



Common Hiring Mistakes *by Melissa Wall*

Hiring managers often fall into five traps:

1. Waiting for the perfect candidate
2. Unwilling to pull the trigger
3. Relying on the Internet as the primary candidate source
4. Failing to use search firms wisely
5. Not tapping into the internal referral system

Let's address each of them in order:

Waiting for the Perfect Candidate.

"There's lots of people unemployed right now. Let's see more candidates before we make a decision."

The problem with this approach is that there's no such thing as the perfect candidate, much in the same way that nothing in life is totally perfect.

A hiring manager needs to outline the three to five key requirements that must be met and then develop a list of secondary "nice-to-haves". The most reasonable approach is to go with the first candidate that meets the first set of requirements while meeting a good portion of the secondary ones. Most decisions in life are based on the 80/20 rule.

Unwilling to Pull the Trigger

It's not uncommon to hear of candidates going back for their tenth interview.

Hiring managers need to ask themselves what message does this send to senior management and current and future employees about their decision-making capability? If a company can take this amount of time to fill a job, is the job really that important and does it need to be filled? When it comes to headcount allocation, remember the corporate rule of "use it or lose it."

Relying on the Internet as the Primary Source of Candidates.

While no one can disagree that the Internet has made the process of sending resumes easier, it hasn't made it easier to find the right person.



According to various sources such as outplacement firms*, only about six percent of positions are filled via the Internet. Not surprising. Anyone who has placed an ad online knows about the problems with Internet recruiting such as receiving hundreds of resumes, many of which are not appropriate, or paying to search databases that are filled with candidates that either don't respond or are no longer available, or seeing their job listing quickly disappear to the bottom of a list of 500 or more jobs – without the ability to refresh. As a result, you spend hours – even days - laboriously going through hundreds of resumes trying to find the needle in the haystack.

The problem is that people can easily instruct an online recruiting service to send their resume to any position that contains certain key words. The result is that they don't know anything about the position or the company.

Are these the people you want working for you – the ones that have given no thought to the position or the company? Or that don't care if their current employer sees that they are looking for a new job.

How do you improve your chances of finding good people via the Internet?

1. Don't confuse Internet recruiting services with advertising. The online recruiting services are simply electronic advertisers and, at best, resume gatherers, *not* recruiters. So you should expect to receive a lot of inappropriate resumes.
2. Make sure your online listings stand out. Check out other job listings and make sure you are different - and specific about the job and its requirements - so that you draw attention from the right type of applicant.
3. Ask prospective candidates to include a cover letter explaining how they meet your specific needs – this will cut out the people who don't know they have even applied. It takes longer and people need to think about what they are doing. It's too easy to "point and click".

Failing to Use Search Firms Wisely.

"With so many candidates out there, we don't need to pay a fee to find someone. We can do it ourselves."

There are several faults in this logic and good reasons to use an outside search firm:

1. You need a good recruiter when there are perceived to be so many potential candidates because a reputable search firm will sort the wheat from the chaff



and present you with only the most appropriate candidates, after having done all the upfront search and interviewing.

2. An outside recruiter can handle a confidential search – important when there is an incumbent or a restructuring planned.
3. A search firm can confidentially and more easily approach an individual working for a competitive organization. This is very important when companies want a specific set of skills or industry knowledge.
4. Search firms have access to candidates that are not active job seekers. Such people do not post their resumes on popular search engines and are most likely not even thinking about leaving their current position. That is, until they hear about the position at your company.
5. Search firms act as a buffer between the two parties to broker the deal and provide both sides with advice and counsel. And they do all this for one fixed fee, regardless of how long the process takes.

Approximately 10 percent of all new jobs are filled by candidates supplied by a search firm.*

Failing to Tap into the Internal Referral System.

Some of the best candidates are referred by current employees.

Start an internal referral program and pay \$1,000 for each successful hire. – success being determined as a person that makes it past the typical 90-day hiring period. Approximately 70 percent of all new jobs are filled through networking*. Are you using your employees to source new candidates?

*Source: Outplacement Firm: DBM.

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