

PEOPLE POINTS

December, 2004

CHOOSING EMPLOYEES WISELY Saving the whales

Imagine you are the owner of a company whose mission statement is "Save the Whales". When you started the business you never expected to be so successful. Now years later the phenomenal growth of the business and the vast number of whales you and your company have saved is incredible! In fact you need to hire a Controller to account for all the whales you've saved. You interview several candidates and choose Harry, an individual with a BBA, MBA and CPA. References say Harry is a skilled accountant, your Human Resource recruiter thought Harry seemed quite intelligent and eager to make an impact. He starts Monday. Early Monday morning as you peer from your corner office window, you see a car pull into a

parking space with a large bumper sticker that says, "Nuke the Whales!" Your eyes bulge as you see Harry emerge from the car. What started as a bright and optimistic Monday now seems considerably darker. You suddenly find yourself repeating an all too familiar sentence, "Business would be great if I didn't have to deal with employees!"

How often have you had to counsel an employee because their performance is failing to meet standards? How much time have you wasted because of work you had to redo or 'fix' because of mistakes? In those darker managerial moments have you found yourself asking, "Why did we ever hire that person?"

In a study commissioned by SHL through the Future Foundation, managers from several countries were asked the percentage of time they spent managing poor performers; the U.S. average was 14%. That percentage equates to 34 days or seven weeks a year of valuable managerial time wasted! Imagine if you could regain those seven weeks.

In our coaching and consulting practice, we have worked with numerous managers and business owners who have indicated that the lack of subordinate performance is a major factor for frustration in addition to taking valuable time away from operational issues. For many organizations we have found the 'root cause' of poor performance can often be traced to the selection process.



*As has become our tradition
in lieu of Holiday cards,
we are making a donation to:*
Goodwill Industries of SA
*who change lives through the
power of work
and
Tony Leffingwell Foundation*
*supporting research for the
cure of Leukemia*
**Wishing you a
wonderful
Holiday Season!**



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The realities of predicting talent and selecting the right person can be most daunting. It is well documented that people tend to view others through their unique internal prism or individual perspective. This prism shapes our thought process; it may be based upon social-economic elements, religious or political preferences as well as other unique identifiers. We know likes hire likes; extroverts hire extroverts and college alum hire college alum. These biases only scratch the surface of the selection challenge. Improper reference questions may gather incorrect feedback and improperly trained interviewers may ask the wrong questions. A manager trying to make the politically correct hire or covering his/her own insecurities can add to the selection dilemma. Other issues impacting the ability to predict talent include one's limited knowledge of the job, the time commitment necessary to interview and choose, or pressures from others. Often we see engineers choose talent through a technically focused prism; while a human resource manager selects based upon the interpersonal capabilities of the candidate. Also good performance in one specialty may not equate to ability to perform well in another.

Often the analysis of collected information is improperly applied leading to false predictions about future success. Even today companies still rely upon the interview as their major selection device despite considerable evidence of its limited predictive ability.

There are several major elements recommended for an effective selection process; however, one overlooked area is the use of assessments. Research indicates well

constructed assessments predict job performance better than almost any other single selection measurement. Personality assessments can add valuable information in a qualitative manner to help build a picture about the suitability of an applicant.

Some employers feel behavioral assessments are too costly and time consuming. Considering managerial time wasted dealing with performance issues after the hire, the cost/time argument is moot. By selecting a validated assessment, administered by a qualified individual utilizing the latest technology, results can quickly be obtained.

Assessments provide objective information about a candidate & have been shown in general to lead to better and fairer employment decisions. Assessments can be used to:

- Enhance the decision making process
- Aid managers in areas of motivation & team building
- Identify development needs for growth & succession planning

Assessments, if validated, up-to-date, and administered by a trained professional, can provide a very powerful and cost effective way to enhance an organization's selection process. When properly used, assessments offer a common platform of language and terminology to help match people to the job, identify individual styles and predict on-job performance.

If managers truly lose seven weeks a year dealing with employee related problems, then the question becomes, "How can one reduce this terrible waste of time?" Harry may be able to count a lot of whales; however, in the long run is he committed to saving the whales?

From our years of assisting numerous companies with their selection challenges, we know that an organized and objective process is essential.

Here are some basic steps:

1. **Develop proper job descriptions including the identification of competencies required for success.**
2. **Incorporate an objective high quality validated behavioral assessment instrument to identify success competencies.**
3. **Train interviewers in targeted behavioral techniques.**
4. **Check references against competencies.**
5. **Reduce personal agendas through the use of teams or outside objective third party assistance.**
6. **Once on board, use behavioral assessment as a development and coaching tool to accelerate higher performance.**

Short change any of these steps and the result is a poor choice for a critical position.

Choose wisely and 'Save the Whales'.

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