Hire the Right People

BY DAVID K. ANDERSON

Your business is only as good as the people on your team. But how do you hire the right people? With some planning and commitment, you can learn to consistently hire the right staff for every role in your organization.

Over the past seven years, I've managed a growing garment decoration company called Imprint Revolution. As we've grown from one employee to 12, I keep honing my hiring process. Much of this process was founded on principles I learned in a previous career, working in organizational design and HR for a global consulting firm. What works for a Fortune 500 firm can work for you, if you tweak the details to fit your reality. Here's how.

DEFINE IT
To find a good fit, you need to know what responsibilities this new person will have, and what skills are required to do the job. I take a cue from the corporate consulting world on this one, and break down a job into one or more roles (i.e. shipping/receiving clerk, pre-treater, printer operator, etc.). Each of these gets broken down further into tasks (i.e. build boxes, pack boxes, accurately label boxes, use UPS Worldship to make labels, track shipments, etc.). This may sound a bit pedantic, and it is, but it helps you get a clear idea of just what kind of person you need.

By doing this, you may even realize that you need two part-timers with different skills, rather than one full-timer with a hard-to-find range of skills. This process also helps with training—you can break down your training into tasks to teach, and if you document them well, the documents can serve as a hiring guide, a training guide, and an on-going reference guide for your staff. When it comes time for reviews, you can use the same information as the basis for rating performance, too.

HIRE FOR WHAT YOU CANNOT TRAIN
There are skills you can teach just about anyone—I could train *a monkey* to weed and cut vinyl. Then, there are skills that are almost impossible to teach once a person has reached adulthood. Meticulousness is a great example: good luck teaching an adult to be detail-oriented if they aren't already.

Look at the tasks you need performed, and make a chart of the skills/knowledge required to perform them. Split those skills into trainable (within a reasonable amount of time) and not trainable (or very hard to train). Doing so, you can focus your hiring efforts on finding people with the skills you need but can't train, and you can mostly disregard industry experience.

You can train them on the details, if they are detail oriented. If they aren't, industry experience won't help you. I'd rather hire a former copy editor to run my embroidery machine than someone with 10 years of