



TOOLKIT 11 – PICKING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

- ❖ **Avoid expensive mistakes and, even worse, mediocrity.**
- ❖ **Reduce turnover in your team.**
- ❖ **Create a team that enjoys working together.**

A recent London Business School survey of CEOs showed that the major factor that contributes to the success of their businesses was:

‘Selecting the right people with good attitudes who are loyal to the company and who want to excel in their careers.’

It has long been recognised that the two key tasks of business leaders are:

1. Developing a winning strategy (see toolkit 9 ‘Redoing your strategy’).
2. Picking the people capable of delivering the strategy.

This toolkit was written to help with the vital task of picking the right people in your business.

STORY – COMPUADD COMPUTER GROUP

‘We had been through three CEOs before we found Dave Osmond,’ says Martin Vincent, the Chairman of CompuAdd.

‘We worked through the ‘Redoing your strategy’ toolkit and developed what we all believed to be a winning strategy. Unfortunately we did not have the top team at that time capable of delivering the strategy. We re-organised the board and unfortunately two directors had to go. We were struggling along until I appointed Dave Osmond, then the business took off. Picking the right people has been a real lesson for us over the past five years.’

My personal experience has been that the difference between somebody who is just OK for the job and somebody who excels is not a percentage point at the margin, it's usually incalculable.

Here's how to do it

STEP 1 Draw a description of the job you need doing.

- Update job guide/description, as circumstances will almost certainly have changed since you recruited for the role.
- Ask what are our strategic priorities right now:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Looking at the balance of your existing team, which tasks or priorities are not currently covered.

Example

If customers are leaving and no one is finding out why, then the business has a problem.

Q. What gaps or duplications do we have in our existing processes or output?

Draw up a description of the job you need doing.

TIP: Make sure you really do think clearly about what the business needs.

STEP 2 Draw up the profile of the person you wish to recruit.

There are hundreds of books on recruitment and selection that covers writing job guides and personnel specs in great detail, so I don't intend to repeat that knowledge. However in selecting people for top jobs it is often helpful to ask:

What are the key skills and attributes, which someone would need to be able to do the job outlined in step 1:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

STEP 3

Create some candidates

For top jobs the major sources of candidates are:

A. Internal candidates

TIP: Your ability to find a suitable internal candidate is the acid test of your succession planning system. If you lack strong internal candidates, this might be a time to review that process.

B. People we know in the industry whom we can approach

TIP: Consider offering business incentives to existing employees for providing leads for successful appointments.

C. Advertising

Remember; even a recruitment advert can provide a positive or negative image of your business e.g., a restaurant placed an expensive large advert in a Sheffield newspaper for a lavish Christmas dinner. On the opposite page they also placed a large advert for a head chef, head waiter and other restaurant staff...

D. Headhunting

TIP: Headhunting is expensive but you generally only pay for the result.

The relative cost and difficulties increase from A through to D.

STEP 4 Setting up the selection process

- Draw up an interview list but be ruthless – time is precious (yours and theirs).
- Use the criteria previously established.

TIP: Keep records of candidates and decision criteria because increasingly rejected candidates sue for unfair selection.

TIP: Treat every candidate as a potential customer. If they don't get the job they might end up with a competitor or as a customer of yours.

- When inviting people for interviews tell them what the steps in the process will be and how long it will take.
- Ask yourself how will you know or assess whether the candidate has the attributes.

TIP: Only highlight a maximum of four or five critical attributes.

- Consider alternatives to interviews.
- Ask them to make a presentation on how they would approach the job. This tests how they think, their presentation skills, knowledge of the area and commitment.
- Use psychometric tests. www.savillesconsulting.com uses up to date practises that really helps business leaders around the world to understand an applicants profile in relation to their personality and their individual skills. If social skills are important consider setting up a meeting with their peer team in your business.

TIP: Write down your criteria, the questions and space to record the answers. People get sidetracked in interviews and they don't stay focused. Writing down your plan really helps.

STEP 5 The Interview

It is important that all the interviews undertaken follow the same format and each competency that is being tested starts with the same question. Secondary questions will evolve depending on what the interviewee says. It is also important to remember that people who recognise their shortcomings and have done something to overcome these show an important trait of self awareness. Remember we have all made mistakes. The difference lies in what we have done to rectify them and make sure that they do not happen again

- There are two options for interviews:
 - A A general screening to reduce to a short list. Maybe undertaken by one person.
 - OR
 - B Straight into the main interview. It is suggested that two people carry out this process, the individual's direct boss and one other appropriate person.
- What evidence will be required to convince you that the candidate has the skills and experience you are looking for?

Example

If the role demanded selling to a retailer then one of the attributes you would look for is sales planning.

- Go for specific believable examples to confirm experiences against your criteria.

Example

You say: 'Give me an example of a time when you made a significant improvement to sales in your business.'

Candidate: 'Over the last year I increased sales by 3%.'

You say: 'What I am after is a specific example of what you did. Describe exactly how you went about it?'

TIP: Look for candidate saying I or 'we'. 'We' means they may not have personally done it.

Probe: Carry on probing to satisfy yourself that the candidate has the experience and attributes you require.

Example

Q. How did you increase sales?

A. I worked more effectively ...

Q. But what did you actually do?

If they cannot answer they probably have not had the experience.

Keep going until you are convinced they have what you need to do the job (or not).

TIP: Most interviewers spend 90% of the time on the biography of the candidate. Avoid this unless the candidate's school, hobbies and family are critical for success! Focus on the criteria, which are critical to the job and save everybody's time.

- Compare each candidate to the criteria **not** against each other.
- By the end of the selection interviews if you stuck with focusing upon your required criteria the choice should be obvious. If you are not sure is it because you have several good candidates or none of them meet the criteria? If it's the latter don't appoint, start again ...
- If you have more than one good candidate consider the risk of appointing each possible candidate and select the one who provides the least risk.
- As soon as you have made your decision let both the successful candidate and the unsuccessful candidates know quickly.

TIP: In order to create a positive response to your offer tell candidates you will inform them of the outcome within one week and then call them the next day. For added candidate delight, ring them the night of the interview.

TIP: It's your business, the final decision comes down to: Can you see yourself working with the candidate for the next 5 years? Do you personally like them? If so, go ahead, if not, think again.

Pre interview

What is the role that I am trying to fill?

What are the competencies for the successful applicant?

-
-
-
-
-
-

What are my minimum expectations?

-
-
-
-
-

Where am I going to look for these candidates and do I know anybody who works for the competition who may want to work for me?

Am I going to ask for a presentation and if so what will it be on?

Question No.
Competency to be tested

Question

Score /10

TROUBLESHOOTER

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

SUGGESTED REMEDIES

Can't get good people to apply.

1. *Consider offering incentives to existing staff to bring candidates.*
2. *Consider headhunting the best people available.*

The Halo effect i.e., you pick people in your image.

1. *Stick to the criteria you established.*
2. *Get someone else to interview candidates as well as you.*

We need somebody therefore we appoint somebody who is not quite right for the job.

1. *Do a risk analysis before you appoint.*
2. *Try re-organising internally to avoid having to make a poor appointment.*

Appoint the wrong person.

Seek legal advice and get rid of them as quickly and as cheaply as possible.