



THE SOURCE

Selection Strategies **Patrick Hopp, Ph.D.**

As the New Year approaches you might be anticipating what hires you will need to make in 2007. At *TalentQuest*, we've seen a wide-range of selection "strategies" over the years. Although most are well intended, many inevitably lead to frustration. We hope you are already implementing the following selection practices but, if not, please allow us to offer some New Year's resolutions.

Plan ahead. If you wait until there is a vacancy to be filled you've waited too long. Ideally, it is best to try to anticipate staffing needs a year in advance. To do this effectively, you need to be up to date with each department's business strategy and ask leaders if they have the right people available to meet their long-term goals. Your selection strategies should include taking inventory of potential internal candidates who might be ready for promotions or show potential and can be developed in time. In this way, your selection, succession, and development strategies should be closely linked.

Know what you're looking for. You can't choose the right candidate if you don't know what you need. Rather than referring to job descriptions, take the time to interview stakeholders. In addition to the hiring manager, talk to potential peers, subordinates and collaborators. If there is an incumbent leaving on good terms, be sure to get the "inside scoop" about what the job is *really* like and what it takes to succeed. Be familiar with the competency models for the positions you need to fill and be sure that they are up to date and validated. Finally, consider creating a *Peak Performer Profile* of the personality traits that are characteristic of successful people in similar roles.

Hone your interviewing skills. Typically, hiring managers rely on routine and general interviewing techniques to arrive at an overall impression of a candidate. These impressions are usually based heavily on candidates' presentation and interpersonal skills. While these skills are important for many positions, they might not be the best predictors of success. You should develop customized and behavior based interview questions for each position you need to fill. When interviewing about accomplishments, be sure to probe for the specific steps that were taken to reach the objectives. It's also helpful to ask candidates to describe their developmental needs. It should be less of a concern for someone to have a few areas that need improvement than for them to think they have none.

Get multiple perspectives. Even when you use the best interviewing techniques, it can be tough to be objective. It helps to have serious candidates be interviewed by multiple

stakeholders who can provide you with independent feedback. For high level positions it is worth getting professional feedback from someone outside your organization. A psychologist who specializes in Executive Assessments can test and interview for strengths and weaknesses that are difficult to observe on your own. Once you've made your selections, the report and recommendations you received from the psychologist will be an invaluable tool to managers for knowing how to best coach the new hires, get them up to speed quickly and maximize their performance.