



## Management and Performance Associates – March 2006

### Hiring

Did you ever regret hiring someone? That candidate that looked brilliant during the interviewing process, but when hired could not perform to your expectations?

If your answer is yes, then this newsletter will help you. Don't worry, you are not alone. Many managers have hired people because they were pressured to fill a position and did not have enough time to continue searching for the ideal fit. Others simply do not have the skills for interviewing. Others have been pressured to accept a candidate who has connections inside the company. And worse, some managers thought they did not have any options when internal candidates were "suggested" to them as a fantastic fit for that department (it makes one wonder, if the candidates were so good, why the previous manager was trying to transfer them?)

We would like to start with one recommendation: treat internal candidates the same way you treat the external ones. The fact that someone is already inside does not guarantee that he or she will perform in the job that you have open.

All candidates, internal or external, should go through the same selection process. If the internal candidates do not meet your criteria, do not feel pressured to accept them. Go for the external ones. The fact that your company has a policy that we have to look for internal candidates first does not mean that you will accept anyone.

Before we start interviewing, we need clarity on the job the candidate will perform once hired. Start by asking yourself what you expect this person to do once in your department. Go through a list of tasks that are critical for success to the job. Once that is done, compare this to the job description and adjust it

accordingly, and now start another list: what kind of skills does this person need to have in order to perform those tasks successfully? Remember, there is extensive research demonstrating that personal characteristics are more important than technical skills.

And by personal characteristics we do not mean invading the privacy of the candidate. Some examples of what we are looking for are flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, adaptability to change, being proactive, etc. Only job related questions should be asked. You may figure out that the candidate plays golf, but what does that tell you about his or her ability to perform on the job? Absolutely nothing unless you're hiring the next Tiger Woods!

The next step is setting up the interview plan. Who will be interviewing? When? Where? What competencies will be addressed by whom? And it is your job, not Human Resources', to write the questions to be addressed during the interview.

The following recommendations will help you find the ideal candidate:

- a) Ask open ended questions addressing past situations when the candidate used the skills you have pre-defined as critical. You need proof that the skills have been used in real-life situations.
- b) Avoid hypothetical/leading questions as they lead only to text book answers.
- c) Explore what the candidate has specifically done in those situations.
- d) Listen to what the candidates are saying, how they are saying it, and most importantly, listen to what they are not saying.
- e) Probe, probe and probe again.
- f) Be very careful when you make a decision after five minutes into the interview.



Chances are your decision is based on superficial and subjective evaluation. Keep interviewing according to the plan.

- g) Ask the same questions to all candidates. They allow for comparison after all interviews are done and avoid discrimination issues.
- h) Be sure to probe into gaps on the resume and reasons for leaving past jobs.

Finally, allow ten minutes at the end of the interview to answer the candidates' questions and to provide information about the job, the company, and the next steps.

**See you next time. We welcome your feedback.**

To know more of our training programs, please send us an e-mail to:

[sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com](mailto:sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com) or  
[sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com](mailto:sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com)

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