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## **Ways Managers Can Avoid Eight Biggest Hiring Mistakes**

**By Tina I. Hamilton, PHR**

Hiring quality employees is probably the most important function you perform. Hire the right person and your business can grow and prosper.

How can you reduce the risk without sacrificing the reward? This is my revised version of the eight biggest hiring mistakes for 2008:

**1. Reference Checking:** Or should I say forgoing reference checking. Yes people respond you can get information. All I can say is give it a try. And when you do...ask the right types of questions. When asking about how an applicant performed on the job you are in essence asking how they performed according to those companies standards. To receive a more accurate measurement of qualification the questions can be presented in a fashion that describes your own tolerances and expectations. Example: "Our company expects each employee to rate at least 90% on their customer feedback scores. How do you feel that John would perform under this condition of employment?"

**2. Emotional Hiring Decisions:** Emotions such as your compatibility to the applicant's personality, warmth and sincerity; or promises; promises by the applicant to increase customers, sales, decrease loss, and promises that the applicant can single handedly turn the company around. While we would never disregard these attributes they are not a sole justification to hire. And although it might appear that your homework is being conducted to assure the candidate is being hired for more than just these things, ultimately the unconscious decision is often based on these emotions. How to know if this is the case in your situation? First check to see if the applicant truly meets all of the qualifications that you required. If not, determine if you are defending the applicant's lack of requirements. If you begin to defend the applicants match, there is likely an issue that needs to be addressed. Bottom line is that the applicant **MUST** meet the criteria of the position. When you adjust your needs to fit around a person you could leave a gaping hole in the needs of the organization.



**3. Strategic Job Descriptions:** It starts with overall company goals. Then with a plan to reach the goals. The plan requires staff to perform the functions. This is where the job description should derive from. And when these descriptions are created they should always only have the plan in mind vs. the actual person to fill the job. Once it is all documented, it is then that you consider who fits where. This is a business. By plugging in people that don't quite fit, it could be a detriment to the company as a whole.

**4. Deal Breakers:** When you begin your recruiting efforts come up with 2-4 deal breakers. These are requirements of skills, knowledge, attributes or experiences that if the candidate does not possess you are willing to walk away. These are realistic needs. Examples: Customer Svc. Manager- must have worked in a job that served people; Admin Assistant- office experience a must, etc. A deal breaker means if the applicant does not meet it, they are not considered, end of conversation. A true deal breaker is identified by asking the question: Would I be willing to walk away from the "perfect candidate" if they don't have this skill, etc. If the answer is yes then you have your first deal breaker. When documented these are powerful criteria that keep you from making mistakes in #2 and #3 above.

**4. Unrealistic Expectations:** Finding a candidate that possesses every possible requirement you desire, but don't count on it. Identifying the ideal person for the job doesn't mean focusing on the skills the person already has. Assess the person's ability to learn the skills needed. Given a reasonable amount of time, the almost-perfect candidate can become the perfect employee.

**5. Advertising blunders:** Sell the job like you would sell the company. Show the attributes of the company as a place to work. Share successes and market the heck out of any fringe benefits you offer. Often ads are focused on what the company needs vs. what the employee is looking for. Advertising is advertising. You are best served by an ad that calls out to the target audience. At the same time be realistic in your ads. There is no point advertising an exceptional pay rate if you are below market demand. Instead market other attributes of working at your company.

**6. "No Good People" Syndrome:** After trying for months to find the right person, you conclude that no good people exist. Big mistake. If there weren't good candidates out there, what would fuel successful companies? The answer: make your company as attractive as possible to potential candidates. Examine it from the outside in. Is it a fun place to work? Are the co-workers nice? Do the supervisors care? How about your

benefits? Ask your employees for their feedback and suggestions to get a better feel on how to sell your company.

**7. Listening to your Gut:** How often is your gut reaction wrong or even way off base? If you are intuitive enough to respond to those nagging little thoughts and feelings, you should pay careful attention. While a gut reaction is hardly the basis for turning away an applicant or for hiring one, it is imperative that you perform your due diligence to investigate your feelings and determine the source of concern. Most of us have silently cursed the fact that we didn't listen to the warning signs of a bad hire. While easy to suggest, this is one of those easier said than done tasks. However it pays off in the long run.

**8. Identifying where help is needed:** Your employees are usually the key source to your company's success and often your largest expense. Skimping on expertise when you need it could mean wasting money on turnover, lost time to hire, lost production, etc. Some ways to invest are:

- Professionally train your hiring managers on recruiting and interviewing skills
- For those with a constant hiring need- hire a marketing company to develop a few campaign messages – a one time investment
- Use a headhunter for highly skilled, hard to find professionals. It will pay off if they offer the right guarantees
- Use a reputable staffing service for temporary needs as they have a pool of ready to go applicants that should be background checked as well.
- Outsource portions of or all of your hiring process to a reputable hiring management service. It is cost effective and a valuable partner to most sizes of organizations.