

The Direct Hire - Recruitment Agency's Role in Defining the Job

By Jim Stewart

Our clients realize that achieving and maintaining top organizational performance is more than just designing the right strategic plan. Rather, it depends on many other important considerations - predicting the market, analyzing the competition, financial planning, strategy choices, learning curves and operational decisions to maximize productivity.

They also realize that it's critical to have the 'right' people in each job. Employees represent a company's most expensive, yet most valuable asset, and finding a way to enhance the recruitment, utilization and performance of employees is an essential ingredient in building long term success. Even before a candidate search begins, providing professional, consultative advice in this area can yield significant benefits for both the recruitment company and their client!

Long before the tedious recruitment process starts – creating/placing job ads & postings, scanning data bases for qualified candidates, receiving and reviewing resumes, conducting interviews and reference checks etc. – **the job must be defined!** There are many items that need to be considered about the job, before the task of finding that 'perfect person' begins. Important items to consider and document in advance include - job activities & duties, measurable performance standards, training to be provided, compensation & benefits, organization culture, type/quality of supervision, previous experience required, and knowledge and skills desired as a prerequisite. How are your clients doing with each of these critical activities? How proactive a role are you playing in recommending and assisting with each?

Once each of these items have been successfully documented and agreed upon, there remains a final step to be taken – **to define and evaluate the behavioral requirements of the job** - one of the most important, yet one of the most difficult steps in the recruitment process. All too often a recruitment campaign is undertaken without any clear idea of the type of behavioral characteristics required by the incumbent to successfully and comfortably perform the job. This means that personal standards rather than specific job related requirements are used as the measuring stick to evaluate candidates. It's no surprise then to see people being hired for positions for which they are unsuited – typically they *can do* the job, but they *don't want to*. They may possess all the essential knowledge and hard skills, but their natural behavioral style does not match up with the behaviors that are necessary for success in the job. How successful have you been in educating and ensuring that you move your clients beyond the traditional skills, knowledge and experience evaluation mode to the higher impact yielding behavioral 'fit'?

The key behavioral-based performance dimensions that ultimately lead to the development of a more thorough job profile, and ultimately a more successful job fit include, *decision making, directing and influencing others, detail and accuracy, service to others, diversification, type of thinking, problem solving, organization of work, and task focus (e.g. internal/external, alone or with others etc.)*. The challenge for, and objective of the employer is to properly define the extent to which the job requires, and provides the opportunity for each behavior, to be used. As

recruitment professionals it is our responsibility to move our clients to this more detailed assessment of tasks to performed!

Ideally, to ensure objectivity, each of these dimensions should be assessed individually by at least two or three people in your clients's organization who are knowledgeable about the position. They should then meet as a group to review and discuss their views and arrive at a consensus. It is also important, when going through this exercise, to focus on what is ***needed in the job***, rather than what is ***wanted***. Also try to separate the person who may currently be in the job, from the job itself, and address what the job requires rather than what the person is like – in other words, be as objective as possible!

The Bottom Line....it's not enough to simply generalize about a few apparent, but perhaps, isolated traits and call that a job analysis. It's far too easy to make expensive selection mistakes with this kind of superficial preparation. There's no doubt about it – explicit, job-relevant behavioral expectations make all the pieces fit - the right hire, improved performance, employee satisfaction, the impact of training, and communication within the organization.

The extent to which we, as recruitment professionals, provide clients with value added services, such as recommending and guiding a more thorough and sophisticated approach to job definition, the more we will develop the much sought after objective – loyal and profitable clients!

Jim Stewart resides in Muskoka, Ontario, Canada and has extensive corporate, entrepreneurial, small business and consulting experience. Jim owns and operates TriNorth Consulting Inc., a company providing professional consulting and corporate training programs and services.

Jim can be reached at 705-646-4339 or jim@trinorthconsulting.com