



10 Ways for Hiring the Best Executive

Insights for Filling Senior Level Management Positions

By Bruce Dingman

#1 – APPLY ENOUGH RESOURCES: Often companies place ads thinking that will be sufficient, but that’s usually similar to buying a lottery ticket. You can get lucky but the chances of finding the winner are slim. A wiser course of action is to carve out sufficient time from your schedule to proactively seek out presently employed candidates through networking and research.

#2 – HIRE THE BEST FROM A SELECTION OF SEVERAL GOOD CANDIDATES: Having one good candidate is bad planning; things can easily go wrong. Try for four solid candidates (having passed thorough reference checking) so if one drops out at the last minute there are still three. If there is only one good candidate you are in a position of weakness and if you can’t attract the person or decide the person isn’t right, you start over. Often the cost of having the position empty longer can be very expensive to the company.

#3 – CHECK FOR THE “PERSONAL CHEMISTRY” FIT: The person’s fit with the boss and the company culture alone may not suffice. Involve the peer positions in the interviewing process. Will this person’s style and personality fit the team as a whole?

#4 – INTERVIEW IN BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL SETTINGS: It is amazing how in the informal setting, usually over a leisurely dinner and even more so during a round of a golf, the candidate will relax and show aspects of their personality or emotions that they held back during the formal interview.

#5 – CHECK WITH BOSSES, CLOSE PEERS AND SUBORDINATES: Checking with former bosses is common, but just as important is what the subordinates and close peers have to say. How does the person achieve cooperation from those over whom he has no authority? Does he really develop a sense of teamwork with his subordinates, is he a true mentor, or is he an autocrat who only communicates downward and doesn’t get the benefit of ideas and feedback from his people?

#6 – PEAKS AND VALLEYS: While it’s natural to look for outstanding qualities, we also need to seek out and calibrate the weaknesses. If someone is “off the charts” in creativity or gregarious salesmanship, is there a counter-balancing weakness in close personal relationships, accountability or valuing process? If so, how significant are those short-comings?

#7 – BACKGROUND CHECKS: For CEO’s, CFOs, Controllers or people who you hope will grow to that level, background checks should be done to insure there is not a pre-existing problem with managing personal finances, drunk driving, or a criminal past. With the

candidate's permission, background checks should be run on their driving record, credit history, and criminal court records as soon they pass the initial interview.

#8 – WISDOM OF CAREER DECISIONS: Part of the candidate assessment process should go beyond knowing what positions they've held and should include evaluating why they left a job, how they managed the separation, how they got the next job and why did they take the position. It matters a lot if someone landed a big job because a friend suggested them and they were the only candidate, versus an extensive national search effort and they were deemed the best of both internal and external candidates.

#9 – TWO-TRIP HIRING PROCESS: While it's quicker and more efficient to hire after one interview, a two-trip process produces better hiring decisions. Involve the boss and the peers on the first trip, and for the preferred candidates have a second trip and include meetings with the subordinates. Also if relocation is involved, bring the spouse on the second trip so the couple is provided with information on housing, schools, etc.

#10 – CALIBRATE THE WORK ETHIC: A major part of fitting the culture is the right work ethic. Do you want a workaholic, or someone who works hours that are "longish yet balanced with the family life", or someone who just works "nine to five"? Ask the candidate and references what has been the candidate's style and what has been his preference. Also, when did the person start working; was it in high school, did they work during college, what type of work did they do (was it demanding or easy) and how many hours a week did they work? All of these questions and answers help to reveal the true work ethic of each candidate.

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