



APPLIED BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *...Can we all say the same things about our hiring methods?*
- *it is important to do a thorough investigation of any suspected situation*
- *How do you know your training has missed the mark?*

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How to Make Every Hire Count

The leader of a large U.S. organization was asked if he planned to fire an employee who made an expensive mistake. "No," said the CEO, because he viewed the "mistake" as valuable training. "You can't put a price on what she learned," he said, "and the lesson should benefit this company, not our competitors."

The employee not only survived the mistake, but she also corrected it. Her innovations positioned the company as an industry leader.

Not all leaders would view the employee's mistake the same way, but this particular executive was thinking smart by thinking ahead. He knew the expense of termination, recruitment, hiring, and training. He was confident in his hiring decisions because his company uses a best-practices hiring process. His managers ensure that each new employee is the best person for the job. Mistake aside, the CEO knew that the employee who erred was a good fit for her role.

Can we all say the same things about our hiring methods? Making every

hire the best hire possible is a goal we should strive for all the time, but it is even more important when the economy is ailing. Leaders cannot afford hiring mistakes because turnover is too costly. Add up the costs of recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and training while a job remains open for weeks, perhaps months. Why spend this money if you can hire the right person and avoid the turnover?

Below are crucial questions that result in hiring the best candidates. Leaders can examine their own practices by asking themselves these questions when thinking about job candidates, as well as current employees:

•Do I know how each job supports our company's key objectives? Your organization may be behind the curve if job descriptions have not changed with your revamped plan of action. If employees are performing their jobs the same old way, they are holding the company back. Make sure top leaders buy into the strategy and share it with employees down the line so that every worker knows how to put the plan into action.

•Do we have a policy of considering highly qualified internal candidates first when organizational opportunities arise? Internal "hiring" demonstrates that you believe in the training practices of your company and in your employees' accomplishments. Such a policy encourages top performers to take initiative and exercise creative thinking. You don't have to train them in crucial aspects of the job, such as the job's scope and how it relates to other employees and departments, because they already know how the company works.

Do managers use objective evaluation criteria based on known outstanding performers in the position? If you want to ensure that each worker fits her job, measure how top performers in the same position do their jobs.

Then apply the same assessment to candidates for the position and see how well they match the top performers. This approach works because it

AHR Helpline



How to Promote an Ethical Workplace

Nancy was having a very bad day. Her boss Tony had just come to her with a major problem. For the third month in a row he discovered that there was missing inventory. It wasn't a lot of lost materials but, if you added them up for 3 months the losses were in the hundreds of dollars and in a tight economy, he couldn't afford to lose anything. Though Tony couldn't prove it, he suspected one or more of his employees were stealing since the losses happened after hours. He had asked Nancy, as the person who helped him with employee issues to come up with a plan for dealing with the problem. She was at a loss. How could she investigate without invading employees' privacy? Once the culprit was discovered how could they deal with discipline without causing other problems? Why couldn't the employees behave in an ethical manner? Where are good values in today's world?

Nancy and Tony's dilemma is not uncommon. In a tight economy, businesses may even experience more problems with bad behaviors as people become more desperate for money. But how do you deal with issues like theft and how can you create a workplace where positive values and ethics are shared by all of the employees?

To the first issue, it is important to do a thorough investigation of any suspected situation by interviewing possible witnesses and perpetrators. You should never accuse individuals or use scare tactics; but it is ok to let employees know that the situation is serious and that you will take disciplinary actions if someone is found to be doing inappropriate things.

It is best to have policies up front about your right to search the workplace including desks and lockers that are provided by the company and which are on the premises before conducting a search.

There are lots of legal issues about using things like video and audio recordings or lie detectors so you shouldn't go there without legal advice.

The next step is to really take action and discipline the person if you can prove they stole from your workplace. This may be immediate termination if the situation warrants it.

Probably more important though is prevention strategies either following this kind of situation or better yet before it happens to you.

Before you hire employees you should use methods that ensure you are hiring reliable people who share your values. Doing background checks, making reference calls and using assessment tools like the Profiles Step One Survey can give you information that will help you select people who will not bring risk to your workplace, BEFORE you make a hiring decision. The Fair Credit Reporting Act amendments require notice to the candidate and permission from the individual to do a background check using a third party service – the safest approach.

The best way to prevent unethical behavior is to promote an ethical workplace in the first place. You need to encourage ethical behavior by creating and communicating fair and clear policies on expected behavior for employees. You also need to follow through on policies fair for ALL employees (not making exceptions for brother Jim or cousin Ned).

You might have a Code of Conduct written in simple language requiring "professionalism and honesty" in all business dealings on behalf of the company. It should include a detailed listing of components:

- ◆ "professional and honest" in all dealings;
- ◆ Employees' expected cooperation in investigations;
- ◆ Maintenance of business and proprietary information in confidence;
- ◆ Having all avoid conflicts of interest;
- ◆ Requiring everyone not to misuse or abuse property and/or assets;

- ◆ Expecting compliance with anti-drug policies (and having those policies);
- ◆ Reaffirming non-discrimination and anti-harassment and echoing employee's responsibility to comply with and support equal treatment

Other related policies/practices you might have can include:

- ◆ Providing notice of locker/personal property & individual searches
- ◆ Progressive disciplinary policy
- ◆ Use of media policy (e-mail, phone, internet)

The most critical factor is how you role model ethical behaviors. Employees believe what you do more than what you say. If you expect them not to take supplies to use at home, you need to make sure that you follow the same rules. If you bend the laws and rules but preach ethics, you will not get participation from your employees.

In today's world, you may expect employees to come to the workplace with the same values that you have but when that is not the case, you need to make sure that those you hire have a view close to yours. You need to be clear about what you expect in terms of behavior and you need to set up and enforce policies that are focused on your values. You may need, in the case of some younger workers, to teach some values and ethics at work. And finally, you need to practice the positive behaviors yourself.

--Phyllis G. Hartman, SPHR

...make every hire count...from page 1

applies objective standards to the position instead of requiring you to rate a person via subjective standards or to "hire with your gut."

• **Is our compensation competitive based on current market rates for the job?**

Paying a salary commensurate to what employees can earn in similar positions is critical to keeping your workforce motivated and attracting top talent. Organizations can compete in many areas—work environment, benefits, growth opportunities—but expecting top performers to stay with you because you offer these things is not realistic if they can earn significantly more money doing a similar job elsewhere.

• **Do we apply a consistent selection process to all candidates?**

If the answer is yes, it means that your selection processes are objective and fair. These are important, not only because you want to do the right thing, but also because legal challenges to employee selection standards are expensive. The best employee selection process ensures that selection standards are job-related, validated, and standardized.

• **Do we include key stakeholders in our employee selection process?**

Key stakeholders are those affected, for better or worse, by our operations, those who have an interest in what we do, and those who influence what we do. That includes almost everyone, but a big-tent approach is profitable: Inc. Magazine reports that "organizations with more effective hiring systems rank higher in financial performance, productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and retention."

• **Are we training our interviewers in our employee selection process?**

Once we determine that we want structured interviews—those in which questions and tasks are chosen beforehand, and that are designed to ensure consistency—it is imperative that we coach our interviewers. The process is likely to go more smoothly if interviewers understand it, buy into the reasoning behind it, and know what to do. The unstructured interview is weak for purposes of identifying the best candidates.

• **Are we giving interviewers guidance to help them probe deeper into a candidate's suitability?**

According to Leadership IQ, a firm that provides research and executive education to top companies, a study of 20,000 newly hired employees showed that "46 percent of all new hires fail within 18 months." This happens not because the new employees lack technical skills, but because they are not coachable, have the wrong temperament, are not motivated, or demonstrate other problems "that never get assessed in the interview." To catch these mismatches, screening interviewers need expert coaching to help them look beyond technical skills and ask the right follow-up questions.

• **Are we conducting comprehensive reference and background checks on job candidates?**

Leaders might view reference and/or background checks as a bother when they "know" someone is right for a position. But employment experts estimate that almost one-third of all resumes contain false or

exaggerated information. According to a Purdue University newsletter, falsified information consists mostly of expanded dates to cover employment gaps.

• **Does our orientation process for newly hired people help them become productive faster?**

A Bersin & Associates/Randstad case study shows that productivity measures increased by 25 percent among employees who participated in an onboarding training program. Employee job descriptions can help by communicating the company's direction and telling the employee where he fits in the big picture.

Is your company set to handle employee mistakes and economic battering? It will be if you are hiring only the best.

Watch for your invitation...



NEXT Webinar:

May 20, 2009

2:00 EST.—1pm CST 12pm
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“...Training efforts should be in direct alignment with the strategic goals of your business units, and organization as a whole..”



Getting the support of your senior management team for training and development initiatives can be difficult, particularly in today's tough economic climate. In the end, it's all about how we deal with senior management and the language we use in speaking with them. It's critical for us to realize that our job as training and HR professionals is actually assisting our senior managers in doing their number one job ... and that is to increase the bottom line of your organization.

An important step in getting your management team's support for workplace learning initiatives is to understand why we don't have it in the first place. Being completely honest, I think we have to admit that in the past our training efforts may have missed the mark. How do you know your training has missed the mark? What you'll hear are statements like these... that the training didn't focus on solving the real business issues, there wasn't enough background work or prep work done ahead of time, or that your department is not talking to people about what they really need. We also hear that programs are too lengthy, with too little relevant content, or that the training wasn't aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. We've probably all seen or heard this type of feedback at some stage in our careers. All of these assertions are statements that senior executives will make if they don't see that the training we're doing is applicable to what they do in their departments

In order to win management support for workplace learning, consider the following:

- **Think Strategically.** Push to make learning & development a part of every department's strategic initiatives. This will provide you with information on what is important to each business unit, and who is responsible for what, so you'll know exactly who to collaborate with, and who will be a champion for your initiatives.

- **Use Metrics.** When speaking with your organization's executives, bring the key numbers and metrics that show why the training you're proposing is necessary. Speak in terms that management and senior executives understand and want to hear ... ROI.

- **Become a Business Unit Partner.** Your executives and management team are your clients. How can your department better serve their needs? Training and Development must work in partnership with business units, providing them with resources that assist them in reaching their bottom-line goals. Training efforts should be in direct alignment with the strategic goals of your business units, and organization as a whole.

- **Just Try It.** Start with a small, targeted group of participants in a pilot program. This allows your executives to show their support of workplace learning initiatives, using a control group that can be monitored, and results easily tracked. In times when budgetary dollars are held tight, using a pilot program allows your organization to spend appropriate resources in time and money, concentrated on a very specific and strategic effort.

Learn more at www.elearningforemployees.com or
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