



WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

More than a hunch: making better hiring decisions

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Recently, I overheard a conversation between two department managers in the hallway of a client organization:

Manager A: “I will not be in our staff meeting today because I have to interview a candidate for the vacancy in my department at 9:00 a.m. If she shows up on time and has no criminal record, I am going ask HR to process this candidate as a new hire.”

Manager B: “Do you expect this candidate to be qualified?”

Manager A: “I just need a body in that job. Qualified doesn’t matter today.”

Does this scenario sound familiar to you?

Whenever an unexpected vacancy occurs, the hiring frenzy begins. Managers often feel the pressure to hire the first “warm body” with the minimal qualifications for the job instead of utilizing a systematic and thorough approach.

The short-term solution may have long-term consequences. The costs of making the wrong hiring decision are simply too high to emphasize speed over quality! Some of the many risks include: decreased customer satisfaction, lost sales, lost productivity, increased expenses for recruitment and training related to inevitable turnover, and decreased morale of existing employees.

How can you improve your process?

Here are some ways to improve your interviewing process.

Structure. Structure solves a lot of problems. Traditional interviews are typically casual and can be characterized by a lack of preparation. Interviewers use open-ended questions, but they focus on subjective “what if” scenarios. A structured process requires additional preparation on the part of the interviewer, but the front-end time commitment produces results. Interview questions are developed based on job analysis and defined key competencies. The same questions are asked of every candidate, which allows responses to be more objectively evaluated.

Substance. The style of your interview greatly affects the information each candidate provides. Interview questions are typically categorized as either situational or behavioral. Situational interviews are future-oriented and based on hypothetical scenarios. Questions often begin with “what if” or “what would you do if.” While this style allows candidates with little job experience to answer your questions, you may be getting what the person thinks is a correct response.

Behavioral interviews are past-oriented, and questions are based on actual demonstrated behaviors. Questions often begin with the phrase “tell me about a time when.” This style makes it more difficult for candidates to “create” a correct response.

And, you know what they say. The past is the best predictor of future performance.

Sample questions. For your next interview, try to structure your process around questions that are behavioral in nature and based on the competencies required for success on the job. Here are some sample questions for your use:

- Think about the boss who has given you the most independence. How did you respond? What problems did you encounter?
- Describe a decision you made in your last job that you now regret. How did you correct it? What would you have done differently?
- Tell me about the last “misunderstanding” you had with a coworker and/or your manager. How did you resolve the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline on an assignment. How did you minimize the effect?
- Describe the characteristics of the most challenging coworker you have ever worked with. How did you handle this person?

Bottom line

Slow down! Your employees are your most expensive organizational asset and must be thoughtfully recruited to your team. Taking the time to structure your process and alter the substance of your questions will pay off.



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