



# Chief Executive Officer

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### Hiring Right: Keys to Building Successful Executive Teams

*J. Larry Tyler, FACHE, FHFMA, FAAHC, CMPE*

Meeting the organizational challenges of a dynamic healthcare field takes more than one great leader. It takes a group of talented players who function as a superb executive team. In terms of moving an organization forward, much can be done if you have the right executives in place.

For organizations as a whole—and especially healthcare organizations—much is at stake if they do not hire right. Hiring wrong can mean that your organization does not meet its objectives. Hiring wrong can even cost you your job. So how can you make sure you hire right?

#### Avoiding Common Mistakes

CEOs know they need people on their team to help meet organizational objectives and get the job done. Most CEOs are concerned about hiring right, but sometimes they shortchange the process because of time constraints. Here are some common mistakes made when trying to assemble an executive team.

Oftentimes, not enough effort is put into creating job descriptions for available positions. It is a good idea to take time to sit down and debate and brainstorm about what elements should be included in the job description to make it as reflective as possible of the open position's duties and requirements. In addition, the job description preparation and review process enables team input and discussion. Sometimes CEOs will push through a job not supported by the management team. The inevitable result is discord and dysfunction.

Another mistake commonly made during the hiring process is not doing a thorough background or reference check. You must verify everything. One misstep in this area can be extremely embarrassing for your organization, especially if the truth is revealed that a candidate has falsified employment history, academic credentials or any other part of his or her background. A former Georgia Tech football coach lost his dream job at Notre Dame because of falsified information about his background, embarrassing himself and both institutions over the issue.

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#### YOUR CAREER

### Leading Through Hopefulness

*Stephen L. Mansfield, PhD, FACHE*

At many organizations, CEOs have made great efforts to create working environments that improve employee satisfaction, retention and engagement levels. However, despite the attention and focus on these areas, in most fields, employee commitment and loyalty to their organizations are in multiyear declines. Increasingly, staff may commit to their careers, but many fail to commit to their organizations.

The negative implications of having staff members who are not fully engaged and committed to their organizations are astronomical in their effect on organizational performance and the capacity of organizations to contribute positively to the good of the societies in which they exist. On the other hand, employees who are satisfied, engaged in their work and devoted to their organizations benefit themselves and their companies. This improves the ability to attract, develop and retain top talent, which is the single most important

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### Hiring Right: Keys to Building Successful Executive Teams (continued from page 1)

Job candidates almost always provide names of references who will give them positive reviews. Therefore, it is imperative to find secondary references. Ask the listed references provided by the candidate for other references. One note of caution: make sure the references are checked at the appropriate time. For example, do not call your candidate's current employer if the candidate does not want the current employer to know he or she is looking for a new position. Before the second interview, have the candidate sign a release so you can check other references. If your reference checking function is generally outsourced or performed by other internal staff members, try to make some of the calls on your own. Once notice is given you should request to talk with the current supervisor.

Another critical mistake executives make when hiring new members to the executive team is not understanding or recognizing that the best candidates often have other choices. How your organization treats job candidates is crucial. It could mean the difference between your candidate choosing to work for another organization or choosing to work for you. A common candidate irritation is not reimbursing the candidate for interview expenses in a timely fashion. If the candidate has to choose between a job offer at your organization or another that has treated him or her more professionally, the candidate will choose the other.

#### How to Hire Right

While focusing on what not to do, here are some tips on making sure

a candidate is right for you. Make sure to take at least two hours to conduct a thorough interview. In addition to asking candidates about their previous job responsibilities and accomplishments, generally the most revealing types of interview questions are behavioral and situational questions, so these should comprise the majority of the interview.

Ask questions that reveal what strengths candidates possess that would be needed in the position you are trying to fill. Evaluate each of the candidate's answers to see if they match your organization's needs.

Examples of revealing questions include:

- What has been your greatest career disappointment?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What kind of person do you want to work for? (This helps managers see if they would get along with the candidate.)

Pose scenarios to candidates to find out how they will react in situations that may occur in your organization. For example, you might ask the candidate: Give me an example of a time when you were confronted by a physician who was upset. How did you handle this situation? Or, perhaps you were upset with a physician for some reason. How did you handle that situation? The basic structure for scenario questions is:

- Tell me about a time when ...

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- What did you learn from that situation?
- How did you resolve the situation?
- Was it resolved?

### Top Five Tips for Hiring Right

1. Make sure you do the front-end work. Have a solid job description in place with input from others.
2. Be sure to have a comprehensive recruiting and interviewing process in place.
3. Spend enough time with candidates to really understand them.
4. At some point during the interview, put on your recruiter hat, and take off your judgmental hat.
5. Hire in haste; repent at leisure.

It is important to remember that members of successful executive teams need to have complementary skills, but they do not need to have the same skills. However, team members' values must be the same. That is because in stressful times, it is values that often are used to make final decisions.

When hiring a candidate as part of your executive team, it is important to ask candidates about their views on being a team member. Ask candidates for examples of how staff at their previous organizations worked together and how they defined the term "team player." The definition of teamwork means something different to every person and to every organization.

Asking about a candidate's strengths and weaknesses is a given. When reviewing candidates' answers to these questions, look for strengths that are needed in the job you are

trying to fill. As a CEO, it is important to know your own strengths and weaknesses. In general, you should not hire someone with your same strengths and weaknesses. When hiring, always take an assessment of what people can and cannot do and what you can and cannot do.

### Making a Decision

Once you have decided on a candidate and provided the offer, you should have the answer within three days. Anything beyond that is a red flag that the candidate might not be a good match for the job. Candidates taking beyond three days to give you a "yes" or "no" answer may be deciding on other offers and may not be 100 percent invested in working for your organization.

Remember, "hire in haste; repent at leisure"—it is not a good idea to hire too quickly. However, it also is not a good idea to take too long to decide on a candidate. Move along through the hiring process with deliberate speed. A good hire should take approximately 90 to 120 days.

Obviously you need to give hiring decisions a lot of thought. However, you do not need to agonize over them. Be sure to listen to your gut; if you are feeling good about a decision, go ahead and make it.

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