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## **CHOOSING THE BEST PERSON FOR A JOB**

### **When to Use Outside Assistance**

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More corporate dollars are spent on salaries and employee benefits than on any other operational expense in today's business world. Let's face it – employees are expensive! But if those employees are doing a good job, it is money well spent. In fact, "Management by Objectives" theory reinforces the principle that the right people in the right positions form the ultimate strength of any organization.

On the other hand, if an employee is not doing a good job, it is not only a waste of time and money for the corporation, it often turns out to be a drain on the productivity and morale of others in the organization as well.

But how can you know who is the best person for a particular job? How can a manager avoid choosing a candidate who will rob the company of valuable time and money in training, developing, disciplining, and finally terminating him/her from the work force?

Of course, there are always some positions in any organization for which individuals can be easily trained over a short period of time, and extensive pre-existing qualifications are not crucial. In fact, if the individual does not work out satisfactorily in such a position, another can usually be found and trained relatively quickly. For those situations, a simple newspaper advertisement may attract an appropriate individual, and reference checks may finish balancing out any validation needed.

But, there are, of course, other positions in all organizations that demand a good deal more pre-existing knowledge or skill on the part of the candidate. And there are sometimes positions in which the corporation's training investment may be significantly greater. There may even be some manpower slots where a vacancy can be tolerated only for a short period of time before impacting the effectiveness of the organization. In all of these cases, choosing the best person for a job becomes more vital.

The qualifications associated with these positions unfortunately are also the more difficult ones to evaluate by reviewing resumes. On the one hand, some resumes are so generally written, it is impossible to determine the individual's capabilities or his/her fit for a specific job. On the other hand, some resumes reflect too much specificity in an area which the interviewer has no interest but completely ignore other areas which interest the interviewer significantly. Unless the applicant takes the time to re-write his resume to reflect the needs of each position he pursues, this confusion will occur a high percentage of the time. That means the interviewer, if he/she is really intent on getting the best person for the job, will have to talk to each individual from which a resume has been received to determine specific skills in evaluating suitability. And, unless this task is something the interviewer does daily, it is very time-consuming and cumbersome to orchestrate such a sorting procedure effectively. In addition, it takes the interviewer away from his/her regular responsibilities in the corporation to handle such detail.



There are differences in the kinds of expertise available on the market to assist an employer in this process. Hiring an employment agency that deals with a variety of fields costs less and may be a perfect choice for companies who want to examine a large number of candidates for a given vacancy. This is particularly true if potential candidates are plentiful in the local or regional market.

The other choice in outside expertise is a search firm. The search firm works only for the client company. Since there are no loyalties to individual candidates, the “best” fits for the company’s needs can be determined and the remainder of the candidates eliminated. Most search firms do not work with unemployed candidates, and many of them specialize in only one field. Therefore they can be thoroughly knowledgeable in that field and consistently effective rather than attempting to have a little knowledge about each of several fields.

A search firm generally provides for a client –

- A focused capability to do the job in less time than doing the job internally
- Market Knowledge - access to candidates otherwise inaccessible (happily employed individuals don’t read want ads but they do respond to a telephone call outlining a good career opportunity)
- A professional approach/image with the candidates
- Thorough knowledge of the client company (they should know the kind of candidate that will fit the client)
- More focused resumes of qualified candidates rather than numerous resumes of unqualified candidates
- Extensive references
- More frequent acceptance of offers (only about 50% of offers made by companies on their own are accepted, mostly because of communication problems)
- Fee due only upon successful hire
- A guarantee to replace the individual if he/she should not work out

Different jobs require different kinds of expertise. An employment firm may be unable to effectively recruit an excellent Regional Sales Manager. On the other hand, a search firm may be just as unlikely to locate a bookkeeper for a local position. Choosing the most effective firm for your company’s needs is an integral aspect of your corporation’s management effectiveness. Remember that employees are the most important resource a company possesses – employees can make or break you! And choosing the right team is the most important management decision you will ever make.

Of first concern is the selection of a reputable search firm. Choosing one specializing in a single industry is generally a distinct advantage because of the superior knowledge base available to the client in the field of choice. Information on how long the firm has been in operation as well as references from hiring authorities who have used the firm in the past are valid means of evaluating potential choices.

Once the selection has been made, thought needs to be put into the fee itself. Search fees generally equate to 25-30% of the candidate’s first year’s income. This can be paid in



increments over the period of the search, or it may be paid in full upon the successful completion of the job. The fee amount may also be negotiable based on the length, difficulty, and time involved in the search. Now is the time to find out about guarantees, how (and when) fees are to be paid, and the estimated length of time needed to complete the search. Most search firms will spell all this out clearly and provide a client with several options.

The next order of business is the job order. Clearly, the more detail the firm has on the position and the organization, the more effectively they can screen candidates, not only for their technical skills, but just as importantly for their personal skills in areas such as dealing with people, handling pressure, solving problems, etc. These factors are often just as important in a successful candidate match as the purely technical areas. It is also helpful to the search firm for the client to thoroughly separate the skills “required” in the position from those “preferred” in the position. If it is decided by the client after the search begins that a “required” skill can be transferred to a “preferred” category, the search firm may have to begin their efforts all over again. When possessing the clearest information possible from the client, a search firm is able to be amazingly efficient and specific in targeting an appropriate search, even focusing on specific geographical areas if the client wishes.

Time required for an adequate search varies a great deal depending upon the type of individual being sought and the methodology used by the search firm. A computerized firm can always conduct a search more rapidly, of course, and qualified candidates can often be surfaced in less than a week, while a non-computerized firm may need three weeks or more to conduct a comparable effort.

Once qualified candidates have been found, backgrounds can be presented to the client either verbally or in writing. From the backgrounds and qualifying information provided by the search firm, the client should be able to select several candidates for telephone interviews.

At this juncture, the search firm can be a decided asset to the process. Not only does the firm schedule and coordinate the telephone conversations, but it also prepares both parties for the interview. For example, a search firm assists the client in formulating questions that can effectively evaluate the potential “fit” of each candidate. Even qualifications like initiative and professional commitment are able to be assessed with the proper approach. The search firm can also help the client in structuring a comparison model for all candidates interviewed so that the best selections and decisions can be made. In addition, the search firm prepares extensive reference checks for the client on the candidates in which he/she is most interested.

In turn, the candidate is prepared by the search firm through extensive information on the client company, its organizational structure and goals. In order to most efficiently utilize the time of the interviewer, the candidate is cautioned to be straight-forward and clear in his/her responses. Of course, much the same role is played by the search firm in orchestrating subsequent personal interviews for the candidates selected as the best possibilities via the telephone interviews.



Once a candidate is selected to whom the client wishes to extend an offer, the search firm becomes an integral part of negotiations, not merely on salary, but on benefits, start date, housing, etc. There is a certain psychology involved in an employment offer that is understandably remote to clients who simply are not involved in it every day. An offer that is too low, for example, can sometimes offend a candidate to the point of non-retrieval, even if the offer is increased later. On the other hand, an excessive offer may result in a hire but at a monetary sacrifice for the company when, unbeknown to them, the candidate would have come on board for thousands less. Salaries encompass an area far too emotional to leave to chance. Having a third party involved to whom the candidate can confide his thoughts is a logical asset in effectively putting the deal together.

A good search firm is well worth its fee. Let's face it – major corporations would probably not use search firms if they could provide an equally effective service at a lower cost themselves. But the fact is that they cannot economically duplicate the concentration of skills needed in the hiring process and still produce the percentage of success proven by a good search firm who does it every day. The next time your company goes through the hiring process on its own, make a note of the time, money, and salaries involved, and you will be surprised at what a bargain a search firm is in the final analysis.