

# The Official Rules for Hiring Top Talent

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*( great article by Lou Adler)*

*By Lou Adler, January 3, 2008*

Everybody - from the Board and CEO down to every manager and supervisor - talks about the importance of hiring top talent. But only a rare few have converted the concept into reality. A number of companies have actually succeeded in embedding the idea into their corporate cultures, but in most cases, even these leave the "how" up to the recruiting department and each individual manager. Creating a road map on the "how to" of hiring top talent is the purpose of this book. It's now more important than ever. The worldwide demand for talent has increased as the supply of trained, talented, and available labor has declined. Even a temporary economic slowdown will not alter demographic trends and the long term need for talent.

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 Not everyone can win. There is just not enough top talent to go around. With a "survival of the fittest" mentality as a starting point, the key to making top talent an achievable goal is to convert the current series of random acts that most companies tolerate into a formal business process with rules, procedures, metrics, and accountability.

It's somewhat odd that every other business function is based on some formal process, except hiring. For example, we have rules for accounting, product design, manufacturing, distribution, and selling. We even have rules for getting travel expenses reimbursed and rules for what to wear at work, yet we don't have rules for hiring the best people possible. Most managers don't know how to interview, and those that think they do violate most labor laws on a daily basis as they trust their intuition, overvalue first impressions, and ask their own pet questions. HR isn't providing enough leadership here, either. They post boring jobs, provide little guidance on how to accurately assess competency, use antiquated technology, and make hiring more a bureaucratic marathon than a well-designed integrated system.

This book will address these issues. They're appropriate for a two-person office or one of the Global 1000. Here are the basic ground rules:

- The new rules for hiring top talent must seamlessly integrate everything involved in the process from beginning to end (e.g., sourcing, interviewing, recruiting, on-boarding, and performance management). Separate and unequal piecemeal processes glued together with antiquated technology must first be short-circuited, then eliminated.
- Hiring the best must be a team sport with everyone following the rules. This requires everyone to give up their own pet rules in favor of the team rules.
- Hiring the best is a competitive sport with winners and losers. Winning is based on how consistent a company and each manager hires top talent and how well each recruiter does in presenting top talent. As part of this you need to keep score and track performance statistics by person to see who needs to be benched or sent to the minors.
- Managers must own the process of hiring of top talent; they can't delegate it to HR.
- Everyone playing the hiring game must be both prepared to play and to play on the same team. This is the only way to get accurate and consistent results across the company. Many managers treat their recruiters as vendors, providing little guidance and little feedback. Recruiters also play favorites, working harder for those they like. Making matters worse, some members of the interviewing team are ill-prepared, untrained, and superficial in their assessments making winning impossible.
- Hiring the best must be a top-down executive-driven strategic initiative. Without this you won't have the resources or management commitment to sustain the effort.
- The system must be designed from a strategic, not tactical, perspective. This means the process is designed based on an understanding of how the best people seek career opportunities and how they select one opportunity over another, not how HR, compensation, IT, legal, or your vendor wants to do it.
- Implementing a top talent-centric focus requires the elimination of the standard requisition-driven approach to sourcing and selection. The best are interested in careers, not in boring jobs that only emphasize skills, nor will they suffer through a demeaning application process. A top-down approach to sourcing which emphasizes the company, the industry, and opportunities by class of jobs must replace the current requisition-based approach to finding jobs.
- The interview and assessment process must be fair, legally defensible, totally objective, evidence-based, accurate, and easy to learn and use. Surprisingly, this is also the easiest.
- In combination with workforce planning, real-time process control metrics must be used to monitor and improve performance. Historical metrics are inadequate for a constantly changing and highly competitive environment. An updated forecast of hiring needs provides the lead time for the recruiting department to implement an effective top-down sourcing strategy.