

Seven Steps Toward Making a Great Hiring Decision

If you missed the [Marin Business Forum](#) in March, John Younger, CEO of [Accolo](#), the Cloud Recruiting company, offered an insightful presentation on “How to Turn Your Company into a Hiring Machine.” We have been working with Accolo for a number of years, and have worked with our clients to adopt a number of John’s [hiring best practices](#). A video of his talk is [posted on the Accolo](#) and [Marin Business Forum](#) web sites, but a digested version of his presentation is offered here.

In his presentation, John emphasized the importance of making the right hire. Only 50 percent of employees hired are considered “good” hires, and every top performer has the same productivity of three average employees. These figures dramatize how important it is to make the right hiring decision. John offers seven steps to turn your company into a hiring machine:

1. Find the emotional triggers – John says that rather than describing the position using terms every applicant will assume, write the job description as a love letter. The objective is to woo the perfect candidate. Ask yourself what the point of pain is, how to measure success, why would the perfect candidate want this job? Also ask yourself what are the common attributes of a top performer? Look for emotional appeal rather than simple qualifications.
2. Develop a compelling recruiting plan – This includes describing the position in a compelling way. For example, don’t put out a call for an “accountant”; try a different approach, such as “looking for someone who can count the beans and make them grow.” Make the recruiting message compelling and personal, and make it stand out. Add keywords at the bottom of the online job description to promote SEO. Create a short list of questions that get to the core of the position, and that promote a two-way dialogue that points to what success looks like for this position.
3. Include all candidate sources – Candidate referrals come from a wide range of sources so include them all. Use a pyramid approach starting with the easiest, least expensive means (e.g. Craigslist and online job boards) and work toward the more expensive approaches (e.g. retained recruiters).
4. Treat each applicant like a customer – Only 6 percent of all job applicants get any response to their application. That’s a shabby way to treat customers, and every job applicant can have an impact on the recruiting effort, either positive or negative. Even an unqualified applicant may be able to recommend someone who is perfect for the position. Be sure every applicant receives some form of closure, no matter the outcome.
5. Screen well and move quickly – The mistake many managers make is waiting to have a field of candidates to choose from. The right candidate may not wait and will get away. Identify the right candidate quickly by asking the right questions, e.g. don’t ask about the number of years of experience, but ask them how many times they achieved a specific goal or task, how recently, and

how they achieved it.

6. Have the right interview team – Interviewing candidates takes skill, so find the right people to do it. Don't use managers who will sell the company or ask the routine questions. Identify those resources in the company who understand the culture and can ask probing questions. Remember that it's about cultural fit as much as qualifications so don't be afraid to use interviewers who know the company even if they don't know the specific job.

7. Leverage all your resources – Give each candidate a 360-degree inspection. Try using a serial approach to job history, starting with their earliest job. Ask how they landed their first job and why they left it. Then ask the same questions about their second job. Did they get a referral from their last job? Look for patterns and indicators as to whether they would be a good fit for the company and its culture. One acid test is what John calls "the airport test" – would you be comfortable spending a long layover with this person at an airport? That will reveal quite a bit.

All too often small business owners and managers don't pay enough attention to adopting good hiring practices only to pay the price after they make a bad hiring decision. By spending more time and care up front and working with professionals who understand hiring in today's web-driven world, companies can minimize lost productivity and increases in overhead due to poor hiring choices.