



Project Management: The Prescription for Successful Hiring

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Most business leaders today are keenly aware of the downsides of a bad hire. On the flip side, they understand how landing the right talent can energize a company's success and potentially boost positive feelings within a company culture and workforce.

How costly is a bad hire on purely financial terms? Estimates vary, but the broad answer is very. Traveling back in time to 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that the average cost of a bad hiring decision can equal 30% of the individual's first-year potential earnings. It's probably higher today. Tony Hsieh, the founder and CEO at Zappos, told Business Insider in 2010 that bad hires had cost his company \$100 million. The recruitment wars are littered with anecdotes and statistics about the horror bad hires can bring.

Apart from the financial risks, there are other unwanted intangibles resulting from a bad hire. Mainly, there the potentially negative effects on workforce-wide morale, both in that the new bad hire may be rubbing co-workers the wrong way, or is causing others to have to pick up slack for the ill-fitting newcomer – the possibilities here are endless.

For those reasons and more, getting the right person in place is serious business. With that as the fundamental objective, finding and landing the right candidate to fill a job requires a partnership between an employer and its search and recruitment vendor. A smooth, effective relationship here is indispensable. But apart from that strong relationship being in place, there also needs to be a winning process as the primary driver. Enter project management.

Project Management: A Difference Maker

Taking a project management (PM) approach to hiring is a proven way to succeed. Used properly, a project management approach will ensure that an employer gets the best possible match between job candidate and the open position. It starts with a professional, dedicated, all-inclusive hiring service, one that offers flexibility in creating customized solutions for every job opening opportunity.

Project management begins when the recruitment partner *really* listens to a client to understand their specific needs. Next, it develops and sticks with agreed-to planning and timelines. Also, embedded in any recruitment partnership is a talent search service that gets the best candidates in the pipeline, while at the same time taking the stress out of management search and compensation negotiations.

What it means is a search process that is smarter, more analytical and truly dedicated to employer branding – the critical strategy of how top job candidates perceive their potential new employer.

The Project Management Path to a Successful Hire

In taking a project management approach to recruitment and hiring, especially on the higher management levels within an organization, there are four basic tenets:

- Establishing a search committee (Who's driving the bus?)
- Drawing a roadmap to success (Cartography that works!)
- Making sense of the candidate (Using a quantitative approach to search)
- Putting logistics planning in place (What happens when you get there?)

Let's look at each of those four success factors!

Success Factor #1: Establishing a Search Committee

Every higher-level management position needs a Search Committee, whether it's two or 10 members. Any new employee is going to interact with more than one person, so there is a need to engage your team and ensure that every company division to be impacted by the new hire has an opportunity to share the responsibility to help us to understand the needs of the job: the skills and personality traits necessary to do the job well. A search committee member representing the interests of each division can provide the guidance required to scoring a successful search.

One key question: Does a Search Committee have the final word on a hiring decision? It should depend on the job opening in question and an organization's culture. Here, look for your recruitment partner to help you determine the right role is for the Search Committee – and help explain it to every member.

Success Factor #2: Drawing up a road map to success

It's the search and recruitment partner's role to make sure it's clear what a client wants and needs in that key hiring decision. That means answering some basic questions:

What exactly is the job you are trying to fill? Here, look for a partner to use information from the search committee to create a thorough position description, outlining the tasks and responsibilities that you hope that your new employee will be fulfilling.

What do you want to know about your candidates? Your search and recruitment partner must work with the Search Committee to create a set of interview questions to evaluate each candidate that they screen.

Success Factor #3: Making Sense of candidates

A key objective from any search and recruitment partner is to create a fully transparent process, so that each candidate is evaluated in a consistent manner. This helps to make better matches between employer and potential employee.

Why is a quantitative approach so important? For one thing, hiring the right person is the clear objective. Search and recruitment is a delicate balance between data-driven decision-making and "gut" feelings. Many employers lean too far toward the instinct side of their candidates and ignore the step of ensuring that candidate data points align with the job needs the candidate will need to meet. The idea here is that "gut feelings" are combined with solid metrics – that way, a candidate you prefer instinctively will have an even higher change for a successful outcome.

How do you create the best data in using a project management approach to hiring? One thing is using the Search Committee's detailed job description and interview questions. Then, create a screening process and scoring rubric for evaluating each candidate.

Be sure to take advantage of your partner's applicant tracking system to provide consistent quantitative screening. With that, a Search Committee will be privy to detailed notes and scoring metrics, so that the committee can review each top candidate using consistent data points. The information needs to meet two prime criteria: it must be both thorough and illuminating. Employers should feel like they know the candidates before they even meet them.

Success Factor #4: Putting logistics planning in place

Here is where a search and recruitment partner needs to really step up to the plate. That entails, among other things, managing every aspect of the candidates' interactions with your company. In all honesty, it's like your partner serves as an adjunct member of your HR Department.

This phase also means a Search Committee receives comprehensive candidate packages, including interview questions. In addition, an effective search and recruitment partner should coordinate all on-site interviews and create a schedule allowing each stakeholder the opportunity to meet the candidates. If necessary, it could also mean coordination with corporate counsel.

Finally, a search and recruitment partner should support the Search Committee in planning and producing a compensation package, and also create an offer letter that will help transform the possible best candidate into the newest employee. Finally, your search and recruitment partner should negotiate on your behalf by closing the deal with your new hire.

Project management injects rigor into search and recruitment!

Again, making even a single bad hiring decision will be a very costly mistake, both in terms of wasted dollars and potential loss of employee morale. Why even risk it? By putting the rigor of project management into your search, recruitment and hiring process, you can greatly boost the odds that not only will you hire the right person, but as a result, you also will drive success for both your organization's culture and its bottom line.

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