PART I: THE TRUTH ABOUT HIRING

TRUTH

1

The Importance of "People Skills"
Is there any "critical ingredient" for achieving success as a manager? Is it an MBA from Harvard or Stanford universities? How about specific technical expertise in one's area of competence like law, computer engineering, or accounting? The answer to our question is "yes, there is a critical ingredient to success," and it's good interpersonal or "people" skills. Technical skills may be a necessary qualification for a job, but they're rarely sufficient. Possession of competent interpersonal skills increasingly plays a major role in deciding who is hired, who is retained, and who is promoted.

What defines interpersonal skills? Although there is no universal agreement, most definitions include oral communication, leadership, motivating others, negotiating, resolving conflicts, and collaboration. In addition to these face-to-face interactions, the term also is expanding to include virtual interactions such as leading virtual teams and electronic communications.

Organizations place a premium on hiring people with good interpersonal skills.

Study after study has consistently found that organizations place a premium on hiring people with good interpersonal skills. Here are some examples:

- When 1,400 chief financial officers in the United States were asked "If two candidates interviewing for an accounting or finance position had similar skills, which of the following would you find most valuable—technical knowledge, people skills, industry-specific knowledge, advanced degree, multilingual skills, or international experience?" The overwhelming first choice was people skills.

- A survey of 330 employers found 96 percent rated communication and interpersonal skills as the most valuable employee trait.

- A survey of more than 500 European business leaders from 32 European countries rated effective interpersonal skills a far more important quality in potential employees than a strong academic degree or business acumen.
Why are organizations putting a premium on hiring people with good interpersonal skills? The answer lies in the changing way work is done. Today's employees are increasingly part of a collaborative workplace. Increased collaboration requires increased interaction with others, and successful interaction with others is dependent on interpersonal competence. In addition to interacting with their boss, employees find themselves increasingly as part of a team. And as team members, they have to participate in meetings, communicate clearly, be active listeners, provide feedback, make presentations, negotiate with others, and demonstrate they can be team players. Finally, many employees are expected to work with customers, suppliers, and others outside the organization. No matter how good their technical knowledge, if these people can't work well with others, their job performance suffers.

What's important for employees in general is even more important for those in managerial positions or those aspiring to a management position. Studies of successful managers—those with high-performing employees and low employee turnover—consistently indicate that they have good interpersonal skills. For instance, a national survey of the U.S. workforce found that wages and fringe benefits are not the primary reasons people like their jobs or stay with an employer. Far more important are the quality of the employees' jobs and the supportiveness of their work environments. So managers with good interpersonal skills are likely to make the workplace more pleasant, which, in turn, makes it easier to hire and retain qualified people. Today's employees are increasingly part of a collaborative workplace.
TRUTH
2
First Impressions DO Count!
When we meet someone for the first time, we notice a number of things about that person—physical characteristics, clothes, firmness of handshake, gestures, tone of voice, and the like. We then use these impressions to fit the person into ready-made categories. And this early categorization, formed quickly and on the basis of minimal information, tends to hold greater weight than impressions and information received later. This categorization is what we commonly refer to as a first impression.

Psychologists refer to the power of first impressions as the *primacy effect*. Essentially, it just means that first impressions influence latter impressions. What’s important from our perspective is that the primacy effect carries a lot of weight when we assess other people and, maybe more importantly, that first impressions of people are not very accurate.

Why do we rely so heavily on first impressions? Basically, we’re looking for a shortcut. When we meet new people, we want to categorize them so that we can process and understand information about them quickly. The error is compounded by the fact that we tend to cling to our first impressions. When later information is received that might contradict that first impression, we tend to discount, misrepresent, reinterpret, or even ignore it.

The best evidence on first impressions comes from research on employment interviews. Findings clearly demonstrate that first impressions count. More specifically, the information processed first has a greater effect on later judgments than subsequent information does.

Research on applicant appearance confirms the power of first impressions. Studies have looked at assessments made of applicants before the actual interview—that brief period in which
the applicant walks into an interview room, exchanges greetings with the interviewer, sits down, and engages in minor chit-chat. The evidence indicates that the way applicants walk, talk, dress, and look can have a great impact on the interviewer’s evaluation of applicant qualifications. Facial attractiveness seems to be particularly influential. Applicants who are highly attractive are evaluated as more qualified for a variety of jobs than those who are unattractive.

Initial positive impressions even reshape the interview itself. Positive first impressions lead interviewers to speak in a more pleasant interpersonal style and to ask less-threatening questions.

A final body of confirmative research finds that interviewers’ post-interview evaluations of applicants conform, to a substantial degree, to their pre-interview impressions. That is, those first impressions carry considerable weight in shaping the interviewers’ final evaluations, regardless of what actually transpired in the interview itself. This latter conclusion assumes that the interview elicits no highly negative information.

Based on numerous studies of the interview process, we can say that first impressions are powerful influences on outcomes. Instead of using the interviews to gather unbiased information, interviewers typically use the process to merely confirm first impressions.

Can managers do anything to lessen the power of first impressions? Yes. First, I suggest that you avoid the tendency to make quick initial judgments. Try to stay neutral when you meet someone for the first time. The more time that goes by before you make a conclusion, the better you’ll know the person and the more accurate your assessment. Second, keep your mind open for new information that may contradict earlier assessments. Think of any early impression as a working hypothesis that you’re constantly testing for its accuracy.
3

Forget Traits; It's Behavior That Counts!
You’re interviewing applicants to fill a job position in your firm. What are you looking for in these applicants? If you’re like many managers, you’ll answer with terms such as hardworking, ambitious, confident, loyal, and dependable. After all, how can you go wrong trying to hire people with traits such as these? Well, you can! The problem is that traits aren’t very good predictors of future job performance.

Most of us have a strong belief in the power of traits to predict behavior. We know that people behave differently in different situations, but we tend to classify people by their traits, impose judgments about those traits (being self-assured is “good”; being stubborn is “bad”), and make evaluations about people based on these trait classifications. Managers often do this when they make hiring decisions or evaluate current employees. After all, if managers truly believed that situations rather than traits determined behavior, they would hire people almost at random and structure the situation to fit the employee’s strengths. But the employee selection process in most organizations places a great deal of emphasis on traits. We see this in the emphasis placed on how applicants perform in interviews and on tests. During interviews, managers watch and listen to see if applicants have the “qualities” they’re looking for in a “good” employee. Similarly, tests are often used to determine the degree to which an applicant has “good employee traits.”

We tend to classify people by their traits.

There are two problems with using traits in the hiring process. First, organizational settings are strong situations that have a large impact on employee behavior. Second, individuals are highly adaptive and personality traits change in response to organizational situations. Let me elaborate on each of these points.

The effect of traits in explaining behavior is likely to be strongest in relatively weak situations and weakest in relatively strong situations. Organizational settings tend to be strong situations because they have rules, policies, and other formal regulations that define acceptable behavior and punish deviant behavior,
and because they have informal norms that dictate appropriate behaviors. These formal and informal constraints minimize the effects of different personality traits. In contrast, picnics, parties, and similar informal functions are weak situations, and we'd predict that traits would be fairly strong predictors of behavior in these situations.

While personality traits are generally stable over time, a growing body of evidence demonstrates that an individual's traits are changed by the organization in which that individual participates. Moreover, people typically belong to multiple organizations (for instance, community, religious, social, athletic, and political, as well as to an employer) that often include very different kinds of members, and they adapt to those different situations. The fact is that people are not prisoners of a rigid and stable personality framework. They can, and do, adjust their behavior to reflect the requirements of various situations. As a case in point, you might be quiet and passive in church on Sunday morning but loud and aggressive in an afternoon pick-up basketball game on that same Sunday.

If traits aren't very good for predicting future employee behavior, what should managers use? The answer is: Past behaviors! The best predictor of a person's future behavior is his or her past behavior. So when interviewing candidates, ask questions that focus on previous experiences that are relevant to the current job opening. And ask for actual work experiences rather than hypothetical ones. For instance, ask: "What have you done in previous jobs that demonstrates your creativity?" Or "on your last job, what was it that you most wanted to accomplish but didn't? Why didn't you?" And instead of asking "how would you handle situation xyz?" ask "how did you handle situation xyz?"

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TRUTH

4

Brains Matter; or Why You Should Hire Smart People
Few topics generate more heated discussion and controversy than that of intelligence. People seem to hold widely differing and strong opinions on questions such as: Is IQ a good measure of intelligence? Is intelligence learned or inherited? Are intelligent people more successful than their less-intelligent peers?

We're concerned with the relationship between intelligence (or what is technically referred to as general mental ability) and job performance—specifically, do people with higher intelligence outperform their peers with lower intelligence? Not surprisingly, this is a topic in which there is no shortage of opinions. But don't put much weight on opinions. You should look for hard evidence. And there is actually quite a bit of hard evidence to draw upon. Certain facts are beyond significant technical dispute. For instance:

(1) IQ score closely matches whatever it is that people mean when they use the word intelligent or smart in ordinary language;
(2) IQ scores are stable, although not perfectly so, over much of a person's life;
(3) properly administered IQ tests are not demonstrably biased against social, economic, ethnic, or racial groups; and
(4) smarter employees, on average, are more proficient employees. I understand that some of these conclusions may make you uncomfortable or conflict with your personal views, but they are well supported by the research evidence.

Smarter employees, on average, are more proficient employees.

All jobs require the use of intelligence or cognitive ability. Why? For reasoning and decision making. High IQs show a strong correlation with performance in jobs that are novel, ambiguous, changing, or in multifaceted professional occupations such as accountants, engineers, scientists, architects, and physicians. But IQ is also a good predictor in moderately complex jobs such as crafts, clerical, and police work. IQ is a less valid predictor for unskilled jobs that require only routine decision making or simple problem solving.
Intelligence clearly is not the only factor affecting job performance, but it's often the most important. It is, for example, a better predictor of job performance than an employment interview, reference checks, or college transcripts. Unfortunately, the strong genetic component of IQ—probably 70 percent or more of our intelligence is inherited—makes the use of IQ as a selection tool vulnerable to attack. Critics are uncomfortable when average IQs are shown to differ among different races or that IQ has been found to be associated with economic differences. Some critics use these findings to suggest that IQ measures discriminate and, therefore, should be abandoned. This is unfortunate because the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that IQ tests are not biased against particular groups, even though what they measure is largely outside the control of the individual.

Our conclusion mirrors what Damon Runyon said, “The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that's the way to bet.” If you want to hire the best possible workforce, all other things being equal, hire the smartest people you can find.
TRUTH

When in Doubt, Hire Conscientious People!
We know that people don’t have common personalities. Some are outgoing; others are reserved. Some are relaxed; others are tense.

An extensive amount of research has identified five basic dimensions that explain the significant variation in human personality. These five factors are

- **Extraversion**—Are you an extravert (outgoing, sociable) or an introvert (reserved, timid)?
- **Agreeableness**—Are you highly agreeable (cooperative, trusting) or low (disagreeable, antagonistic)?
- **Conscientiousness**—Are you highly conscientious (responsible, organized) or low (unreliable, disorganized)?
- **Emotional stability**—Are you stable (calm, self-confident) or unstable (anxious, insecure)?
- **Openness to experience**—Are you open to new experiences (creative, curious) or closed (conventional, seek the familiar)?

Numerous studies have been undertaken to see whether there is any relationship between these five personality dimensions and job performance. Findings indicate that conscientiousness is most related to job performance. For the most part, conscientiousness predicts job performance across a broad spectrum of jobs—from professionals (engineers, accountants, lawyers) to police, salespeople, and semi-skilled workers. However, conscientiousness appears to be a stronger predictor of performance in jobs that are highly routine. While still relevant, conscientiousness is a weaker predictor of performance in complex jobs requiring a high level of intelligence. What explains this difference? It’s been proposed that it might be due to how job performance is measured in routine jobs. Performance in these jobs is not typically dependent on the quality of decision-making ability. Rather, it’s more likely to focus
on variables like showing up on time and following directions—behaviors associated with conscientiousness.

Individuals who score high in conscientiousness are dependable, reliable, careful, thorough, able to plan, organized, hard-working, persistent, and achievement-oriented. And these attributes tend to lead to higher job performance in most occupations. Additionally, research indicates that the power of conscientiousness transfers across borders. For instance, a review of studies covering people in 15 European countries found conscientiousness to predict performance across jobs and occupational groups.

So, in contrast to our conclusions in Truth 3, "Forget Traits; It's Behavior That Counts!," if you're looking for a single personality characteristic that is likely to be associated with high job performance, you're well advised to try to hire people who score high on conscientiousness. Let me note, however, one interesting caveat: More of this trait is not necessarily better. Evidence indicates that extremely conscientious people typically don't perform any better in their jobs than those who are merely above average.

Our conclusions on conscientiousness, of course, don't mean that other characteristics might not be relevant for specific jobs. For instance, evidence indicates that extraversion is a good predictor of performance in managerial and sales positions. This makes sense since these occupations involve high social interaction.

Some readers might be surprised that high emotional stability wasn't found to be related to job performance. Intuitively, it would seem that people who are calm and secure would do better on almost all jobs than people who are anxious and insecure. Closer inspection suggests that only people who have fairly high scores on emotional stability retain their jobs. So the range among those people studied, all of whom were employed, tended to be quite small. In other words, people who are low in emotional stability either don't tend to get hired in the first place or, when they do, they typically don't last too long in their jobs.
TRUTH

6

Want Friendly Employees?
It's in the Genes!
Executives at Southwest Airlines recognize what many managers fail to notice: Some people are just inherently more friendly and upbeat than others. Southwest believes, and rightly so, that it's difficult, if not impossible, to train people to provide friendly and courteous service. So Southwest Airlines focuses its hiring process on selecting out people who aren't basically happy and outgoing. Google, Apple, and The Four Seasons hotels are other examples of firms that hire for attitude.

A number of jobs—flight attendants, retail clerks, salespeople, and customer service are some obvious examples—are performed better by people with positive dispositions. Many managers trying to fill these jobs assume that pleasant employees can be created. They spend a lot of their time trying to design motivating jobs, working conditions, or attractive compensation and benefit programs to encourage their employees to be friendly and upbeat. Additionally, they spend millions of dollars on training to shape behavior. Most of these programs fail to achieve their objective. Why? Because whether a person is happy is essentially determined by his or her genetic structure. Studies have found that 35 percent to 50 percent, and maybe as much as 80 percent, of people's differences in happiness is attributable to their genes.

One of the more interesting streams of research on this subject has been done by comparing sets of identical twins who were separated at birth and raised apart. If environment were the prime shaper of personality, you'd think that the twins would likely have little in common if they were raised in very different households. But that's not the case. One set of twins, for example, had been separated for 39 years and raised 45 miles apart. Nevertheless, they drove the same model and color of car, chain-smoked the same brand of cigarette, owned dogs with the same name, and regularly vacationed within three blocks of each other at a beach community.

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1,500 miles away. Evidence like this has led researchers to conclude that genetics accounts for about 50 percent of the personality similarities between twins.

Analysis of satisfaction data for individuals over a 50-year period found that individual results were amazingly stable over time, even when these people changed employers and occupations. This analysis and other evidence suggest that an individual’s disposition toward life is largely established by his or her genetic makeup, that it holds over time, and carries over into his or her disposition toward work.

The message here is to follow Southwest’s example. If you want pleasant employees, focus your attention on the hiring process. Select out the negative, maladjusted, trouble-making fault finders who derive little satisfaction in anything about their jobs. How? Through personality testing, in-depth interviewing, and careful checking of applicants’ previous work records.

An individual’s disposition toward life holds over time and carries over into his or her disposition toward work.
Don’t Ignore Emotional Intelligence
In the past 20 years, few management topics have received as much notoriety as emotional intelligence. Is that notoriety justified? First, let’s make sure we understand what emotional intelligence is. Then, let’s look at the evidence.

*Emotional intelligence* (EI) refers to a person’s ability to detect and to manage emotional cues and information. It’s composed of five dimensions:

- **Self-awareness**—Being aware of what you’re feeling
- **Self-management**—The ability to manage one’s own emotions and impulses
- **Self-motivation**—The ability to persist in the face of setbacks and failures
- **Empathy**—The ability to sense how others are feeling
- **Social skills**—The ability to handle the emotions of others

People high in EI know their own emotions and are good at reading emotional cues—for instance, they know why they’re angry and how to express themselves without violating norms. Early EI proponents argued that people who know their own emotions and are good at reading others’ emotions should be more effective in their jobs—especially jobs that demand a high degree of social interaction.

Several early studies were encouraging. For instance, one study looked at the characteristics of Alcatel-Lucent engineers who were rated as stars by their peers. The researchers concluded that stars are better at relating to others. That is, it was their EI, not IQ, that characterized high performers. A study of U.S. Air Force recruiters generated similar findings. Top-performing recruiters exhibited high levels of EI. Using these findings, the Air Force revamped its selection criteria. A follow-up investigation found that future hires who had high EI scores were 2.6 times more successful than those who didn’t. By using EI in selection, the Air Force was able to cut turnover among
new recruiters in one year by more than 90 percent. Another illuminating study looked at the successes and failures of 11 American presidents—from Franklin Roosevelt to Bill Clinton. They were evaluated on six qualities—communication, organization, political skill, vision, cognitive style, and emotional intelligence. It was found that the key quality that differentiated the successful (like Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Reagan) from the unsuccessful (like Johnson, Carter, and Nixon) was emotional intelligence.

What does the overall evidence tell us? First of all, EI has not proved to be, in contrast to some early predictions, “the single most important predictor in job performance.” That enthusiasm appears to have been more hype than fact. Second, EI has to take a backseat to both cognitive ability and personality in predicting job performance. Intelligence and particularly conscientiousness predict a larger portion of job performance. Third, EI is more than just intelligence and personality. Contrary to what some have claimed, EI brings a unique addition to the search for valid predictors of future job performance. The evidence demonstrates clearly that EI, when added to intelligence test results and scores on conscientiousness, offers an improved predictor of job performance. Fourth, EI has been found to be positively related to both job satisfaction and job commitment. Finally, high EI scores by managers have been shown to relate to multicultural competency. That is, EI appears to predict whether managers will work well in diverse cultures.

All this suggests that organizations that hire managers and employees with high EIs are likely to benefit. However, it should be seen as an additional predictor of job performance—helpful but inferior to both intelligence and conscientiousness.

El is more than just intelligence and personality.
TRUTH

8

Throw Out Your Age Stereotypes
There are numerous age stereotypes about older workers (typically defined as those over age 55)—and most of them are negative. Some of the more popular ones include: Older workers are less motivated; can’t learn new skills; lack flexibility; resist change; don’t work well with younger bosses; are less productive than younger colleagues; have reduced cognitive abilities; and miss more work days due to illnesses. The truth is that most of these stereotypes are wrong.

Why is it important for managers to overcome any negative stereotypes of older workers? The answer is simply that the workforce is aging, and managers can expect to work with older employees. Even ignoring the legal repercussions from age discrimination, this has important implications for managers. The reality is that the workforce is aging in the United States and in other industrial nations. Between 2010 and 2020, for instance, the over-55 segment of the U.S. workforce is expected to grow by 11 million—from 19.5 percent of the total workforce to 25.2 percent. Even before the Great Recession, an increasing number of Baby Boomers were indicating they wanted to postpone retirement, while recent economic events have made their staying in the workforce increasingly necessary. So as a manager, you’re likely to be hiring, working with, or working for someone who is older—and holding inaccurate stereotypes can be a serious impediment to that relationship.

Now, let’s look at the evidence.

Many believe job productivity declines with age. And at first glance, that may seem logical. As we age, our vision and hearing often decline. So do our muscular strength, manual dexterity, and reaction time. But these factors don’t necessarily translate into impaired performance because they tend to be offset by experience, judgment, and a strong work ethic. The overall evidence indicates that age and job performance are unrelated. In fact, performance often improves with age, and when declines occur, they tend to be small. One likely explanation for why performance increases with age is that older workers tend to have longer job tenure, and increases in job tenure are associated with...
higher job performance. The evidence also shows that there are much greater differences in job performance within age groups than between age groups. That is, it’s the individual differences between people within age groups that matter most when predicting job performance.

What about factors such as cognitive abilities, absenteeism, turnover, and ability to learn? Studies comparing samples of older and younger workers in objective tests of cognitive abilities found no significant differences between the groups. Where small decreases in older workers have been found, it tends not to affect performance. Older workers appear to use their experience to cope and compensate for any age-related decline in cognitive skills.

The findings on absenteeism are mixed. While most studies show that absences decline with age, a closer examination finds it is partially a function of whether the absence is avoidable or unavoidable. In general, older employees have lower rates of avoidable absence than do younger employees. However, they have equal rates of unavoidable absence, such as those due to sickness.

In terms of turnover, the evidence is clear: The older you get, the less likely you are to quit your job. Of course, this isn’t an unexpected finding. You would expect older workers to be more stable for several reasons. As workers get older, they have fewer alternative job opportunities because their skills have become more specialized. Additionally, their long tenure also often provides them with higher wages, longer paid vacations, and more attractive pension benefits.

Finally, what about older workers’ ability to learn? The evidence here is also mixed. Older workers can learn “new tricks” but often complete training more slowly than their younger counterparts. There is also evidence that the type of training may influence its effectiveness. Some training methods such as active participation, modeling, and self-paced learning appear to be more effective with older workers.
TRUTH

Match Personalities and Jobs
Want to increase the satisfaction of new employees and decrease the likelihood that they'll resign? There is a substantial amount of evidence that demonstrates this can be achieved by selecting job applicants whose personality matches the job you're trying to fill.

Six personality types have been identified, and evidence strongly supports that people are happiest when they are put in jobs that align with their personality. Those six personalities are realistic, investigative, social, conventional, enterprising, and artistic.

*Realistic* people prefer physical activities that require skill, strength, and coordination. Their personality traits: shy, genuine, persistent, stable, conforming, and practical. Examples of jobs that align with their personality include mechanic, drill press operator, assembly-line worker, and farmer.

*Investigative* people prefer activities that involve thinking, organizing, and understanding. Their personality traits: analytical, original, curious, and independent. Examples of jobs that align with their personality include biologist, economist, software programmer, mathematician, and news reporter.

*Social* people prefer activities that involve helping and developing others. Their personality traits: sociable, friendly, cooperative, and understanding. Examples of jobs that align with their personality include social worker, teacher, counselor, and clinical psychologist.

*Conventional* people prefer rule-regulated, orderly, and unambiguous activities. Their personality traits: conforming, efficient, practical, unimaginative, and inflexible. Examples of jobs that align with their personality include accountant, corporate manager, bank teller, and file clerk.

People are happiest when they are put in jobs that align with their personality.
Enterprising people prefer verbal activities in which there are opportunities to influence others and attain power. Their personality traits: self-confident, ambitious, energetic, and domineering. Examples of jobs that align with their personality include lawyer, real estate agent, public-relations specialist, and small-business manager.

Artistic people prefer ambiguous and unsystematic activities that allow creative expression. Their personality traits: imaginative, disorderly, idealistic, emotional, and impractical. Examples of jobs that align with their personality include painter, musician, writer, and interior decorator.

The evidence indicates that people in jobs congruent with their personality tend to be more satisfied and less likely to voluntarily resign than people in incongruent jobs. Social individuals, for instance, should be in social jobs, conventional people in conventional jobs, and so forth. In addition, personalities can be conceptualized in a circle. Points on that circle would be in this order: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, conventional, and back to realistic. Findings support that the closer two personalities are in that circle, the more compatible they are. And adjacent categories are most similar. So a realistic person in an investigative job is more congruent—and should be more content—than if he or she were in a social job.

Our conclusion is that managers should assess vocational interests in the hiring process. And by successfully matching interests and job requirements, there is an increased likelihood that hires will perform well on the job and stay with the organization.

Managers should assess vocational interests in the hiring process.
TRUTH

10

Hire People Who Fit Your Culture: My "Good Employee" Was Your Stinker!
Many a manager has hired a new employee based largely on his or her skills, then lived to regret it. While skill competence is certainly an important ingredient in the making of a “good employee,” never underestimate the role that an organization’s culture plays in an employee’s success or failure.

Employee performance typically has a large subjective component. Bosses and colleagues have to make interpretations: Is Dave a team player? Is Tina taking unnecessary risks? Is Laura too competitive? And whether those interpretations are positive or negative depends to a great extent on how well an employee is perceived to fit into the organization. A good person-organization fit goes a long way toward ensuring that an employee will be perceived as a high performer.

An organization’s culture represents a system of shared meaning. It expresses the core values shared by a majority of the organization’s members. The culture at Ireland’s Ryanair, for example, values aggressiveness and competition. In contrast, Johnson & Johnson has a communal culture that emphasizes a strong family feel and values trust and loyalty. The typical “good” employee at Ryanair looks and behaves very differently from the typical “good” employee at J&J. Similarly, Walmart’s obsession with cost-minimization creates a different culture and attracts and promotes a different type of employee than does Nordstrom, whose culture is defined by commitment to customer service.

As a manager, you should assess potential employees in terms of how well you think they will fit into your organization’s culture. You want to hire people whose values are essentially consistent with those of the organization, or at least a good portion of those values. If you begin by getting a solid handle on what your organization values and rewards, you’re well on your way to determining whether a candidate will be a good match. Ask questions and make observations that will allow you to determine
the applicant's propensity to be innovative and take risks, to focus on "the big picture" versus the details, to emphasize means or ends, to be team oriented or individualistic, to be aggressive and competitive versus easygoing, and whether he or she prefers the status quo to growth. These are the primary elements that identify organizational cultures.

The Limited, the women's clothing retailer with 260 stores and 5,000 employees, is using software designed to help managers select among job candidates by analyzing 39 behavioral traits and fitting them to The Limited's culture and what the company has found to characterize high performers. The software categorizes candidates into four groups based on degree of fit. Limited's manager of staffing states that candidates from the top two groups "turn over far less frequently than candidates in the bottom two recommendation categories."

What can you expect to happen if you make a mistake and hire a few candidates who don't fit with your firm's culture? It's likely you'll wind up with hires who lack motivation and commitment and who are dissatisfied with their jobs and the organization. They'll get lower performance evaluations than employees with similar objective performance but whose values align with the organization. And, not surprisingly, employee "misfits" have considerably higher turnover rates than individuals who perceive a good fit. Most people pick up the cues that they don't fit in and, assuming other job options are available, leave for a job where they're more likely to be appreciated.
TRUTH

11

Good Citizenship Counts!
No matter how detailed and precise management is in writing up employee job descriptions, it's difficult to capture all the nuances that go into the tasks that result in doing "a good job." In fact, when unionized employees limit their work activities to only those minimally required by their labor contract, it's called "work-to-rule" and is used as a tactic to slow down operations. The work-to-rule example is meant to illustrate that jobs have voluntary components, in addition to their required elements, that contribute to high employee performance.

All other things equal, most managers want employees who will do more than their usual job duties. They want employees who will go beyond expectations. Employees who exhibit discretionary behavior that is not part of their formal job requirements, but that promotes the organization's operations, are said to be good citizens. And in today's workplace, where flexibility is critical, jobs are fluid, work is often done in teams, and job descriptions frequently fail to include all the essential tasks that need to be done, top performing managers need individuals who display good organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).

It helps to think of OCB as filling in the cracks that are left in job descriptions but that, nevertheless, help the organization achieve its goals. It's the optional activities employees do that add to their effectiveness on the job.

What is good citizenship behavior? Examples include making constructive statements about their work group and the organization, helping others on their team, volunteering for extra job activities, taking the initiative to learn new skills, avoiding unnecessary conflicts, showing care for organizational property, respecting the spirit as well as the letter of rules.
and regulations, and gracefully tolerating the occasional work-related impositions and nuisances. Not surprisingly, studies indicate that those organizational units that have employees who exhibit good citizenship behaviors outperform those that don’t.

So what can managers do to stimulate good citizenship among employees? The answer seems to be twofold: Increase employee autonomy and treat people fairly.

To demonstrate OCB, employees need autonomy. This provides them with the freedom to do extra tasks, to help out others, and make decisions that can help them do their job better. Additionally, when people believe outcomes, treatment, and procedures are fair, they are more likely to talk positively about the organization, help others, and go beyond the normal expectations in their job. If your employees feel that you, your organization’s procedures, and company pay policies are fair, trust is developed. And when employees trust you and the organization, they’re more willing to voluntarily engage in behaviors that go beyond their formal job requirements.
TRUTH

12

Think back to the last time you went for a job interview. Once the interviewer got past asking you questions, how did he or she describe the job and organization? Most managers, when conducting employment interviews, almost exclusively focus on promoting positive aspects. They talk about interesting work assignments, the camaraderie among coworkers, opportunities for advancement, great benefits, and the like. Even though managers typically know the downside of the job and the organization, they carefully avoid those topics. Why turn off a good job applicant by talking about negatives?

Managers who focus only on the positives are making a mistake. As attested to by a survey of 2,300 recently hired employees, their main complaint was an unrealistic, inaccurate picture of their new job. They said, for instance, that they wished they had known the turnover rate for their position, true travel requirements, actual hours, and the actual state of the organization’s finances; seen an official job description; and had more information about team structure and dynamics.

At its worst, managers who focus only on the positive are setting themselves up for the disappointment of a sudden and surprising resignation. All those hours spent reviewing candidate applications and conducting interviews prove wasted when, after only a few weeks or a month into the job, the new employee abruptly quits.

Is there anything an astute manager can do to avoid this experience? The answer is Yes: Use realistic job previews (RJPs).

RJPs provide job applicants with both unfavorable and favorable information before an offer is made. It’s in direct contrast to the typical job previews that most managers give during the interview stage—carefully worded descriptions that sell the positive aspects of the new job and the organization. All these do is set up the employee with false expectations. No job or organization is perfect. And you’re more likely to keep your new hires if you’re straight with them from the beginning.
Why do RJPs reduce turnover? The evidence indicates that this openness enhances the perception in applicants of the organization's honesty.

When the information that a job applicant receives is excessively inflated, a number of things happen that have potentially negative effects on the organization. First, mismatched applicants who would probably become dissatisfied with the job and soon quit are less likely to voluntarily select themselves out of the search process. Second, the absence of negative information builds unrealistic expectations. If hired, the new employee is likely to become quickly disappointed. This, in turn, leads to low employee satisfaction and premature resignations. Finally, the new hires are prone to becoming disillusioned and less committed to the organization when they come face-to-face with the negatives in the job. No one likes to feel as if he or she was tricked or misled during the hiring process.

An RJP balances both the positive and negative aspects of the job. For instance, in addition to positive comments, managers could tell candidates that there are limited opportunities to talk with coworkers during work hours, or that erratic fluctuations in workloads create considerable stress on employees during rush periods.

The evidence indicates that applicants who have been given a realistic job preview hold lower and more realistic expectations about the job they'll be doing and are better prepared for coping with the job and its frustrating elements. Job satisfaction is also increased because new hires see that their employer has been honest and forthright in its recruitment efforts. The result is fewer unexpected resignations. While presenting only the positive aspects of a job to a recruit may initially entice him or her to join the organization, it may be a marriage that both you and the new employee will quickly regret.
Manage the Socialization of New Employees
All Marines must go through a multiweek boot camp, where they “prove” their commitment. At the same time, the Marine trainers are indoctrinating new recruits in the “Marine way.” In a similar but less elaborate manner, Starbucks puts all new employees through 24 hours of training to teach them the Starbucks philosophy, the company jargon, and the ins-and-outs of Starbucks’ coffee business.

The Marines and Starbucks use their formal training programs to socialize new members. They’re helping employees adapt to their organization’s culture. Why? Because no matter how good a job an organization does in recruitment and selection, new employees are not fully indoctrinated in the organization’s culture. Socialization turns outsiders into insiders and fine-tunes employee behaviors so they align with what management wants.

When hiring a new employee, you have four decisions you can make—each of which affects the shaping of that new hire’s behavior:

First, will socialization be formal or informal? The more a new employee is segregated from the ongoing work setting and differentiated in some way to make explicit his or her newcomer’s role, the more formal socialization is. The Marines’ and Starbucks’ specific orientation and training programs are examples of a formal process. Informal socialization just puts the new employee directly into his or her job, with little or no special attention.

Second, will socialization be done individually or collectively? Most employees are socialized individually. But they also can be grouped together and processed through an identical set of experiences as in military boot camp.
Third, will socialization be serial or random? Serial socialization is characterized by the use of role models who train and encourage the newcomer. Apprenticeships and formal mentoring programs are examples. In random socialization, role models are deliberately withheld. The new employee is left on his or her own to figure things out.

Finally, will socialization seek investiture or divestiture? Investiture assumes that the newcomer’s qualities and qualifications are the necessary ingredients for job success, so these qualities and qualifications are confirmed and supported. Divestiture tries to strip away certain characteristics of the new hire. College fraternity and sorority pledges go through a “hazing” divestiture to shape them into the proper role.

Generally, the more that management relies on socialization programs that are formal, collective, serial, and emphasize divestiture, the greater the likelihood that newcomers’ differences and perspectives will be stripped away and replaced by standardized and predictable behaviors. Conversely, the use of informal, individual, random, and investiture options will create a workforce of individualists. So managers can use socialization as a tool to create conformists who maintain traditions and customs or, at the other extreme, inventive and creative individuals who consider no organizational practice sacred.

Managers can use socialization as a tool.