



Improve Your Hiring Process

Time to revitalize your recruiting practices?

BY BARB GORMLEY

As every seasoned club manager knows, a bad hire can be a costly and morale-sapping lesson.

The traditional hiring process—screen resumé, hold interviews, and then perhaps assess candidates with a personal training or group exercise audition—can fall short if the hiring person or team hasn't perfected the process. After all, it isn't simple to

evaluate technical skills, communication style, cultural fit and more, in just a few interactions.

But some managers have found ways to tweak the process to increase their rate of success. Consider these tips to help discover the rock star employees of your dreams.

RE-EVALUATE YOUR QUESTIONS

When it comes to interview questions, determine which ones are

most-frequently asked—and then don't ask any of them, suggests Alanna Turco, a partner with 360impact Group, a Toronto recruiting and training company. "Rehearsed answers to generic questions are useless," she says. "Instead, go back to the job description, check the key skills and characteristics that are required and then craft questions that are specific to the job."

Turco also encourages companies to ask candidates to bring 10 questions



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about the job and company to their second interview. “Stay away from people whose questions focus mainly on what your company can do for them versus those who ask how they could contribute and grow with your company.”

TRY TO TALK CANDIDATES OUT OF THE JOB

Be upfront early in the process about

all aspects of the job—the good, plus the bad and the ugly. For example, don’t gloss over it if working on weekends, late evenings and holidays is a requirement. Quickly determine who is and who isn’t a good fit for the job requirements.

According to Turco, Disney uses this screening-out process, and approximately 20 percent of its candidates decide not to pursue the interview process any further.

LOOK FOR SPARKLE

Proceed with caution if candidates don’t immediately exude an upbeat attitude and a passion for their work, a must-have for any role in the fitness business. To quickly get a sense of this, ask candidates casual questions about where they’re from and what they do for fun, suggests Darrik Smith, program supervisor of adult fitness, wellness & inclusion services at the Canada Games Complex in Thunder Bay, Ontario. “In an interview or at a meet-and-greet, look for people who shine, who can keep the conversation going and who have solid social cues. Ask yourself, ‘Would this person be able to have a friendly, easy going conversation with one of our members?’”

Another great question? Ask candidates about the qualities that make an excellent personal trainer or group exercise instructor, depending on the position they’re interviewing for, says Smith. “People who are serious about a job will have thought long and hard about this question. You want to hear that they love working with people and that they derive satisfaction from making people happy.”

Even in a municipal fitness facility setting—where the interview process is extremely formal and structured and the design allows for little or no casual conversation—it is important to determine each candidate’s personality. “When you ask for concrete examples and stories in an interview, be sure you have questions that give people the opportunity to show that they are compassionate and positive people,” says Art McDonald, a recreation supervisor at the City of Vaughan, in Vaughan, Ont. “For example, you could ask how the person would handle the situation if a colleague was clearly not completing his work and it was affecting others around him.”

RE-THINK YOUR APPROACH TO REFERENCE CHECKS

Although some past employers will only confirm a candidate’s previous employment with their firm, feedback from those who are willing to share more information is invaluable.

Instead of simply asking about performance in general terms, ask the reference person to rate their former employee from 1 to 10 in five areas that are important to you, says Brenda Abdilla, founder of Management Momentum in Denver, Colorado. To relieve the pressure from a liability standpoint, clarify that explanations for the ratings are not necessary, she adds, and consider any rating under an eight to be a red flag.

“Consider flipping the traditional hiring steps: start with reference checks first before even meeting the candidate and beginning the often lengthy interview process.”

Complete the reference check by asking if the person has any additional comments about the former employee. According to Abdilla, one “no” response shouldn’t count against the candidate, but it could be telling if two or more references have no positive comments to add.

Also track how long it takes a reference to return your call. If you don’t hear back within 24 hours, move forward cautiously. Former employers are in a bind if they didn’t have a good experience with the candidate, so they may put off returning your call or not call at all.

SWITCH UP THE STEPS

Consider flipping the traditional hiring steps: start with reference checks first >>

Are you ready for the big changes ahead in staffing and employee retention?

Forty years ago, most people worked for the same company for much of their lives, with a stable working environment and a predictable career ladder. Because change was much slower then, people had long lasting skills. Not so today.

It is estimated that young people now entering the workforce will typically change jobs 12 to 19 times and change entire careers three times during their lifetime. So your average new hire is going to be with you from two to four years before they move on—unless you give them a very compelling reason to stay.



More and more work will be done on a project basis by freelancers. It is estimated that in just a few years 40 percent of North American workers will be freelancers or contract workers, part of the “gig economy.”

According to *Forbes* magazine, people who strategically change employers every few years end up earning a minimum of 50 percent more over their working lives than those who stay put in just one or two jobs.

To illustrate this point, *Forbes* tells the story of a woman who started her career earning \$8 per hour (\$16,640 per year) as a YMCA marketing manager. Over 10 years, she changed employers five times to ultimately earn \$72,000 per year at her most recent marketing position. This is approximately a 330 percent salary increase over a 10-year period.

As business owners or managers, this means that we must improve our ability to onboard new employees and freelancers quickly so that they're highly productive as soon as possible. No more taking months to ease them into the job.

It is also important to put into place a process to recognize top performers quickly and to create with them a career path that keeps them challenged, engaged and rewarded.

Finally, if you're a toxic boss or if some part of your culture is toxic you need to change your ways in a big hurry. The real battle in business today is to attract, challenge and retain talent. Top performers won't tolerate toxicity. They'll move on while you stand there complaining that it is impossible to find good staff these days.

So, what needs rethinking, fixing or doing in your business to prepare for the big changes coming in staff turnover and the trend to hiring more project-specific freelance employees?

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before even meeting the candidate and beginning the often lengthy interview process. After all, if former employers weren't thrilled with a candidate's skills and abilities, why would you want to interview them?

CONNECT WITH CO-OP EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Take advantage of college and university coop programs, says Sheila Corneil, fitness manager at Toronto's Royal Canadian Yacht Club.

“It takes effort and time to organize and manage co-op students, but it's worth it,” says Corneil, who has hired a high percentage of these students once they've completed their work terms. “Over the six weeks you really get to see their work ethic in action.” And if it doesn't work out, the mismatch will only be for a short time frame.

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CLARIFY NEEDS EARLY

Be upfront about your own specific requirements, and ask job candidates to share their career plans very early in the screening process, suggests Corneil. When a dream employee moves on after just a short time, it can be shattering for both staff and members. Says Corneil, “If I fall in love with someone as an employee, I want them to stick around and not head off to study physiotherapy in a year or two.” FBC

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