the job talk, is to get a clear understanding of the traits necessary for the job to be successful. By doing this, you limit the personal biases of comparing people rather than the traits used by people for success.

“My clients who have used this process have reported a higher quality hiring practice due to the matching effect between new hires and the position. This practice has shown higher levels of retention. A significant side effect to this practice is the high energy shown by the new hires since they are using their strengths rather than their weaknesses on the job.”

“The smaller the organization,” concludes Weiss, “the less margin for error in hiring over then next 12 months.”

SAC is an international association of consulting professionals who subscribe to an industry code of ethics and have provided evidence of significant consulting results among their clients. For more information, please go to <http://www.consultingsociety.com>, write to info@summitconsulting.com, or call 800/825-6153 (401/886-4097).

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