

## Hire Well! It's the Next Best Thing to a Magic Bullet.

**It's too common a story: Someone we were thrilled to hire is turning out to be the wrong person for the job.**

Any of the top candidates would have brought important strengths, but this was the candidate most people liked the best – relevant experience, great recommendations, lots of poise, good sense of humor, even the right degree from a high-status school. But the relationship is already starting to fray, maybe even unravel. And morale is taking a dip throughout that person's work group.

**So what happened, and why does it happen so often?** It is estimated that 85% of a person's success on the job is due to behavior style, attitude, and soft skill competencies, while only 15% is due to technical skills. Yet when organizations design their hiring and training processes they too often reverse that emphasis. Yes, our employees need the right training and experience, but there is much more to the story, and some of it can't be developed on the job.

**The keys to improving your percentage of excellent hires is to do better at identifying the whole range of factors linked to success.** Which behavior style, attitudes, and soft-skill competencies are most necessary for success in this specific position, at this point in time, within your organizational culture? If you need a risk-taking, team-oriented, fast-paced juggler who enjoys new challenges – and who also happens to know a specific software program – hire for the first qualities and train for the technical skill. (It sure doesn't work the other way around....) You should clarify and come to consensus about what really is the job, and you should do so before you begin the search.

**Then you can assess each top candidate on similar scales.** This lets you go beyond the resume and references to more closely match the person with the demands of the job and with the culture of your organization. There's not likely to be a perfect match, but at least you can knowingly choose for the strengths you most need and the weaknesses you can best support.

**There are good tools available to help you with both sides of this equation** (I.e., “What qualities do we really need, and which of these candidates provides the closest match?”). Look for instruments that are well-validated, available on-line, quick to complete, and easy to interpret. They do exist and they are affordable. If you don't have an HR Department that is familiar with using these tools, hire a consultant to help you. (It might even be more important for small companies, since it's harder for them to “dilute” the effects of a mis-hire or to move someone laterally.)

**There are other benefits to analyzing the position, too.** This higher level of clarity lets you more effectively communicate performance expectations, and more carefully focus your employees' professional growth efforts. For example, you can specifically tailor your 360° performance review instruments to the position itself. Then you can use the results of that review to find what are the (a) highest priority competencies that (b) this person has still not mastered. Focus there. (This is especially true for new supervisors, who often were promoted for reasons other than supervisory prowess.)

**It's worth it!** Replacing a mismatched employee is estimated to cost the organization between three and eight times that person's annual salary! At a time when improving productivity, morale, and retention means more than ever, there is no substitute for finding the time – and the tools – to make the best possible hires.

**Hiring effectively is the single most important role of top managers.** Invest the time and resources to do it well!