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Advice before hiring: 'Dig deeper'

Role awareness among key traits.

Assessments, tools, right questions can find ideal candidate.

By **Laura Raines**
For the AJC

Most hiring managers look at education and experience when choosing new employees. That's not always enough to keep companies from making a bad hire, said Suzie Price, managing principal of Priceless Professional Development, an Atlanta leadership and management consulting firm.

She provides her clients with assessments, tools and questions to help them identify high role awareness and job engagement in potential candidates.

"These are traits found in all high performers across all industries," Price said. "When workers have high role awareness and job engagement, they are internally energized and in harmony



Ian Ahern, CEO and partner of development for Profisee, and Rene Orlin, QA manager at Profisee, meet with new hires at the management software company in Alpharetta. Assessments and questions are used in hiring, Ahern said. *Leita Cowart Special*

with their work. They're proud of what they do. They have fun doing it, so they are more resilient to setbacks."

In Price's view, Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz from the History Channel reality TV show "American Pickers" are a good example of these traits in action because of their excitement, competence and pride in finding valuable relics among other people's junk.

While high role awareness and job engagement can be developed, hiring people who already possess the traits decreases company risk.

"I tell companies to take their time, be really mindful and dig deeper before they hire. Through the assessment and interview process, the focus should be on what the job needs, not just on whether the person seems nice," she said. She offers

workshops and seminars to teach hiring managers how to ask competency and behavioral-based questions and hire better.

Her Job Fit process includes a mathematically accurate assessment that objectively identifies how the mind analyzes and interprets experiences. Based on Robert S. Hartman's science of axiology, the assessment basically examines how candidates think and make decisions,

Price said. It can measure for role awareness and job engagement as well as other traits.

Price suggests companies define the ideal candidate for the role upfront and then measure each candidate's fitness through assessments and in-depth questions.

Fit is especially crucial in a small company, said Ian Ahern, CEO and partner of development for Profisee, a master data management software company in Alpharetta. The startup has grown to 30 employees since 2007. Ahern previously headed the company Stratature, which Microsoft Corp. acquired in 2006.

"For us, the ideal recruitment method is to hire within our network of people that we know and trust, but as your company grows, there comes a time when you have to step out," Ahern said. He has worked with Price's company and used her methods for the past eight or nine years.

Profisee first develops a detailed job description

Hiring continued on H2

'Process saves us time'

Hiring

continued from H1

that includes national industry benchmarks to define the ideal type of candidate for the role.

"Between the first and second interview, candidates take an assessment that either amplifies or assuages our concerns," Ahern said. For example, his sales jobs require a lot of travel, but he's found that candidates usually say what hiring managers want to hear. "Through assessments and questions, we can better ascertain whether someone is suited to extensive travel," he said.

Since the company has started putting more effort into the hiring process, it has improved results. "We've seen less staff turnover, better employee retention and everyone is happier," he said. "The process saves

us time in the long run. If you're 100 percent sure of a candidate, you hire him. If you're only 80 percent sure, you put off making the decision, and time is money."

Price said that different sources estimated the cost of a mistake in hiring to be 1½ times or more a person's salary. It can include recruiting and training costs, lost productivity and the cost of finding a replacement. Bad hires also can hurt morale at a company.

Greg Barnett knows the importance of a good

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Greg Barnett
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hire. The director of the medical division of Cutting Edge Laser Technologies hires sales professionals for the Rochester, N.Y., maker of medical therapy lasers.

"We have a costly four-to-five-month onboarding process for our representatives who interface with our customers, so it's essential to make the right hire initially," Barnett said. Reps need clinical skills, knowledge and sales abilities.

The benchmarking of core attributes, skills and values needed for the position, assessments such as TriMetrix, and in-depth interview questions allow Barnett to understand a candidate more fully.

"We put a lot of work into pre-hiring, but it's worth it. It takes away a lot of the guesswork out of the process, and the added information gives me an additional level of comfort. Hiring is a risk on both sides," he said.

He has used the process to hire about 75 sales professionals in several companies. "The vast majority are quality producers and long-term employees," Barnett said.