

## Four Hiring Pitfalls To Avoid

By Allan Forbis, Planning and Development Section

In their book, *Reframing Organizations*, authors Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal state that, “when teams work well, they elevate the performance of ordinary individuals to extraordinary heights. When teams malfunction, they can erode the potential contributions of even the most talented members.” Accordingly, staffing your team with the best people for the job is crucial.

After all, no one wants to be in the position of the manager who said to the employee, “For this job we need someone who is responsible.” And having the employee reply, “Perfect. Everywhere I’ve worked, whenever something went wrong, I was responsible.”

Have you ever wondered how a poor-performing employee was hired in the first place? It’s possible that the person, or interviewing team who made the hiring decision may have made one of several common, yet easily avoidable errors. Do you think any of the following could happen to you?

### **1. Convince yourself that you don’t have time to look for the right person.**

Time is short and work is plentiful, so hiring someone quickly is obviously the way to go – right? Before you do, consider the cost of making a hiring mistake. There’s no more important decision an organization can make than hiring the right people. Employees who stay with the organization for several years represent a huge investment. When you consider just the salary and benefits package provided to an employee making \$35,000 a year, the state’s yearly investment is nearly \$52,000\*. This figure does not even include the cost of training, travel and any other number of things involved in preparing the employee to do his or her job. If this person is a poor fit and eventually leaves the team (probably after a lot of anguish on their part – and yours), not only will you have lost the financial investment, you also suffer a potential loss in productivity, disruption of service and depressed morale.

To put it another way, if today you were told to purchase a \$52,000 piece of equipment, how much time and effort would you take to make sure you get the best piece of equipment your money can buy? Taking your time and energy to find the right person for the job is every bit as important.

**2. Do not fully define what you want in a candidate.** Starting the interview process before clearly defining the real duties of the job and the kind of person who would best fit in with your existing team can only lead to trouble. Make sure the qualities you’re looking for in a prospective new team member are the ones that will make the biggest positive impact in the job and on the team.

**3. Make a decision based on your “gut” feeling.** While many questions about a candidate can be answered in the first 30 seconds of an interview, qualities such as handshakes, posture and grooming are not reliable predictors of success.

**4. Present the job inaccurately.** It’s easy to find yourself treading lightly on the less desirable aspects of a position to persuade a candidate you think is right for the job to take it. Instead, make sure you help applicants make informed decisions from the start. It’s better to have someone say “no” to the position when it’s offered instead of a month or two after starting the job.

The next time it’s “your turn at bat” to interview potential job applicants, make sure you cover all the bases by keeping these four hiring pitfalls in mind. They may help you find the best fit for the organization and the applicant.

\*Missouri Uniform Classification and Pay System Employee Benefits Calculation

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