

## Line Managers Hold Key to Candidates' Culture Fit

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The final say in any recruitment decision must go to the new hire's direct manager, says management consultant Harry Wolfe, because a match between their attitudes is more important than any other selection factor.

According to Wolfe, an expert on "attitude" and the director of Management Dynamics International, selecting the best candidate for a job is "a challenge of intangibles, not of facts".

The facts are simple, he says: either the candidate has the required education, qualifications, competencies, experiences and validated references, or they do not. "But discovering whether the candidate has the motivation to do the job in the way [their manager]... wants it done is a more difficult challenge."

Selecting the candidate with the best culture fit is a matter of finding the right match with the direct manager, he says, but current selection processes often ignore this, resulting in low productivity and high attrition.

Managers want somebody they can work with, he points out. "You want somebody who has the same attitudes towards the job as you do, because they're going to do it exactly as you want it done.

"If I think somebody should be very detailed in their approach to their job, and they're anything but, it's going to cause an awful lot of stress in me. And that in turn is going to cause a lot of stress in the person who's trying to do the job. If I want somebody in a job who I know has to be outgoing and relate to a whole lot of different personalities, and they come in and sit at the desk all the time... again it's going to stress me and I'm going to be using my influence on that person to get them out.

"[An external recruiter] can provide a shortlist of candidates who have the right qualifications and education, but the final test as to whether they're going to be a success in the job has to be with the person who's going to manage that person, assess their performance and

hopefully reward them for having done a splendid job."

There are two exercises managers should undertake in the final stages of recruiting to ensure they select the right person for the job, he says.

### **"Walk the talk"**

After determining the KPIs for the job, and the behaviours needed to achieve those KPIs - for example, directive, persuasive, results-oriented, investigative, creative, imaginative etc - a manager will "talk" those behaviours during the interview and candidates quickly reflect them back in their answers, Wolfe says.

"But the behaviours you nominated for the job, even when based on your past experience, are only your *perception* of the behaviours to succeed in the job," he points out. "Perception is subjective, and the behaviours listed may therefore be inaccurate."

Managers must validate the behaviours nominated, to avoid raising false expectations in the candidate's mind, he says. Doing so requires the manager to examine their own attitude to the job, because attitude encompasses feelings and emotions - which are inextricably entwined with beliefs and values - and "consequently attitude determines and predicts behaviour".

A manager's attitude to the job "therefore determines and predicts the actual behaviours [they] will 'walk' in managing the job holder, in that job".

So, the manager should compare the behaviours nominated for success in the job with their own behaviours in managing the person in the role. If the two match, "you have confirmed how you 'talk' about the job is a match with the behaviours you 'walk' in managing the job holder. You 'walk' your 'talk' [and] your behaviour specification for the designated job is a valid benchmark."

Managers who don't "walk their talk", Wolfe notes, "are a significant cause of people's job dissatisfaction, high job turnover, and the prevalence of the 'hired for his skills, fired for his behaviours' syndrome."

### **Find an attitude match**

After validating the behaviour specification for a job, the manager's next step is to identify each candidate's "key intangible attribute" - their attitude, Wolfe says.

It is vital that the candidate's attitude - which motivates and predicts his or her behaviour in the job - matches the manager's attitude, he says.

"Attitude is more than twice as important for success in the job as any other attribute a candidate may have."

Questions during interviews must invite the candidate to talk about his or her feelings and emotions, and beliefs and values, in different job situations. For example, "How do you feel when you are: working with people you dislike; congratulated; criticised; or working under pressure?"

If candidates' replies to the questions begin with "I think..." rather than "I feel...", Wolfe says, managers should stop them in their tracks. This is because "I think" talk is about perception and direction, not motivation. "It is vital to the success of your selection you are able to feel, empathise with, and relate to, the candidate's actual feelings, emotions, beliefs and values, that motivate and determine his or her behaviour."

The closer the candidates' feelings, emotions, beliefs and values are to the manager's (in the job situations nominated), "the better the candidate is for the job", Wolfe says. "The greater the difference in attitudes to the job... the more unsuitable the candidate is for the position."

When a manager selects a candidate whose attitudes match their own, they are hiring a person who naturally communicates on their wavelength, Wolfe says.

"The words you use, and the implications of your words, will have the exactly same meaning and motivation for the candidate as they do for you, and vice versa. Appointing this candidate immediately increases your own personal efficiency and effectiveness as a leader and manager. Your communications with the candidate in the position are simpler, clearer; you quickly establish trust, positive motivation, and team spirit. Within a few days you feel you have known the candidate for months, or even years."