

Hire the right executive

Use these five tips to ensure you've picked the right leader for your organization.



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It would be nice to say that healthcare organizations in the United States are exempt from losing sizable amounts of time, money and resources on mishires. But that's just not the case. If you think Right Management's cost estimate of one to five¹ times base salary is disheartening, Bradford D. Smart, PhD, author of *Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching and Keeping the Best People*, states a figure of 24 times base salary. And the more senior the position, the more costly the mistake.

The encouraging news is that there are surefire ways to minimize the burn of a bad hire and increase the chances of finding the right leader for your organization.

1. Set clear expectations before casting the net. It's crucial that the search committee reach consensus on job specifications, reporting relationship and the ideal candidate's education level, experience and technical skills. For example, is it mandatory that candidates have hospital CEO experience, or would COOs of larger organizations be considered? Are there intangible criteria, such as credibility or pedigree, that should be addressed? The committee also needs to define success of the role for its 1-year mark. Any conflicts regarding the above should be addressed openly. It's wise to create a written candidate profile embossed with the committee's seal of approval to keep everyone on the same page.

2. Keep influential factors on your radar. Few things are more disappointing than having an offer declined due to familial concerns or real estate issues. Appeal to candidates' spouses/significant others, and consider children; be proactive about addressing hot spots such as location, city offerings, cost of living, employment opportunities (for the trailing spouse/partner), healthcare, distance

from family, schools, childcare, real estate and temporary housing. Engage candidates' spouses/partners early in the process and resolve any issues.

Additionally, probe candidates for their thoughts and plans about real estate in their current markets and potentially new market. Many organizations provide relocation kits and a trusted agent to further sell the new city to final candidates. However, don't overlook asking candidates if they have reviewed sites like Trulia.com or Zillow.com, or better yet, found a real estate agent to assess their current home's worth. Attractive relocation packages and signing bonuses act like icepacks to bruises made from lost value.

3. Acknowledge culture. Considering most of us spend a large portion of our waking hours working, being happy with our jobs and for whom we work impact our productivity and overall health. Understand your corporate fabric – the attitudes, beliefs, experiences, psychology and values of your organization. To what degree should candidates reflect these fibers? Many times this information can be acquired by asking candidates to describe the organizations in which they have worked. Generally, organizations with strong corporate cultures favor leaders from similar reams.

4. Seek candidates with well-suited behavioral styles. Various tools exist for analyzing role behavior, or how the job needs to be accomplished. Our firm uses *DiSC*, which also offers helpful hints on how to best communicate with candidates. *DiSC* provides nonjudgmental language for exploring behavioral issues across four primary dimensions: dominance (*D*), influence (*I*), steadiness (*S*) and conscientiousness (*C*). After conducting more than 4,500 *DiSC* assessments over the

years, our firm has identified position trends. For example, main leadership positions tend to favor executives with high "*D*" and high "*I*" profiles. It's important to note, however, that one should never banish candidates solely on the premise that they are not high "*D*s" or high "*I*s."

5. Properly train and support your new leader. When the cost of a mishire is factored in the equation, it's no surprise more U.S. employers are taking notice and developing leadership transition programs. These should include a 360-degree assessment so new hires may identify bumps in the road and be prepared to make early- and mid-course corrections. Some organizations even assign the new leader an external mentor or coach.

Placed candidates, who must be quick learners, need to understand what is critical to their roles. To be successful, they must learn the culture of the organization, evaluate people and develop informal networks. Those adept at listening have a good chance of surviving and thriving. A valuable read is *The First 90 Days* by Michael D. Watkins, who states, "The actions you take in the first 3 months in a new job will largely determine whether you succeed or fail."

Whether you use internal resources or partner with an executive search firm, finding the right executive for your organization – and making the placement stick – are worth their weight in gold

Reference

¹ *Lower Employee Morale & Decreased Productivity Are Biggest Consequences of Bad Hires & Promotions* [Right Management], press release, April 11, 2006.

Source

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