Seven steps to candidate selection—succeed with the soft stuff

Quick quiz: What's the leading indicator of success in a job candidate? Experience and hard skills gathered from the resume? Intellect, personality, and cultural fit discovered from a pre-employment screening assessment? Or the personal impression during a formal interview?

According to the **Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends** survey, executives identified "the ability of their people to adapt, reskill, and assume new roles" as the top-ranked item to navigate future disruptions. People with the right soft skills are the ones with this ability. The rise of the social enterprise in a disrupted world has increased the importance of soft skills such as complex problem solving, social skills, and cultural fit. Although hard skills and experience are important, most hiring managers recognize them as the cost of entry (and a cheap one at that). True business value is created by identifying an individual's behavioral DNA—that critical combination of cognitive skills, behavioral characteristics, and cultural fit in a company, business unit, or department.

Companies invest a considerable amount of money in recruiting, hiring, and training in new employees. If the candidate ends up not being a good fit it is a huge waste of money, reports **Business News Daily article**. Organizations simply cannot afford to focus exclusively on a candidate's hard skills and experience match.

If "soft skills" are widely accepted as a strong success determinant, why are so many managers ineffective at hiring for the ideal profile? The answer lies in a lack of reasonable expectations, training, and tools. Most companies are aware of concepts such as these, but often deter willing managers from taking the perceived risks associated with hiring "non-standard" candidates. Soft skills are very difficult to detect in an interview since many people tend to be their best selves rather than their true selves.

To avoid these pitfalls, here are seven steps to help you get serious about hiring and start focusing on what really matters in candidate selection.

1. Set criteria per position that determines great performance (and best performers). This criterion must align with stated corporate goals and values.

2. Create a benchmark by job category of cognitive skills (intellect), core behavioral characteristics, and cultural fit of leading performers.

3. Deploy this benchmark as a measuring stick, which can assess future candidates early in the screening process. This avoids wasted screening time with low-potential candidates who possess an impressive resume but bear little resemblance to the best incumbents.

4. Focus recruitment advertising, branding, and strategy around this benchmark of top performers.

5. Create an interview process to support and highlight key areas of strengths and weaknesses relative to the ideal profile.

6. Ensure application to positions is available to all potential candidates—including remote ones—by using online job postings, applications, and assessments.

7. Make managers accountable for the ongoing ability to hire and develop future star performers by making this a core performance metric.

Sound difficult? Not necessarily. Innovative candidate assessment software is available today that can drive this benchmark and screening process quickly and inexpensively relative to the payoff.

Perceived difficulty aside, consider the value to be gained from deploying a behavioral driven talent assessment tool. Certainly, a reduction in turnover and an increase in quality of hire will directly impact a company's business outcome. Other major results include an increase in employee productivity and morale and improved customer satisfaction. These are reasonable expectations of a comprehensive "soft skill" hiring process, backed by modern talent acquisition technology—one that focuses on replicating the best employees. Start today and see the results.

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