

Hiring Help

How automating portions
of your hiring can help you find
the best of the best. **BY WENDY WEBB**

In the workplace, there are few things as vital—and fraught with peril—as hiring. Finding the perfect fit for the job is nothing less than an art form. It's part gut instinct, part objective science, part careful training, and part hard work. And even if you master all of those elements, it still can feel like you're flying blind.

In any economy, hiring the right person for the job means huge savings in turnover and training costs—we've all heard the statistic that it costs the equivalent of a person's yearly salary to hire and train his or her replacement when you figure in the time needed for HR to advertise the position, sift through resumes, and interview candidates. When you finally get someone on the job, there's the time and productivity lost as that person gets up to speed. But the cost of finding a replacement for a bad hire is only one reason it's so necessary to hire the right person in the first place. Having the best people on the job increases a company's bottom line and overall satisfaction in the workplace—not just on the part of the person hired, but everyone he or she interacts with—and creates an atmosphere of success for other workers to emulate. Bad hires engender exactly the opposite.

In a recession, all of those variables are heightened by the necessity for companies to be firing on all cylinders, all the time. Everyone in the workplace needs to be delivering stellar performance to ensure their company stays ahead of the competition. That means you need the right people in the right jobs, giving 100 percent, all the time. There's no room for a bad hire in a bad economy.

A recession also brings another variable into hiring. When economic times are tough and millions of people are out of work, hirers can expect a flood of resumes for every open position. And oftentimes, many in that deluge will not be qualified for the job for which they're applying. People tend to cast their

nets wide when they're out of work.

All of this makes life difficult for HR pros, managers, owners, or whoever it is doing the hiring. Fortunately, some new online hiring systems can help you wade through the sea of resumes and take the guesswork out of hiring the best person for the job. Many such systems exist—for example, Wonderlic, Inc., based in Libertyville, IL, offers Phone App and Web App, while the system created by JobAPP Network, based in Troy, MI, is geared toward companies that hire hourly workers.

Features are similar—candidates apply online or over the phone, answering a series of questions that either will qualify them for the position or weed them out. Some systems go further, including personality testing and tightly focused questioning, and most include reporting that allows hirers to see and compare results of the top candidates.

STREAMLINING THE PROCESS

JobApp Network's niche is in hourly hiring, explains CEO Blake Helppie. With the JobApp system, hirers spend their time interviewing only the most qualified applicants instead of wading through resumes and weeding out those who are unqualified.

The first contact a job applicant has with your company comes either online or over the phone. "Candidates first input their basic information, such as name, address, and Social Security number, and then answer a list of questions," Helppie says.





BEYOND TALENT TRACKING

According to a new Bersin & Associates study, "Talent Acquisition Systems 2009: Facts, Practice Analysis, Trends, and Provider Profiles," many organizations are evaluating their talent acquisition processes and technology investments—even in this recession. Principal analyst and author of the study Madeline Laurano says the down economy is spurring many organizations to make smarter decisions around identifying and meeting their talent needs and to reassess their current systems and how to improve them. Traditional solution providers are responding by offering more Web 2.0 capabilities such as RSS feeds and integration with social networking sites. Others are forming partnerships with new providers such as Jobs2web, SimplyHired, and Jobfox to provide their customers with search engine optimization, social networking capabilities, and a standard job application.

Organizations looking for new strategies and tools to recruit talent have many new options, but making the right decision around recruitment technology can feel daunting, says Laurano. "Today's organizations are in a precarious position to not only demand more from their existing providers but to take advantage of the new innovation in areas such as social networking, video tools, job matching, and search engine optimization," she says.

Laurano's advice? Try not to yield to pressure to select and implement a system in a short period of time. "Integration is a critical component of any talent acquisition system," she says. "Be sure to consider any long-term implications such as integration with your existing HRMS and third-party recruitment providers." For study results, read this Web extra at www.trainingmag.com/talent.

The first set of questions determines whether or not the candidate meets the minimum qualifications for the job. That might mean a college diploma, a certain number of years of experience, reliable transportation, or the flexibility to work nights and weekends—whatever the position requires.

"If candidates give any wrong answers to those questions, they're thanked for their interest but told they do not meet the minimum requirements," Helppie explains. And their application process is over.

If candidates answer the prequalifying questions correctly, they're in the pool of acceptable applicants. The system then helps you determine which of those qualified candidates is your ideal hire. It does that via specifically targeted questions you have created based on your needs for the position. After applicants answer those, it's on to a test that measures their character traits, including honesty, integrity, dependability, people skills, motivation and work ethic. Then they exit the system and their application is complete. And remember, it's all done online or over the phone—not in your office.

When all is said and done, hirers get a color-coded ranking page that identifies the top candidates for the job, based on their answers to your targeted questions and personality test.

"It allows hiring managers to view all applicants very easily, all at one time, without having to sift through piles of written applications," says Helppie, noting they also can see (or hear) an applicant's entire profile—how they answered each question, their resume information, and the like.

Hirers use the system via a custom-configured, Web-based application that allows them to view, manage, transact, and report on all items related to hiring. They don't need special hardware—the system works from any Internet connection.

"By using this system to streamline the process of finding the best people for the job, companies are seeing dramatic reductions in turnover," says Helppie, pointing to the system's success for clients such as Burger King, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, Subway, Church's Chicken, and Popeye's, among others.

Melissa Smith, director of people services at Church's Chicken, reports her company ran a pilot test of the system last year in 46 of its 280 stores nationwide. "We saw a 60 percent reduction in turnover in those stores," she says. Based on that success, Church's rolled out the JobApp system nationwide. **T**

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