

# Hiring—No Problem? Or, Stuck in the Resume Zone?

Although the economy seems to be slowing down, most companies are still have hiring problems. The recent hot economy just brought to the forefront a crisis that has been plaguing industry for years. The saying—“Twenty percent of the workforce is doing eighty percent of the work”—is still considered a business norm. However, in the next few years the more successful companies will evolve on how they acquire their most important asset—people. The advancement starts with a system for all three phases of hiring—finding, obtaining, and retaining. With that, the progression to the “performance zone” will result in companies having every employee making positive contributions.

Before you can solve a problem, you must identify the *real* problem. Oddly enough, most companies are focusing on a symptom—finding enough talent. History provides the clue to why we are stuck in the resume zone.

## **Homegrown Talent**

Back when America was an agricultural society, the workforce was homegrown. If you did not have at least ten children to help on the farm, something was wrong. The subsequent industrial revolution brought about a shift in labor needs. Even as we moved from hiring neighbors to strangers, it wasn't difficult. Compared to backbreaking farm work, assembly line jobs were easy. No skills were needed, just a pair of hands. The move to a technological-based work force has changed that.

Unique problems have accompanied each transition from agricultural to industrial, and then to technological based economies. For example, the assembly line era created turnover difficulties. Can you imagine having hundreds of spare workers every day because you did not know who would show up for work? Henry Ford's five dollars a day wages was considered outrageous at the time but it did solve that problem.

## **Technology Transition and Beyond**

Today's transition into technology has brought the need for specialized skills. (In spite of what you would think, the future hiring transition will be the realization that talent does not equate to experience. The company that seeks individuals with outstanding records of accomplishment in any field, then hires based on attitude

and motivation will blow away its competition. Teaching knowledge is simple but improving talent is impossible.) Today's jobs do not require just a pair of hands. Nonetheless, existing hiring methods still have the old "pair of hands" mentality.

The help wanted sign and the handshake evolved into the employment application. The want ads and the resume came next. Although the Internet is an improvement, we are still stuck in the resume zone.

### **Interviewing Progress**

Consider the progress in interviewing. "You want to work at my country store?" "Yep." "Good, here's a broom sweep out the place." Phrasing into: "I see on your application you finished high school?" "Yep." "Good, go see Harry, he will teach you how to put on hubcaps." Now we have: "I see on your resume you know C++?" "Yep." "Good, when you start Monday we will have you write code for the Mars' remote vehicle program." See the problem?

Initially resumes served the purpose of telling an employer where a person took up time and space. In the past if a person had "shovel expert" on his/her resume, it did not leave much room for variation. Back then, basic qualifications had narrow scopes. A shovel expert could be still lazy but firing someone was not a mess as it is today. Also, finding a replacement was not complicated. Consequently, the interview did not need to focus on qualifications but rather personality. Let's also remember past employment usually meant a gold watch for twenty-five years of service. Today's job functions have become more complex but the resume and the interviewing process has not changed.

Stuck in the resume zone also has supply limitations. Approximately five percent of the qualified people for any position are actively look for a new opportunity. The primary purpose of a passive method—any process where the prospects make the initial contact—is to reach these individuals. In the past, there were many choices. Now with the record low unemployment, this talent pool is shallow. Even if the economy slows down, a company must seek outstanding employees. Therefore, incorporating active methods means using any process where a company representative makes the initial contact. Although these methods undercover the most talented, the hiring system must allow for the fact that the best do not have current resumes. That is probably the toughest barrier for most companies need to surmount to break out of the resume zone.

### **The Sidecar Employee**

Let's throw in two other interesting changes—the pace and the sidecar employee. Travelling across this country now takes hours instead of months. The same can be said for the change of pace in the workplace. With this rapid business tempo also comes the difficult task of getting rid of the sidecar employee—the one that is along for the ride but doesn't contribute much to the bottom line. Before, a hiring mistake might have meant an extra employee. Today's "lean and mean" philosophy has changed that.

Let's sum up the situation. The available labor pool is shallow. Job functions are technology specific. Resumes are the primary hiring tool. Interviewing focuses on personality fits. Hiring takes months. Twenty percent of the workforce is doing eighty percent of the work.

To escape the resume zone, the path to outstanding success starts with an active, structured and organized hiring process. Mixing in passive and active means for "finding" employees deepens the talent pool. A structured process incorporates attitude and motivation checks that not only make the candidates take a more active role but also better determines qualifications. The resume is just one small aspect of the process. Organized not only reduces the hiring cycle but allows the interviewing to focus on abilities and capabilities. The primary objective of the progressive "performance zone" is have to every employee positively contribute to a company's success.