7 Ways to Improve Your Next Hiring Process

Interview processes across positions, industries and time have been similar and largely ineffective. Efforts to improve them have increased in complexity and cost but not in positive results. Thankfully, research tells us what works. There is nuance across industry and position but you can apply the strategies below to any hiring process to increase your chances of choosing a strong candidate.

1. **STOP winging it.** Yes, it is nice to get a feel for the candidate as a person, but asking different questions and having different conversations with different candidates makes it impossible to compare. This unstructured conversational style lends itself to all sorts of personal biases that favor people we like and relate to regardless of their fit for the position.

   INSTEAD ask all of the same questions to all of the same candidates in the same order so you can compare answers better and mitigate some of those persistent biases. Make sure you and the other members of your hiring team are clear about what answers you are looking for so you can deliberate toward the same goal. Capture some data on the hiring process itself to learn what is working and what is not. Be willing to adjust, recognizing that no process is perfect and it can always be improved.

2. **STOP** going it alone. You have no ability to provide multiple perspectives and insights to the process or fully check your own biases.

   INSTEAD include multiple people in the process to help add perspective, limit bias and more effectively assess fit. When applicable make sure to include the person who will be supervising the candidate, a person the candidate will be supervising, someone from the same team, and ideally a board member, volunteer, or client. You want the process to be inclusive and representative, and having everyone in the same place at the same time allows you to participate in the same conversation, limiting unnecessary repetition.

3. **STOP** going with your gut. We like to think that our intuition is our best guide and that we should listen to it above all else, but our guts and our intuitions are comprised of countless biases, prejudices and personal beliefs that discriminate against candidates in several ways.

   INSTEAD create a rubric to capture answers and discuss with your hiring committee ahead of time what answers best fit for the position and your organization. Challenge comments such as, "*I just can't put my finger on it*" or "*I just have a feeling*". Include someone in the process who examines the rubrics without having been present to the conversations to see what insight and questions come up for them. This can help distinguish between people who simply interivew well and those who can do the job well.

4. **STOP** falling in love with experience. Just because someone has worked for a long time in your field does not mean that experience has been great. Or even good. Choosing someone based on length of experience seems like a good idea, but research shows it does not correlate with better hires.

   INSTEAD do what you can to simulate the work they will be doing. This is consistently one of the best indicators of how candidates will perform on the job. In some positions, this will be easier said than done (e.g., teachers facilitating a lesson, writers writing) and in others you may need to get creative. But as best you can, give them an opportunity to show you what they can do, and unless there is an extenuating circumstance, do this during the interview process. It is unfair to ask candidates to put in unpaid work just for the chance to talk with you.

5. **STOP** asking hypotheticals. Their answers will not tell you anything except how well they answer hypotheticals. Polished candidates can produce wonderful responses to, "What would you do if...?" but it does not mean this is what they would actually do.

   INSTEAD ask about experiences. The past is the biggest predictor of the future, so ask for examples of what you want to know. If people have trouble producing an answer, it can be an indication that they do not have any experience in that area.

6. **STOP** dragging it out. Although it seems like more time should equal more insight, the research does not support this. Plus, the longer your process, the more likely you are to lose high-quality, high in demand talent along the way

   INSTEAD keep it as short as you are able. A quick phone screen and an in-person where the candidate gets to meet the right people is all you need. Conduct the process efficiently and make the best choice you can based on that. Make sure you are upfront about the salary and timeline so candidates are clear and will not proceed if either of these is not a good fit for them.

7. **STOP** using arbitrary qualifications. Outside of industry-required certifications, many positions do not need the degree or the years of experience you are currently requiring.

   INSTEAD look for people who have the unteachable traits and talents you need for the position. Lots of tasks can be taught, but many traits cannot. Other traits simply are not a good fit. For example, if you need someone who loves collaborating with people, a position where they sit in front of a computer all day is not a good fit. So, forget about the things that can be taught and learned. Focus on finding people who already have the unteachable traits you need that fit the position.

Hiring well is one of the most important things you can do as a supervisor. As you work on improving your hiring process, keep track of which hires are successful and which ones are not. What patterns do you notice? What insights do you get looking back? Remember the process will never be perfect, so do the best you can and keep adjusting as you go.