Select Great People to Join Your Turf Team

We have all heard of self-fulfilling prophesies. I believe our inability to recruit and select great employees is in part a self fulfilling prophesy. It is unlikely we will find a great employee if we start out thinking that finding a great employees is unlikely or impossible. The customer service literature (for example *Raving Fans: A Revolutionary Approach to Customer Service* by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles) clearly states that great customer service begins with a vision of great customer service. Similarly, selection of a great employee should begin with your, the employer/turf manager's, vision of a great employee. Just as great customer service begins with a great vision and then is modified by the vision of the customer, a great employee begins with a vision by the superintendent which is then modified by the realities of the employment market.

So what should this vision of a great employee include. First let's think of who we want to join our turf team. That means we think more broadly than just the skills we are looking for. We want a productive, happy employee who is committed to our mission, vision and core values. Take a few minutes, maybe even close your eyes. Think: "What attributes—attitudes, skills, experiences, etc.—do I want in my maintenance staff employees?" Develop a vision.

Some companies hire primarily on attitudes. They argue that teaching the skills needed is much easier than changes in attitudes. Southwest Airlines, probably the most successful airline of the last twenty-five years, hires flight attendants strictly on attitude.

The Dating Game

If we have successfully recruited based on our business attributes, we have a pool of candidates. We also now have a vision of the employee we are seeking. Now what? We must select the best candidate or candidates. Let me suggest that selection is like a "dating game."

When you are dating, both parties are continually increasing their knowledge of their "date." At any time either party can discontinue dating if they so desire. Selection work the same way. Both the turf employer and the potential employee are collecting information as they proceed through the process. Similarly, either can decide at any time that this is not a good match.

In selecting a great person to join our team, we wish to develop an interview process that results in our choosing the best person for the job. In selection jargon we want a reliable process. A reliable process results from consistently using a systematic selection process which results in the best candidate being hired. The following are suggestions to ensure reliability:

- Identify job characteristics. These are the characteristics or attributes—skills, knowledge, training, attitudes—that we are seeking. It may be difficult but the best results will be attained when the number is small.
- Write a list of questions based on job characteristics. This will force you to think about each characteristic and develop questions to evaluate each characteristic.
- Plan to ask each applicant the same questions. Every trained interviewer works from a list of questions. Some ask follow-up questions to pursue interesting dimensions of the answers; others do not deviate from their list to avoid potential bias. Personally, I believe the value of follow-up questions exceeds the potential for bias.
- Plan to score responses. Some type of relative scoring facilitates comparison of candidates by reducing first impression and contrast bias.

As a concluding note, remember that we are selecting the people who, other than our family, will likely be our closest associates in the coming years.

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Human Resource Update

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