



Find the superstars – master the art of good interviewing

Getting the right talent on board is critical to the success of any organisation – A.m.p. examines how to make the most of your interviews

Do you recruit new staff with unpredictable results or is your staff turnover too high?

Given the huge price of getting recruitment wrong – it costs thousands of pounds to recruit and train a senior sales person for example. With a target of £½ million getting it wrong could mean the loss of revenue equivalent to three months sales targets and a very big deficit to the bottom line.

These days a successful appointment is someone who matches the culture of the company, performs well and stays put once they are appointed. Mike Maher, Manager of Technical Appointments says, “Culture is a fascinating area and one of growing interest. While the same job in two different organisations may look the same, when organisational culture and values are taken into account, the jobs can be completely different. This is where the measure of soft skills come into their own.”

He adds, “How do we at A.m.p. take this into account? The essential prerequisite is job design – having a clear understanding of what the job involves and the human attributes needed for superior performance. Many organisations are turning to competencies to fulfil this requirement where they set out ‘how’ the job is to be done as opposed to ‘what’ has to be done.”

Hiring managers must therefore get the clearest brief they can, when they are looking to appoint new staff – each appointment demands a thorough understanding not just of what an employee will be expected to do, but how they are expected to do it.

Every manager wants to find and then clone star performers. Not only do they perform, but they also set standards for their colleagues to reach. We assume that all employees have the right characteristics to be successful in a particular business for example, intelligence, ability, experience, communication skills, etc. The big question is why some employees with the same skills, training and experience are far more successful. Louise Elvin, Manager of Sales Appointments acknowledges that recruiting in sales can be tricky: “They tend to be good at selling themselves, naturally enough.” How can you tell if you are hiring the best person for the job before it becomes apparent that you have not?



As a company, A.m.p. have more than twelve years' experience in identifying outstanding performers and spotting future talent. Selecting the right staff also means that people stay in jobs longer, which provides significant cost savings, never mind the disruption and effects on morale and the negative effects of having disgruntled ex-employees 'bad-mouthing' the company.

A.m.p. spend a lot of time with line management identifying the specific tasks involved and the personal attributes needed for the job. This information is then integrated into the interview together with the company culture and encompasses questions to get at the heart of experience, aptitudes and motivations.

Sam Cunningham, MD of A.m.p. and Mike Maher who heads up the Technical Division have more than 35 years of combined experience. This is a combination unmatched in the region and makes A.m.p. the No.1 consultancy in all areas of Sales, Marketing, Technical and Management recruitment.

A.m.p.'s Interview Checklist

1: Preparation of job description – set out clearly what the job involves and the human attributes required in a way that can be understood by all parties in the selection process.

2: Interview preparation – identify general questions which will be asked of all candidates. Specific questions relating to specific candidates should also be framed, based on the candidate's CV, application form and/or letters. These will be probes to check and clarify the facts, information and evidence available prior to the interview. Good questioning improves the structure of the interview and the quality of the information established.

3: Establishing rapport – initiate the interview with low order questions to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding and guide the interview quickly to your key indicators

4: Be honest – be prepared to answer negative questions as well as positive ones. Answer truthfully and frankly. Avoid over selling and over promising.

5: Body language – statistics demonstrate that in a face to face confrontation, the communication passes from one part to the other as a mixture of three ingredients... the Words - 7% of the total message, the Tone Of Voice – 33% of the total message and the Non Verbal Signals – 60% of the total message. Pay attention to posture, eye contact and gestures, however small.

6: Objectivity – avoid emotional hiring decisions. Personal biases and preferences must not affect your interpretation of the facts. Often first



impressions are subjective and emotional. But after an hour of intelligent probing and conversation your thoughts will be more objective and rational. Those first impressions can be counteracted and proved misleading by having a template or a structure.

7: Feedback – agree the timeframes for interview feedback. If you set out people's expectations correctly, you can deliver what they are expecting and no-one will be disappointed.

Perceptive, focussed interviewing skills are where the rubber meets the road in hiring the best people – but do you have the time and the budget to train your hiring managers in complicated behavioural and situational interview techniques? A.m.p. handles more senior appointments than any other agency in the region and offers a powerful, cost effective recruitment process focussed on identifying key performers crucial to your growth and success. Their proven experiences over many years has constantly differentiated them from other agencies and placed them as leaders in their field.