

HR EXECUTIVE MAGAZINE: ATTRACTING AND ASSESSING HR TALENT

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Assessment of talent is an art, not a science. Yet HR professionals tend to prescribe more structured methods for other executive positions than for themselves. The entire HR toolbox should be available for attracting, assessing, selecting and on-boarding candidates.

From: Human Resource Executive | By: Cindy Lubitz

Most business-savvy HR leaders are keenly aware that every new hire must noticeably upgrade the team. Yet when it comes to the HR department, often “the cobbler’s children do not have shoes.” When given the opportunity to attract, assess and select HR talent for our own teams, it is easy to race to the finish line without fully leveraging the skills and tools that offer greater precision. It’s “ready, fire, aim” rather than strategize, plan and then execute.

We can be guilty of spending less time on our own efforts than we do when driving the hiring process for the rest of the business.

One example of this is when organizations earn a reputation (among candidates and search firms) for drawn-out searches that reveal lack of clarity about the job profile for which they were looking. Too often, interviews stretch from a first round of candidates to a second round and sometimes further. It’s critical to the business, to the team and to the business that a thorough and rigorous hiring process is employed inside of the HR team itself. It is time for us to lead by example.

The best place to begin is with a mini-needs assessment — the same as prescribed for every other department. As it is the HR department’s responsibility to provide the human capital support required to move the business agenda forward, more time needs to be invested up-front, clarifying the profile of the ideal candidate with the CEO or executive team.

Discussions should include critical business initiatives and the support required from the HR department; an understanding of the CEO’s view of the role of HR — what percentage of time is to be spent on strategic partnering or upgrading the expertise of one of the functions; and an overall assessment about how HR rates today within the organization and what a new hire could do to improve the function and the company.

Many HR leaders already know what their bosses expect, but the conversation is still worthwhile. Beyond the opportunity to glean new information, partnership is demonstrated

by laying the foundation for acceptance of the new hire before he or she arrives. Whenever a leader can confirm the focus of talent infusion — be it cost-saving measures, or administrative speed — we are setting expectations for success and clarifying position specs.

Armed with this broader lens, HR can conduct an environmental scan of the in-house talent environment. What skill and knowledge is currently available? What are the gaps? Does talent need to be bought or built? Should the team be shuffled before adding new talent to the current mix? After answering such questions, it is time to create clear and differentiating job profiles. Work to get the buy-in from everyone who will impact the success of the new hire.

ATTRACTING WHO YOU WANT IN HR

Once the position spec has been informed and refined, a plan needs to be developed to create a recruiting experience designed to attract top talent. Plan how many times the organization will require the candidate to take time off of work or use travel days to meet with the company. Make sure they have a full roster of interviews when they arrive. If multiple candidates can be interviewed on the same day, the process can be accelerated for everyone.

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Consider using an internal or external HR assessment center that uses a structured series of job-related simulations to objectively evaluate skills and competencies of job candidates. Through job simulations, one can see how candidates perform, not just how they interview. It provides invaluable insights on both incoming selection and ongoing development efforts. Another method that adds value are cognitive and personality tests.

Whether leaders use multiple tools or simply an extensive interview, it's important to be detailed and thorough. Every step in the process should be designed to gather information about the candidate. Create enough room in the schedule for candidates to interview the company and the department. Their questions and probing provide great insight — a concrete measure of their interest and their ability. Determine how much they read about the company, the CEO and executive team. Assess how well they know the industry, and whether they have substantive questions about it.

Given that HR is an influencer role, it is important that all those in the position of assessing the candidates also look for company and job fit. Chemistry between the candidate's orientation toward both the profession (technical skills) and the business (credible activist)

are key factors in predicting who will assimilate well in the organization. How flexible and entrepreneurial is the company? Is the candidate oriented toward autonomy or process? As in any dating relationship, the match needs to work from both sides.

As a final note, throughout the process, remember that hiring for one's own team provides an opportunity to review one's own work process for thoroughness and ease of use. Additionally, HR can be an example for the rest of the organization in terms of leveraging tools for the benefit of a hiring process. If an HR leader is side-stepping his or her own processes (use of assessments, structured interviews, etc.), it is a good indication that peers are doing the same thing.

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