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Are You Hiring Smart?

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There isn't an industry today untouched by escalating staff turnover - - and the causes vary based on industry, location and size of the company. One experience, though, is consistent to all. Getting the right people on board is becoming increasingly difficult.

Have you ever hired someone who did exceptionally well on the interview only to find yourself asking shortly after their start date, "What happened? This is not the person I thought I hired!"

Recruiting-screening-interviewing-hiring-training new employees is often time-consuming and expensive. When you add up both the explicit and implicit costs of having to replace employees, the affect on the company's bottom line, not to mention the impact on morale and productivity, is staggering.

To stay competitive, our advancing global marketplace - - even at the local level - - demands specialists. Professionals with specific and focused technical skills are passionately sought after.

But while these accomplished prodigies and experts alike possess the desired profession-specific skills, some may not have the behavioral skills that help them navigate the challenges that now come with increased and readily available consumer intelligence, decreased product and service differentiation, more complex consumer needs and wants, and an increased emphasis on team based organizational structures.

Subsequently when these employees are negotiating with a client that is aggressive and impatient, presenting to a group of decision makers that have very different personality styles, or working in a cross-disciplinary team, the limitations of their behavioral skills become apparent and at times costly.

Employees at all levels need behavioral competencies to supplement profession-specific technical skills. Such skills include communication, leadership, team building, problem solving, conflict management, style-flexing, stress management, initiative, negotiating, follow-through, diplomacy, and customer service skills.

If you find yourself asking, "What happened? This is not the person I thought I hired!", consider re-evaluating your interviewing practices. It is a common experience that although we have screened and hired the 'right' applicant, something still goes wrong. The new employee starts to fall behind on work, misses deadlines, shows up late for meetings, argues with colleagues or clients, and "is not fitting in." This is often the result of not screening for the right mix of behavioral competencies.

Employing *Behavioral Interviewing* allows for a situational discussion of how the applicant would respond in a particular scenario. Behavioral interviewing questions are always open ended and there is no right or wrong answer per se; rather, the answers allow the interviewer to assess whether or not the applicant would respond to the situation in a manner that aligns with the organization's corporate culture.

Create the framework for your behavioral interviewing questions in advance using primers such as "give me an example of...", "how did you handle...?", and "what was the result?" These SAR (situation, action, result) questions are asked to probe the applicant's hands-on experience with both technical and interpersonal scenarios that commonly occur while conducting business. If the applicant is more junior in their experience, the interviewer can still ask behavioral based questions that probes for future response, "What would you do if ...?"

While profession-specific technical skills are in high demand, the lack of behavioral competencies in a highly specialized or even not so specialized employee could end up costing the organization much more than the value of those specialized skills.