EBOOK

Talent Optimization is the guide to making better hires

Talent optimization and hiring

Deciding on the right candidate to hire is crucial to the company's overall success. Turnovers and high attrition can cost 50% to 200% of employee salaries, depending on whether the hire is entry-level or a seasoned executive.

By taking the talent optimization approach to hiring, you dramatically improve hiring odds. Following a step-by-step recipe will place the right people in open roles and fulfill the goal of aligning your talent strategy with your business strategy.

Below are the four aspects that are incorporated in the hire aptitude of talent optimization:

1. Define and communicate job requirements.
2. Equip your leaders to land top talent.
3. Predict new team dynamics.
4. Determine candidate cultural fit.

Read on to see its application.

Communicate and establish clear job requisites.

Job descriptions need to speak to both the behavioral requirements and the skill set needed for success in the role in order to attract the right candidate. Teaming up and brainstorming with stakeholders is a great way to determine what the role requires, transcribing the information into a job posting.

Use this three-step process to communicate and establish clear job requirements:

1. Solicit stakeholder input.

Hiring managers often make the mistake of hiring the wrong talent to particular roles due to lack of understanding the job requirements. Connecting with several stakeholders - this includes not only the hiring manager, but, senior leaders in the department, team members who will be interacting with the new candidate and any incumbents.

2. Describe the job.

Stakeholders must focus on the objective job characteristics. Examples include:

- What are the most important and frequent activities?
- What behavioral style and temperament is most naturally suited to do this type of work?
- How quickly will the successful individual need to learn new information and skills?
- How flexible and adaptable will the person need to be in this role?
- What specific knowledge, skills, and abilities are required?

Reviewing answers in a group is essential to get a well-balanced point of view of what the top candidate would resemble. However, it's also just as important that stakeholders are on the same page regarding how the role is outlined.

3. Draw talent with your job advertisement.

Your job ad should include the following:

- Job tasks and responsibilities
- Behavioral styles
- Adaptability
- Any characteristics required for success in the role

Customized to your company and the available role, consider your choice of words for the job ad. For example, using words such as "team-oriented" or "collaborative" for a role that requires someone independent and assertive will not resonate with the right candidate. Ensure your job post illustrates the company's culture and core values.

It's also important to focus on using non-gendered wording or what could be considered exclusive language. For example, the words usually associated with masculinity, i.e., leader, dominant, competitive - can affect your talent pool and result in fewer women applying for a role.

Prepare your leaders to deliver top talent.

Training is crucial to ensure intelligent and objective hiring decisions are taking place. Here's how hiring managers can use people data to make the right decisions:

1. Gather the interview team.

Create and gather an interview team that comprises of the hiring manager, team members who will work with the new hire, an incumbent - if available, and an impartial employee who can interview for culture fit. Interviews should never be conducted one-on-one.

Once together, define the responsibilities of each interview team member before the interview, reducing redundancy.

2. Collect objective data about candidates.

Talent optimization requires going beyond the traditional resume and work history. The following should be gathered from your candidates:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Education
- Behavioral profile
- Cognitive ability
- Values

This can be collected through behavioral, cognitive, skills, or values assessments you administer after the initial screening.

3. Prioritize which candidates will be interviewed.

Once the data is collected, rank candidates based on how well they fit the job requirements and your company culture. Regardless of how well a candidate's experience matches your requisites, if they are not a behavioral or cognitive fit for the roles, they should not be considered in moving forward.

Ranking allows the team to focus their time on candidates with the highest probability of being a good fit for the role, team, and organization. Using people data to create your interview reduces unintentional hiring biases, leveling the playing field for all candidates.

4. Conduct candidate interviews.

Use the information you've collected about each applicant to guide the questions you ask. For example, if a position requires highlighting repetitive tasks and a candidate's behavioral style suggests they may prefer more variety, ask questions around the discrepancy. A sample question might be: Tell me about a position where you worked on repetitive tasks. What were they? How did you approach them?

You'll also want to interview for cultural fit (more on that below).

Predict new team dynamics.

It's critical to consider how team dynamics will change with the addition of a new team member. Hiring a new employee whose personality doesn't mesh with the existing team, it can cause tension and conflict - ultimately, affecting and possibility reducing performance.

1. Understand how a candidate compares to existing team members.

Talent optimization includes taking a data-driven look at candidates and considering how they match up to the available role, the existing team, and the company's culture.

Is the candidate wired to behave the same as the rest of the team? Or is there something about their personality that might clash with others on the team? For example, if you're introducing a process-oriented individual to a marketing team that's predominantly driven to move quickly, conflict may arise.

2. Predict possible changes to existing team dynamic.

In adding a new team member, a new team is now created. It can change how the work is assigned, completed, processes are developed and enforced, and how communication is delivered and received.

Take into consideration current team dynamic and the behavioral style of the candidate. Would the candidate add to the present dynamic or have issues, eventually clashing with it? For example, if you have a highly collaborative team and your candidate is independent and assertive, that could create issues.

3. Make an informed, data-driven decision.

Just because a candidate isn't perfectly aligned with the existing dynamic on the team doesn't mean they're not a good candidate. Consider how each person might enhance-or-disrupt-the team's work and make an informed decision.

For example, if the team in question moves quickly to get product out the door but often forgets minor details, it could benefit from the addition of a person who's more process-oriented and can help formulate and implement a system to help alleviate those errors of action while simultaneously allowing the team to continue moving quickly.

On the other hand, if your team is wired to protect against risk and you're trying to launch a new product, a new hire with the same risk-averse wiring would likely not move the needle any more than the existing team and only exacerbate the problem.

Determine candidate cultural fit.

Company cultures are created to successful executive business strategies. This is the reason for securing the right candidate by assessing their cultural values and whether it fits with the current company's culture and values.

1. Ensure candidate fit in the organization.

Evaluating a candidate's cultural fit needs to be explicit and purposeful. It can't be based on gut feelings and subjective decision making. In order to interview against your culture, your business culture needs to be designed, documented, and communicated.

Each member of the interview team should be prepared to evaluate candidates based on their similarities to the company's core values, guiding principles, and rewarded behaviors.

Having a person on the interview team whose sole purpose is to evaluate culture fit at the deepest level is a great way to ensure good fit.

2. Set candidate expectations regarding culture.

A strong and positive company culture can be a selling point when it comes to getting your candidate to accept your offer.

In addition to being a factor in your candidate's decision to take the offer, interviewing against your cultural standards also sets the expectation that upholding your company's culture is expected and rewarded.

Interested in learning more about talent optimization?

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