

TAKE THE PAIN OUT OF HIRING THE RIGHT PROCUREMENT COORDINATOR

By Sherry Knight, President and CEO, Dimension 11 Ltd.

You've hired them before and it hasn't worked out. It's not unusual, really! Grant wanted to hire a supply chain manager for his manufacturing firm. He prepared the job description and used that to create an ad which he placed online. He reviewed résumés, conducted interviews, checked references and offered Sam a position. All was well.

Well, not exactly – like many new hires, Sam lost his job within the first three months. It's unfortunate and it's costly. In fact, this cost Grant's company about \$150,000. That's a lot of money lost, and now Grant has to start all over again.

Attracting the right people is not an easy feat. Grant realized he needed to adjust his approach to hiring. In examining his processes, he knew most of what was occurring was the best approach. What he also realized was that there were so many different approaches to actual procurement that he had not explored his candidate experiences deeply enough.

This brought forward a new approach to interviewing.

Questioning

Grant realized his questions needed to go deeper, so he devised a few questions to add to his repertoire:

- What was the greatest challenge you experienced in your last job?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- What inventory trends have you seen in the organization?
- What's the number one benefit of a safety program?
- What will you do when you cannot find a product at our regular supplier?
- How do you develop relationships with suppliers?
- How do your co-workers describe you? Your boss?

References

In exploring a prospective candidate, reference checks are critical. Many people overlook this aspect of hiring, yet it can be so important. The interesting element here is getting to the culture – a person who is successful in one organization may be totally unacceptable in another



organization. Consider the following questions of a reference to better understand how your new hire will complement your organization:

- How does this candidate communicate with co-workers?
- What does this candidate do when confronted with equipment breakdowns?
- What will this candidate do to "fit in" with the rest of the team?
- What made this candidate a success in your organization?
- How did this candidate provide feedback to a vendor who is not compliant?

Experience

Before hiring someone it is always a good idea to "see" the quality of their work. Grant realized he could get a better understanding of the candidate's abilities by having them conduct a few tasks to see how they do things. For instance, he would now take a candidate to the procurement department and have him/her perform some of the duties to be completed:

- Ask the candidate to find a vendor in your system.
- Ask the candidate if he could suggest a better way to restock inventory.
- Ask the candidate to process a request.
- Ask the candidate to reconcile a project costing situation.

Hiring is critical in every organization. When it is done well, it saves frustration and money.

The number one need for a new employee is "cultural fit". If this new employee will fit in with everyone else, then it will be a positive hire. If the candidate does not fit the culture of the organization, he or she will never be successful and Grant will be looking again for a candidate.

Recently we interviewed an individual for a client who wanted to have someone who was a self-starter, someone who did not need to be guided with too much help. During the interview, we noticed the candidate carefully read a paper for a task which we asked him to do. When he completed his reading, he turned to the interviewer and asked, "What is it you want me to do? Who is going to tell me what is needed?" Right away we knew he would not fit into the culture of the organization.

Asking the above questions and seeing what the candidate can do and how he or she interacts with the other people on the job is the best way to ensure a good fit. It takes extra effort to go to this length to ensure a good fit. However, in the long run, it makes a difference.

You want to be able to sleep at night knowing you have made the right hire. Grant does. Can you?

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