

# Don't leave it to chance

Contributed by Marcus Miller

Technical recruiting requires a comprehensive job profile to set the road map, continuing on with a creative approach to candidate sourcing and developing your own database of candidates and then combining all parts of a structured interviewing process to yield the best results.

Frequently, organizations get bogged down with the challenge of hiring technical professionals.

That's because it's difficult for the HR recruiter to keep up-to-date and interpret the vast array of acronyms that identify the candidates' skills, accreditations and competencies.

Confused by the jargon, many HR managers delegate a lot of the control of the process to a technical manager. This approach can work if a manager is equipped and trained to conduct the full range of recruitment tasks. But when such a manager has little experience in these matters, the company can make some egregious hiring mistakes.

When candidates are hired only because of their technical prowess, problems can arise. The rarity of candidates with specific technical skills, as well as the scarcity of time to meet growth targets, forces many employers to compromise their hiring standards. As any HR professional will tell you, there's no foolproof process for consistently hiring winners. But there are proven steps you can follow to give you a much greater probability for success.

There is a process companies can employ that will help ensure they choose the right technical person, even if technology isn't the HR staff's forte.

The strategy has three-parts.

Not surprisingly, it starts with writing a comprehensive job profile. Next comes the execution of a clear recruitment marketing and sourcing process to generate applicant flow. Finally, the strategy ends with the evaluation and selection of the right candidates through a structured interviewing process.

## Comprehensive job profiles

A comprehensive job profile addresses a range of characteristics that define the elements for success and how the position fits within the organization. Ultimately, a targeted job profile provides a clear roadmap to execute the candidate search. The elements of the job profile are:

### 1. Level of supervision

What is the level of supervision that best suits the position? It can range from close supervision for entry-level jobs to general supervision for senior positions.

### 2. Scope and impact of the position

Who are the primary groups serviced by this position and what impact does this job role have on the wider organization? How can these benefits be measured? When will they begin to be felt? Identify the major projects or deliverables the role will accomplish in the first three, six and twelve months.

### 3. Problem solving and decision-making

Identify examples of typical and complex problems the person will resolve, and what problems are referred to the supervisor.

### 4. Major functions

What are the major duties and responsibilities, in order of importance, and what percentage of the new hire's time should be spent in each area?

### 5. Supervisory responsibilities

Will the person train and hire new employees, plan and assign work, handle budgeting, resolve grievances or conduct performance and salary evaluations? Include these details in your profile.

### 6. Technical knowledge, skills, abilities, and certifications

What is the technical knowledge required for the position, and at what level of effectiveness (basic, intermediate, advanced)? Give examples of how the person will apply the technical skills to problem solving. What abilities does the person have, such as verbal and written communications, and professional certifications?

Traditional job descriptions focus on the technology, tasks and duties, whereas a job profile addresses what it takes to accomplish the tasks and achieve the job outcomes. Do your homework to understand the position, its impact and the importance of related technology.

#### Sourcing and generating candidates

Get creative in sourcing candidates. The sources for candidates are endless. Always research, test and measure to determine which sources are worthwhile. You can generate applicant flow from your Web site's job postings and from public resume boards, but don't overlook the people you meet through professional associations, employee referrals, seminars, conferences and trade shows.

Smart hiring managers also use industry applicant tracking systems to create a database of potential candidates. You can track the performers that work for your competitors or candidates that could make a difference to your business in the future. Seek these people out and develop relationships with them through e-marketing. This database of prospective candidates is for your exclusive use in recruiting and the cost is low.

When you start a candidate search from scratch, the results are slow to yield worthwhile results. Budget at least three to six weeks for a new job search. Typically a candidate search begins with the hiring manager reviewing resumes received from postings on their web site or a public resume board. The first wave of responses are mainly from active job seekers whose resumes are under consideration by many other firms in the marketplace.

To move to a more time-sensitive mode, you could launch a Candidate Alert process of the public resume boards, such as Monster or Workopolis, to notify you whenever a job seeker posts or revises his or her resume. This brings you to the edge of the active marketplace, along with the commercial recruiters. You may find that the real results come from mining your own private database.

Here are the steps for building and sourcing your own private database:

#### 1. Drive traffic to the job postings on your corporate Web site.

Whether you are sourcing candidates from trade shows, employee referrals or the public resume boards, get the candidates to apply by reviewing the postings on your own company's Web site.

#### 2. Qualify the applicants with competency questions.

Competency questions give you information not available on an applicant's resume and useful information for rough screening. Pose questions that deliver facts or measurable data and set a limit of four to eight questions. A barrage of questions will drive the respondent away. Try to keep the application process to less than five minutes.

#### 3. Track and build applicant response.

You never know when you may want to hire someone and you need to build a relationship for that eventuality. Applicant tracking systems and applicant marketing is the best strategy of freeing yourself from hiring active job seekers.

#### 4. E-marketing trumps E-cruiting

Implement a long-term strategy to brand your company as an 'employer of choice' versus a reactive recruiting strategy of shaking the bushes and hiring from the active set of candidates.

Sourcing is the most important step. First you make potential candidates aware of your job opportunity, you convince them to apply and then you assess them. The heart of sourcing involves creating a pool of great candidates to later screen and select.

#### Structured interviewing process

Interviewing is a two-way dynamic process. On the one hand, you are marketing the opportunity to work for your company. At the same time, you are evaluating and qualifying the applicant on the fit. The job seeker is going through the same process as they present well-rehearsed answers and size up your opportunity.

#### 1. Engage and qualify the response for technical competency

The first step is to rough screen the resumes to select a handful of potential contenders. Engage the candidate with a phone qualification interview. Get the candidate to give you a 'thumbnail sketch' of their resume, and listen carefully and evaluate their interpersonal skills. Ask qualifying technical questions to amplify missing or sketchy information. Drill down on specific competencies to determine the depth of expertise and skills. The phone interview will take ten to twenty minutes to form a worthwhile impression. The phone interview also allows you to develop rapport with the candidate, which will alleviate some of their nervousness in the face-to-face interview.

#### 2. Select based on job performance and cultural fit

Take a structured approach to interviewing for the evaluation and comparison of candidates against the job profile. Behavioral and situational interviewing provides an accurate view of what the candidate has done before and will do in the future. Have them draw out performance-based stories to gain insights into their operating styles, accomplishments,

track record and areas of weakness. Use this opportunity to determine the cultural fit on whether it matches the values of your corporation. Save this assessment for the conclusion of the interview.

### 3. Confirm your view with behavioral reference checks

Reference checks are meant to verify information gained from the interviewing process and, at times, to gather insight on whether to proceed. Ask prepared situational questions to reveal operating style and business acumen. Ask for opinions and their insight on how similar problems were addressed. Rate the quality of the reference and the insight gained.

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