

The Perfect Match

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Finding an employee who fits in with your team

By Jennifer Smith

Hiring and retaining a new employee can be similar to starting a new relationship. In addition to being able to perform the tasks of the position, this individual must be compatible with the rest of the team. Let's face it—sometimes we spend more waking hours with our coworkers than we do with our own families. You need to ensure that each day is productive, and happy employees are the most productive employees. So how do you find that perfect match for your team? Here are a few suggestions.

Empower Your Current Employees

You likely know your team members' personalities and work habits. However, how you view your employees and how they view one another may be different. Take a few minutes to chat with each employee individually to find out what qualities he or she would like to see in a

new team member. Ask if there are any concerns about conflicting personalities. For example, you may be hiring for a management position. Is there an employee who was counting on a promotion? Will that employee be toxic to the new employee? How does the rest of the team recommend you address the toxicity?

When speaking with each of your team members, discuss his or her role regarding the new employee. Will he or she be a part of the interview or training processes? Is there an organizational chart that details the chain of command so there is no confusion about who this new team member will report to? Are there written job descriptions so all team members are clear on the new employee's responsibilities?

Finding Your Match

The next step to finding that perfect match for your team

is creating an attractive job posting. This ad must list all the benefits, responsibilities and expectations of the position. Do not sugarcoat it. If there are challenges with the position (straight commission, evening or weekend hours, undeveloped territory, etc.) make sure to list them.

Once you start receiving resumes, keep the question, "Will this person fit in?" in mind as you read them. If your company is small and laid back, will an applicant who only has experience in the corporate world mix well with your group?

The next step is the "first few dates"—otherwise known as the interview process. Start with a telephone call. (Always schedule the first phone conversation ahead of time. This allows the candidate to be in a location where he or she can talk freely and have time to review the ad prior to speaking with you.) Start the conversation by explaining your interview process and describe this first phone call as a quick "get to know you" conversation. Tell the candidate to let you know if, at any time, the position does not seem to be the right fit. Ask yourself whether this person has a good telephone personality—is he or she polite and interactive? What excited him or her about the job posting? What benefits is he or she looking for? Does there seem to be a connection? If so, invite the candidate for the first face-to-face meeting.

You can make only one first impression. When your applicant pulled into the parking lot, did he or she toss a cigarette butt on the ground? How did he or she interact with the receptionist? Did he or she dress to impress? Did he or she research your company and come prepared with questions? Make this interview as relaxed as possible. Remember, this is the "first date." Candidates should be on their best behavior.

But how do you know this person is the right fit? Do you have a team that is religious, family oriented and will all be voting for the same political party this November? If you hire somebody who is the complete opposite, you may have conflict in the workplace. Of course you cannot ask, "So which church do you attend with your family and who will you be voting for president?" However, you can review the candidate's resume to see his or her interests and volunteers work. Ask, "Did you have a good weekend?," "What do you do for fun?" and "If you could have a salary of \$1 million a year, what career would you choose?" Let the candidate ask questions about the company. Pay attention to the substance of the questions.

Will the candidate be they type of employee who will act like a team player or is he or she only thinking of what the company can do for him or her? Consider asking a riddle to see how the candidate reacts to pressure. Does he or she ask questions to help solve the riddle or just say, "That's impossible"?

Discuss the details of the position and whether there are any concerns (i.e., the position requires working week-day evenings but the candidate can only work Tuesday evenings). If you seem to have a connection with this candidate, walk him or her around the facility, introduce him or her to your team members, let your employees ask a few questions and invite him or her back for a second "date." Then ask your employees their thoughts.

In the second interview, the candidate should be more comfortable and you should feel more of a connection. Is the candidate still on his or her best behavior? Does he or she have a sense of humor that will fit with the rest of the team's? Pay attention to the candidate's energy—if your team is more relaxed and this candidate is high-energy, it may cause animosity. Ask the candidate his or her thoughts on the facility and the employees. What does he or she like about the company and the position so far? Do he or she see room for improvement?

If you are still connecting with this candidate, it is might be time for the next step: the "proposal."

The third meeting may be a good time to bring in the candidate's significant other. Let your candidate know his or her partner is not being interviewed, but that you would like to answer any questions he or she may have about the position. Again, you want a "keeper," and support from a significant other always helps. Meet for lunch or dinner. Watch how the candidate interacts with his or her significant other and the wait staff. Is he or she respectful or demanding and demeaning? This is a relaxed setting and most likely represents how the candidate will react with the rest of your team. If this is the right one, then pop the question: "Would you like to join our team?"

When your new employee begins, formally introduce him or her to the rest of the team. Explain his or her role to the existing employees and let each of them talk a bit about themselves. This will be the beginning of a great relationship—let's make it a long-lasting one! **WQP**

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