



Mistakes That Employers Frequently Make in the Hiring Process

Mistake: Believing everything they read on a resume.

Remedy: Perform a thorough check on the details of the resume (especially job changes, responsibilities, education, certifications and salary information) or use a third party to do a pre-employment screening and background check. It has been estimated that as many as 60% of resumes possess false or misleading information.

Mistake: Too much of a subjective approach on the part of the hiring authority, either wanting to hire someone just like himself or just like the person who used to have the position, or even worse, not really knowing exactly what he wants but feels that he can trust his “gut” in knowing the right candidate when he meets him.

Remedy: Your “gut” is not a reliable predictor of success. Instead, you are better off choosing the 10 most critical elements of the position to be filled and create objective questions based on them to be used in each interview. Take good notes in every interview and grade each candidate interviewed against your 10 critical elements (your standard) based on their answers to your objective questions. Using this tool effectively will keep the more subjective issues from overshadowing the factual criteria.

Mistake: Putting too much emphasis on a particular reference or a particular pre-employment test rather than looking at the results of every interviewing tool used in the process.

Remedy: If one or two items in the pre-screening or referencing information stand out as extreme or unique from the rest of the information, dig further to get more clarification. Ask more questions of the candidate, request more references or have him re-tested. If you can ascertain a more consistent and complete picture, you can be more confident of your direction on the hire.

Mistake: Believing that credentials are actually accomplishments.

Remedy: Just because the resume has every credential, license and accreditation you could ever dream of, it doesn't mean the candidate has accomplished anything with those designations in the real world. Conduct a rigorous evaluation of the candidate's actual skills and abilities, even if it means putting him in the workplace as part of his interview process. Know what skills you have to work with and then you can truly assess if he is a good fit for the position or not.

Mistake: Too many people involved in the interview process and the hiring authority wanting consensus before hiring so that he can “spread the risk” of a bad hire.

Remedy: Use no more than 3 interviewers for input (not necessarily consensus) and make sure they are employees actually impacted by whoever is hired for the position. Employment studies demonstrate that if the hiring process exceeds 3 interviewers, the probability of a bad hire is



greater. With the input of those involved in the process, the hiring manager should make the decision as the one accountable for the choice. That is his job.

Mistake: Poor interviewing techniques that result in indecision on the part of the hiring authority at the end of a multi-candidate interview process.

Remedy: Your technique needs more structure, more objectivity, a good standard to compare each candidate to and better note-taking. Choose the 10 most critical elements of the position to be filled and create objective questions based on them to be used in each interview. Take good notes in every interview and grade each candidate interviewed against your 10 critical elements (your standard) based on their answers to your objective questions. Using this tool effectively should help in separating the suitability of the various candidates interviewed and help you come up with a list of finalists. References on each of them should refine your list still further and a final decision should result from any additional screening tools and/or secondary interviews.

Mistake: Discounting someone with the right skills on the basis of a poor resume.

Remedy: Not all great candidates can write great resumes. They may have had responsibilities they didn't think to document or performed tasks that didn't seem important in their zeal to keep the resume concise. There is also the issue of chemistry or ability to learn quickly, neither of which can be revealed in a resume. If the right skills are there, it may be useful to interview them or at a minimum, have someone do more pre-screening on the things that do not appear on the resume to satisfy your understanding of their background.

Mistake: Not interviewing enough candidates.

Remedy: There is no set number of candidates you should interview for any position of course. In fact, sometimes the number is purely driven by the market availability. But limiting the number artificially only because you don't want to commit any more time than that to the process can eliminate a great candidate and short-change your access to the best pool of people. Interview until you find the best match to your critical criteria for the position.

Mistake: Interviewing too many candidates.

Remedy: Use a pre-screening tool like a job-specific questionnaire for the position and have each candidate complete it. It will eliminate the confusion over badly-written resumes and resumes that simply omit things in an effort to be concise. The questionnaire will be the same for every candidate so you will be able to compare experience and skills candidate to candidate and come up with a refined list of those worth your time to interview.

Mistake: Not selling the candidate on the company or the position.

Remedy: A hiring authority can be so intent in an interview obtaining information on the candidate, he neglects selling the candidate on the company but in this candidate-driven market,



that is not a good thing to neglect. Often candidates these days have several companies interested in them at one time and a good interviewer needs to impress on each candidate the value of wanting this position and company more than the others. Don't assume that the candidate knows all the things you know about the company. Imagine why a happily employed person would quit a good job, relocate a family and take the job you're proposing – then convince him of the advantages of your situation. By relating verbally some of the benefits of working there and sending written materials home with applicants, they will hopefully have more reason not to accept another offer before hearing about the outcome of the decision on your position.

Mistake: Poor follow-up communication with candidates after their interviews.

Remedy: Silence conveys dis-interest to candidates who have interviewed and they will move on to other opportunities if they have no reason to wait. Give every interviewee a general timeframe in the interview and follow it even if only to have someone call them and tell them it will be another week before a decision is made.

Mistake: Political pressure to hire a friend or relative of an existing employee.

Remedy: Interviewing someone referred for a position is fine but do use the same structured interviewing questions and process as you would for any candidate so that you can defend your assessment of all the candidates including the referral. Don't be pressured into hiring someone for a position when they don't fit the skills and qualifications you need. At some point, you will have to deal with the ramifications of such a decision. It's best to handle it on the front end of the process.

Mistake: Going all the way through the process with a single candidate, making the offer and having it turned down, then finding out your number two choice is no longer available.

Remedy: Time-consuming and expensive re-starts of a search can result from taking only one person through the process at a time. Having some suitable backups is ideal and the best way to do that is to have your back-ups actively engaged in the process by pursuing 2-3 good candidates in parallel. Even if one particular candidate seems so outstanding, you don't want to take the time to interview others, you need to do so because there is no way you can be confident at the interview stage that you can successfully get your preferred candidate on board successfully and you don't want to lose the others in the interim. You may also find that the other candidates have some qualities that didn't seem so apparent prior to the interviews and they may turn out to be stronger contenders that you imagined at first.