

Job Definition - the Right Way!

Several years ago a Friend of mine joined a start-up and convinced his CEO to consult me on their recruiting challenges. With in minutes of being ushered into the CEO's office I discovered I had being summoned to replace my Friend. Apparently he was a huge disappointment.

It turned out that the CEO didn't know we where friends so I indulged him for several hours. I knew his dissatisfaction was evidence of more systemic problems because I had recruited my Friend many years earlier (he wasn't a friend at the time) and he had a consistent history of success. I quickly learned that AMESS Software had thus-far recruited 4 "duds". Here's why...

When AMESS set out to recruit a Vice President of Sales, some informal meetings resulted in a job being loosely defined as having responsibility for all sales and marketing. Their VCs suggested some likely candidates they knew who were just like "Bob", (Bob being the VP Sales at their most successful competitor). Very little thought was given to how candidates were going to be identified, qualified and contacted.

When several candidates finally appeared, (Bob wasn't interested) there was disagreement on whom to hire. As time ran out a compromise selection, which no one really favored was made. Shortly the compromise's performance lagged and the inevitable, termination took place. After the fact, everyone commented on what was wrong with his management style and abilities. No one bothered to look at the reasons why the wrong person was selected in the first place.

Every event and decision made in the recruiting process is derived from the definition of the job and essential candidate characteristics. Any recruiting must begin with a thorough and formal definition of roles and responsibilities, position objectives, and the personal and professional attributes necessary for success. Only sheer luck will allow you to reach a specific destination without a proper road map.

If you've heard all this before, and, in honestly trying to apply these concepts, you still haven't succeeded here's what you should do to define the role correctly:

1. Require all decision makers to participate in describing the job content and objectives, performance measurement, essential technical and management skills, and most appropriate, personal skills. (A decision-maker in this case, is anyone at a superior/peer level who spends 15% of their working time with the candidate AND has a previous track-record of hiring winners.) .
2. Create an Official Position Profile documenting the agreement reached on the specifics:
 - Define successful performance. Establish and agree upon realistic six-month, one-year, and two-year objectives.
 - List experience requirements in detail. Must candidates possess experience in your industry? To what degree must they have been in a comparable role in the past? What specific experiences are an absolute *must*, versus nice to have?
 - Define essential personal qualities. Where are the contact points with other positions? Does the role require a person to carry on with the established foundation, or start from

scratch? What is the management style of this person's boss? What styles work with him/her?

- Specify all of the elements of the compensation package after you gather objective competitive market data. Think about the upper limits if the absolutely perfect candidate came along. What's the rest of the package look like?
3. Decide who will participate in the interviewing cycle, how the final decision will be made, and who will make the final decision.
 4. Ensure all decision makers review the most critical variables prior to interviewing each candidate, and again prior to a final decision.

At the end of this process, you and the selection team should have a balanced and consistent profile of the job and its' qualifications and understand exactly how the candidates measure-up.

Process, doesn't guarantee that you will end up with a quality search. However, without process you are placing your bottom line in the hands of pure chance that an appropriate selection will be made. If you hire a Professional Recruiter remember, their role is to execute the search process, melding together ideas, people, personalities, and perceptions. They're paid to bridge the gap between the "science" of a well defined, methodical search process and the "art" of getting two parties, who are in essence strangers, to decide to join together, BUT you're stuck with the results so learn to define jobs the Right Way.

PS. I learned recently that AMESS is now on its' ninth Vice President of Sales, since 1996.

This is the second in a series by **David Perry**, managing partner of Perry-Martel International Inc. He can be reached via e-mail at dperry@perrymartel.com.