

# How to Attract and Hire the Best...Every Time

Hiring the right people can make or break your business. Whether you are hiring sales people to bring in more business, operations people to make your company run smoothly, or leaders to bring it all together, hiring right is critical. Here in a challenging 2009 business world getting a *people advantage* will allow the stronger companies to survive.

## 1. What Defines “Best”

The first secret to attracting and hiring the best people is to clearly understand who the best people are when it comes to the position in question. Not in general, but specifically for your company and for the job you have to fill.

To some, the best people are the ones who will produce. To others, the best people are the ones who will treat their customer’s right. Still others see the best people as the ones who will quietly do the job with the fewest complaints.

The truth is that the characteristics of the best person for a specific job in a specific company are very complex. Think of your job as a missing piece in one of those very complex jigsaw puzzles. The piece that makes it whole has some very unique characteristics that are even hard to describe. No wonder it is so hard to find a good fit!

"the fastest way to improve a company's performance is to improve the talent of the workforce...it energizes the company and leads to positive things"  
**John Zillmer, CEO**  
**Allied Waste**

Our first task is to accurately define the ‘best’ person for the position in terms that will allow us to know that person when we see them.

## Who Defines ‘Best’

If we agree that someone has to define the characteristics of this person, who is that someone? Most would agree that the person’s manager would have a good idea of who would fit the job. After all, the manager knows what needs to be done and knows what type of person has worked out well in that position before. They should also know what type of person has not worked out in the past.

But how about the CEO, owner or another senior manager? This person is responsible for the culture and future of the company. This person may be looking for an eventual replacement for the manager or a person who could eventually manage a new division. Should their input be included in the definition?

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One person we often fail to ask is the person who had the job last or another person who currently holds the job. If you ask most front line employees, they will describe their position much differently than their managers and completely differently from senior management. It might be useful to get their idea of what makes an ideal employee for their position.

And let's not forget Human Resources. HR is charged with building our organizations and should have a clear understanding of what is needed in each position. While their perspective may not be perfect, it certainly provides a critical piece to the puzzle.

So at the very least we have three or four people that must be included in defining the characteristics of this 'best' candidate. This is called the "**Requirements Team**" because they set the ultimate hiring requirements. Before we even begin to advertise and attract a group of candidates we must synthesize the opinions of each of the individuals into one clear picture of our target person.

## Defining the Job Requirements

Now that we have agreed that we are going to take the input from a Requirements Team and use it to develop an ideal model with which to compare our candidates, we need some criteria to work from.

At a very minimum there are three criteria that most organizations include in one way or another as part of their selection process. They include skill, knowledge, and behavior.

Skills encompass the ability to do the job required. Whether they are learned skills such as those gained through on-the-job training in the trades or academic skills gained through formal education, we must define what is required to do the job.

Knowledge encompasses an understanding of the job on one or many levels. It is possible to be skilled at doing a job, yet lack the knowledge that would be required to go beyond the basic activity.

Behavior defines how a person will act or react when faced with various situations. Do you need a person who is good with people or one who is focused on details? Do you need a person who can multitask or do you need someone who will not become bored when repeating the same task over and over? Studies have shown a very high correlation between behavior style and job performance in virtually every type of job.

## Skills

Ask each of the people on the **Requirements Team** to make a list of the skills required for this position. This is called a **Skills Inventory**. You might want to include someone who actually is doing the job or even shadow a current employee and record what they

“matching talent to personality delivers staff that are more engaged, enthused and suited to deliver the kind of results you’re looking for.”  
-McKinsey, Survey of talent 410 companies, 2009

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do. It is amazing how often we forget what a person really does in a day. Even if you have a job description you must know that most job descriptions are out of date and incomplete, and should not be used as a hiring document.

Once the lists are completed, they should be compared with an eye for differences. It is important to reconcile these differences and agree on a common **Skills Inventory** before starting the hiring process. There is nothing worse than putting your new hire in the middle of a disagreement on job requirement.

## **Knowledge**

Once again we need your **Requirements Team**. This time the task is to develop a Knowledge Inventory; a list of what the new employee will need to know to do the job. Remember that some things can be taught, but you have to start somewhere. For instance, you can teach a person to prepare a report but you may not want to teach them to read and do math. You may be looking for knowledge of specific systems, machines or industries. You may even want someone who has knowledge of specific groups of people or geographic areas.

As before, once the lists are completed, they should be compared with an eye for differences. Reconcile these differences and agree on a common **Knowledge Inventory** before starting with the hiring process. You don't want to hire someone only to find out they lack the critical knowledge needed to be successful in that job.

## **Behavior**

Of the three criteria groups, behavior is often the hardest to define. Studies have shown that it may also be the highest predictor of success in the job. Behavior describes how a person will function in a given situation. It is possible for many people to be technically able to do a job but not behaviorally able to do it in your company or the way you need it done. Behavioral mismatches are leading causes of failure and turnover from front-line workers to CEO.

Again, you need to have your **Requirements Team** develop a **Behavioral Inventory**; a list of the behavioral characteristics that will make this person successful. If you do this right, you will hire someone who will not only do the job well but will be happy doing it.

We recommend the **Predictive Index PRO** tool for this important task. It has been used to hire great CEO's, CFO's SVP's, VP Sales, Finance leaders, IT leaders and rank and file. It is a tool that has proven easy to use, understand and has assisted to build some of Canada's very best managed companies. It automates the process by allowing several people to independently define the job and then brings the results together for comparison. The results can be compared with similar positions at other companies to build a behavioral profile that predicts success in the position.

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## 2. Attracting The Best

Now that you know who you want to hire, you need to find candidates to choose from. Ideally, you want to attract a pool of candidates who are reasonably close to your ideal model. In other words, they fit the **Knowledge, Skill and Behavioral Inventories** that your **Requirements Team** developed.

### **Make Your Ad a Magnet for the Best**

Studies by our company and others have shown that ads written based on the Behavioral Inventory of the ideal client will attract applicants who fit the model. For instance, if you are looking for a person to network in the community and you include phrases like “must enjoy working with people” or “community involvement a must” you will tend to find the right people. Imagine a person who hates networking when they see this ad. They will skip over it, while the person who loves networking will make it their first priority. Your lobby will be full of people who have already preselected themselves. This reduces your interviewing time and maximizes the options you have to choose from. Clients have noticed that placing advertising on any media where behavior has been modeled has lead to much more successful placements. With PI, the PRO does this for you.

### **Look Where the Best Are**

It is important to place your ads where the candidates will see or hear them. If you want to appeal to those who are unemployed, the internet or the newspaper is the media of choice. Everyone who is looking for work is looking there.

But what if you want to attract people who are not looking for work? You are looking for someone who is already successful and productive somewhere else and you want to jar them loose from their current situation. In this case, you need a less typical approach. Radio is one great tool since your ads will be heard by people whether or not they are actively seeking a job. We also now assist clients with using the PI to detect low morale in potential candidates and then the ability to get them to jump to our company is higher.

Another approach is to advertise in traditional media but in a non-traditional way. In other words, place your ad in the general advertising section of a local community paper or shopper’s guide. One contractor I knew placed his ads in local car magazines. He knew the type of person he wanted also read those magazines and he was able to out-flank his competition by using this unique approach. Another company actually purchased the billboard across the street from his competitor. He knew his audience and he knew where to find them. Others have used PI to show candidates that all their placements tie the person to the job not the job to the person. Younger hires in the “facebook group” love the attention and uniqueness that a personal PI read gives them when they are down to the final 2, 3 potentials. Being different works.

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The bottom line is this. The combination of an ad written around the behavioral profile and then placed where the right people would see it generated the greatest number of viable candidates. With so many more people to select from currently the need to be razor crisp on what your company needs in each role to drive revenues or perhaps cut cost could not be more important. Your mission is the most important part of any company engine. It needs A players. If you hire an 8/10 she will hire a 6/10. So if you bring in a 6/10 she will bring in a 5/10 or a 4/10....something to think about isn't it?

## Network with a Focus

If you take the same approach to networking you will have equally good success. Give your current employees a clear understanding of who you are looking for and reward them for bringing in their friends. You'll be amazed how powerful an army they can be. That same information in the hands of other business leaders can also generate results. I have seen companies who were hiring approach companies who were laying off and almost walk the best people from one company to the other.

It all comes back to the work we did earlier. If you can clearly describe who you need, you can more easily find and attract them.

## 3. Hire the Best of the Best

### Catch the Best Quickly

Once you attract top candidates, you need to make sure they actually fit your criteria and then engage the best before your competition does. A quick pre-screen will help you see who is close and needs your immediate attention.

While resumes are often exercises in creative writing, they do indicate if a person potentially has the skills and knowledge needed, based on their previous experience. A total miss-match goes to the bottom of the pile while a close fit gets a second look.

A behavioral assessment like the **Predictive Index (PI)** can quickly tell you if a candidate has the right behavioral characteristics for success in your company. Since it can be administered on paper or email and takes less than 10 minutes to complete, we recommend that every applicant be given the PI when they first apply. This gives you the opportunity to scan the applicants and quickly bring the best to the top of the pile. As a result, you can often take the best people out of the job search before your competition ever sees them.

"The PI® gave me that extra bit of insight and ammunition to really drill into important items related to performance, morale, and role expectations (amongst a series of other things). From my perspective, it's a great outcome that already yielded a very positive ROI."

**Frank Battison, National  
Sales Manager  
Microsoft Services Canada**

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## Gap Interviewing

Using the process we have outlined, you now have a selection of candidates to interview that are reasonably close to what you need. In preparation for the interview, compare each candidate with the Requirement Team's ideal profile. Make notes for yourself highlighting the gaps between the ideal and the particular candidate. Look for behavior based interview questions that will assist you.

What knowledge is missing?

What skills are missing?

How does their behavioral profile (PI) differ from the ideal?

In your interview, spend your time drilling into those gaps to see if there are any critical pieces missing in knowledge, skill or behavior. If you believe you have a winner, ask yourself this simple question, "What still bothers me about this person?" Tell the next interviewers about your concerns and ask them to drill in on that area. In your next interview with them, drill deeper yourself.

Only when you find no glaring gaps should you begin to spend time telling the candidate about the position. Only now can you start selling the candidate on your company.

When you follow this simple process, you will dramatically increase the quality of your team and the results of your company. As Jim Collins said in "Good to Great", to be successful, "You need to get the right people on the bus!"

If you would like help improving your hiring process, including developing your **Knowledge and Skills Inventories** or using the **Predictive Index** behavioral assessment, please contact us. We also offer training including Behavioral Interviewing.

For more information and a complete list of our services, contact us at 905-430-9788 You can also find more valuable information and case studies at [www.predictivesuccess.com](http://www.predictivesuccess.com).

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"Our people are the main reason for our success over the past 50 years and we use the PI® process on all our people decisions. It is a very useful tool to make better decisions, and it is uncanny how accurate it has been. We place a great emphasis on providing a culture where each one of us is treated with Dignity and Respect as we attempt to be the Best in our Industry. The PI process helps us in this quest!"

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