

There are five critical mistakes people make when they are hiring new people:

1. We write a job description that is incomplete, fuzzy, and that focuses only on the transactional items of the work to be done.
2. We fall into the trap of hiring people because they have “direct experience” instead of honoring talent as a selection criterion.
3. We look only at the “usual suspects” – those people who saw the job posting and presented themselves for consideration.
4. After we hire, we forget about the critical importance of onboarding well.
5. We overlook talent right under our noses and fail to grow talent inside our organization.

**At all  
levels, hire  
for**



Most larger organizations have a required format for job descriptions – if you have that requirement, be compliant. At the same time, however, prepare a “cover sheet” to clarify the unique characteristics of style, temperament, team culture, and “fit” needed for a person to be successful in the position. In addition, include the specific goals you would want this position to accomplish or contribute towards, and the core competencies needed to be successful in the role. Work directly with your HR department to move them toward putting out a call for applicants that is very FOCUSED on those desired characteristics and outcomes. The better you focus the call for applicants, the more focused the pool of candidates will be. A lot of people will self-select out of applying because they know the role is not in their particular “sweet spot”. Remember that success is not receiving 150 applicants. Success is getting 3, or 2, of the right ones.

When you are screening applications, don’t fall in the trap of looking at a candidate who “has done the exact work before.” Look beyond to find the specific talents and temperament you need for your team. A candidate with the EXACT experience in the job you want is a double-edged sword. They may have learned the role WRONG for your culture and fit. Breaking bad habits of a seasoned new team member can sometimes be harder than building the right habits in a strong, culturally-right candidate.

Also, take the time to get to know your existing team members first. Look at them using a NEW lens. This can be hard sometimes, understanding that when you have worked with a person in a one way for a while, its challenging to envision them in a new way. It is a new day, so look for their talents, fit, and cultural alignment. Evaluate them using the cover sheet you have developed for the role. Ask your team members if they have skills or interests they want to pursue. Once you know your current or inherited team, then fill in the gaps through your hiring process.

If you are new to the team leader/manager role, it’s important to take a moment to address the “sentiment” issue you might have with the veteran team members you are now supposed to supervise. I encourage my coaching clients to set a personal commitment goal to NOT seek to exit a team member for a set period of time. Six months is a good timeframe. That way new leaders are not tempted to just dismiss a team member who may have talent and fit if they give it a chance to work. If we do our job well in orienting and onboarding the NEW team member now that you are in the lead position, most team members will exhibit our team-desired dynamics.

To get the right people, a new manager must be nimble, persuasive, and creative. “Soft networking” of people you know would be a good fit for your team can be done without upsetting people inside your organization. It does take some care. For people who might be perfect to work for your organization, there is no harm in seeking them out. A point of caution is encouraged here. Just because someone is your friend, does NOT make them right for your team. Asking your colleagues to recommend your opportunity to someone is a great way to get the right candidates in the door. Careful encouragement done with clear goals of getting the best fit on your team is definitely worth your time.