



Hello and welcome to another troubleshooting session here in the Supervisors Circle.

Troubleshooting is an opportunity for folks like you and me to come on here and talk through some challenges that we have as supervisors.

You are welcome to submit your own challenge. You can submit it anonymously. You can come on here live. You're welcome to join us and support the person who has a challenge. You're also welcome to join and sit quietly and listen however you best want to participate. After each session, we post the trouble or the challenge in the forum, and you're welcome to add your encouragement, support, advice, ideas in there as well.

So, let's go ahead and check out today's challenge.

*"It seems like as soon as I hire and train someone, they leave. All of my time these days is spent on hiring and orienting, but nothing seems to be working. I know it's tough out there, but this is ridiculous. We can't stay staffed, and everything is suffering as a result. What do I do?"*

I love a lot of things about these troubleshooting sessions, not the least of which is that almost always what someone submits is something that I think is applicable to pretty much everybody in some way, shape or form, and always seems to be so timely.

We know these days that hiring and staffing are ongoing, legitimate, really consequential things that we're all dealing with.

What do we do about it? There's a lot here.

I want to start by saying you are not alone. I know that doesn't always make you feel better when you hear that, but I still think it's important to remind you that while there may be things you are doing that are in some way contributing, there are greater forces at play here.

This is an issue that almost every organization is struggling with.

Regardless of all the things you're doing right, and I'm sure there are many, many things you are doing right in this process. So, it's a balance and it's a both of saying, you're up against it, we're up against it right now, and what can we do in our own sphere of influence, our own locus of control to do the best with what is a really, really difficult situation.

Certainly, want to make sure we acknowledge the challenges here and the terrible consequences they're having for the people who are doing the hiring, the people being hired or not hired, and of course ultimately the clients. Whether those clients are paying customers of a product, whether they're on the receiving end of a service, everybody is suffering with the challenges that are in front of us. So, we're with you. We feel it, and that's a big reason why we do this in community, not just for the encouragement and the empathy, although those are very important, but also to say, let's put our heads together



and figure out how we collectively can both support each other and figure out some practical and realistic things we can do to make the best of what is a really challenging situation. So, thanks for submitting this one.

Let's look at our things to consider.

The first of which is how much is related to what you are doing or not doing? Again, there are a lot of systemic and societal things going on right now that are making hiring really challenging.

You can't control those.

As you reflect on what is going on personally for you and for your organization, what are you doing or not doing that may be making this challenging situation even more challenging? Or on the flip side, what you're doing to make it a little bit better?

It's important to understand in anything we do, the context in which we're doing it.

We have this societal situation right now where things are tough for organizations on the staffing end. You didn't cause that, and there's not a lot you can do to fix that on the larger societal systemic level.

So, think about what you can do.

Sometimes that's really empowering to say, okay, I'm really going to step into what I can impact and focus on that and know that I'm doing the best that I can and hopefully seeing some changes as a result of that. At the same time, that can also feel a little defeating or overwhelming to say, I can't fix it. I can't fix it in the way I want to fix it. It's out of my control in a lot of ways.

Isn't this true of most everything in life?

That there are parts where we can make that positive change and positive impact and there are really significant things that are out of our control too.

Welcome to supervising and welcome to life.

This is an ongoing juxtaposition. I don't even think it's a juxtaposition. I think these things go hand in hand. There's something happening. Part of it I can do something about and part of it I can't. How do I do something about the part I can do something about? This requires you and invites you in a less harsh way, I guess, to really examine what you are doing.

Within this greater societal challenge, what's your piece of it?

If you like many other people I've talked with are saying, well, I'm not doing anything different. I've always done it this way and now it's not working where it worked before.



Great self-awareness and you just got a clue to where you are getting in the way of some of that progress because life isn't as it was pre-pandemic.

Will we ever get back there? Not exactly. Maybe closer, who knows? Time will tell, but for now, we know that things are different than they were before the pandemic.

If you're doing everything exactly the same way and it's not working, there's a clue that you can't be doing things the same way because it's no longer working. It did work before and now it's not.

When it comes to hiring and retaining, of course they're connected and they're also separate pieces of that puzzle. (My metaphors are off today.)

There are so many components of each of these, right? And they need to be in alignment to work well. I want you to keep the bigger picture in mind as you are drilling down a little bit to each piece of this. You have this big overview of staffing, of hiring and retaining high quality staff.

I'm doing a session on this this week and it's a session I do a lot because it's on everyone's mind.

How do we hire and retain good high-quality staff? There is a broader, bigger vision and plan for what your staffing should look like.

And then within staffing, there's all those pieces of it. You have the recruiting, you have the actual interviewing, you have the offer and what you're able to provide for compensation, you have the orientation piece, then you have the retaining, supervising, developing, supporting staff piece. And with each of those, there are so many smaller steps.

Think about the last time you hired someone and all the steps that are involved with that. How you write the job description, where you post it, how long you keep the posting open, what are you asking candidates to do?

How many rounds are there of your hiring process?

Who's involved in those rounds?

What are you asking of the candidate? How long is each interview?

What's your communication like with candidates in between interviews?

How many candidates are you bringing forward to each round?

How are you making your decisions? Who's writing the questions?



What questions are you asking?

All of those things are a part of this bigger picture and it's important to look at each of those things and where you might make some adjustment to make this process better.

But before you do that, this is a great opportunity to start first with that bigger overview.

What are we trying to do with staffing?

What is our vision?

How does it align with the mission of the organization in terms of how we talk about the organization, how we talk about the work, the type of people that we want to be a part of this work, how we're messaging that, how we're vetting people, how we're supporting them, how we're communicating with them, how is that all in alignment with what you're doing?

I push back a lot on organizations I work with because I work so much in the nonprofit sphere, and we talk a lot in the non-profit sphere about equity and how important equity is as a value and in the same breath we do a lot of things that are not equitable.

Case in point, research has shown that one of the best ways to increase equity in your hiring is posting compensation, specifically salaries, that that helps doesn't solve it. No one thing solves anything, but it helps to make the process more equitable.

Yet a lot of organizations can continue to not publish the compensation when they're advertising jobs. Similarly, when you are deciding which candidates to hire and not, research shows that one of the best ways to have a fair and equitable process is to have a rubric type of system where you're not just going off your gut, which is filled with lots of our biases and preconceptions, but you have a process in place to try to make it more equitable. Yet a lot of organizations continue to go by their gut, and these are the same organizations that are saying,

I just can't hire well, and I can't hold onto my staff because they're using systems that are ultimately pretty arbitrary. Thinking about what your values as an organization are and how you are putting those into practice, getting staff on board, the actual process of it and also being honest with yourselves about how you're living into those values or not.

Start with that bigger picture. What does it mean to work here?

What does it mean?

What does the work we do mean and how do we make that clear to candidates? And who are we looking for candidates?

Do we want people who are going to outside of the skills themselves? What type of person does well here?



Are we an organization where people work on their own and they have to take a lot of initiative and we encourage new ideas, and we want to hear ways to shake up the work that we're doing?

Or is this a place where we're really happy with how we do things and we're looking for someone to get on board with the processes and the products and services we already have and to fall in line, so to speak and continue to do it the way we've always been doing it?

Both of those are okay based on how your organization operates. Either one of those is a perfectly fine way to operate. You want to make sure though that you're hiring people who fit into that type of work environment. Certainly, logistics come into play.

Do you work from home? Are you hybrid? Are you in the office?

Is there flex scheduling? What does the PTO look like?

All of these things that people take into account when they're deciding to work somewhere or not.

You can do it however you want to do it and you need to be open to reflecting on how that piece of this puzzle that has many, many pieces might be contributing to who you're attracting and who you are turning away.

When you think about the people you want to work for you, what do they want from you?

And is that what you are selling them so to speak or not?

Are you communicating the right way in the right places to the people that you want to see that you're hiring, and you want to apply, and you want them to get excited as they're going through your process?

Sit down and look at every piece of your hiring process.

I'll put a document in the community for you to use that you can create your own.

Because the one I'm going to post is really, really simple, but basically what it is it's a very simple document to say here's all the current steps of our process.

Here's what is working or not, how do we know?

And here's a place where we might be able to shift this piece of the process. A lot of times when we're talking about fixing something that is a big problem, we're looking for that one big answer.



What's the one thing we can do in this process to make it all better?

Sometimes there is such a thing and in a lot of cases it's a lot of small changes with something as big and complex as hiring.

There may be that one thing or as you go through and look at all the steps involved, you may realize, okay, I don't know that one big thing, but if we change just a little bit about the questions we ask in the interview, or we change it from three rounds to two or we experiment with group interviewing instead of individual or we, who knows, but thinking of improving by inches and letting all those inches add up is a really viable strategy.

One of the best sources of information you have is people who have gone through your process.

You likely don't have a lot of access to people who don't continue through the process though it's worth reaching out to figure out from them. But the people who you've hired and who have gone through your process, that's a great opportunity as soon as they're hired, as soon as they're going through orientation, getting feedback from that.

What made you apply in the first place?

What was really appealing to you about our hiring process?

What made you want to sign a contract with us and were there places along the way where you almost changed your mind?

What suggestions do you have for us to do it better?

It's a great opportunity if there's a way for you to get that feedback from people who end up pulling out of the process or somehow look at your job description, but don't apply what valuable data that is really hard to get that data.

As you go through this process, this reflection, this audit, this assessment of what you're doing and where are there opportunities to change what is in your control?

I'm not talking anymore about those societal things that are in your control, but where you are right now with your organization, how much can you control? For a lot of organizations, HR controls the hiring process. They may also control the orientation process. They may also control professional development and how you supervise your staff.

There may be a lot of things that you don't have control over within your own organization. So figure out where are those places where you can recognize you want to try something new and see if it helps and you have the ability to do that or other places where you recognize it would be really nice to do something different and you don't have that power or control and then you make the decision, is this something that I resign



myself to because there's nothing that can be done? Is this something I continue to advocate for with HR with my own supervisor, with the boss?

That's a lot slower of a process. We know that.

Where can you make the changes you need to change with little resistance or oversight or approval and where are there other changes that can be made that might take some time and where are there other changes?

Where right now the answer is no. And do you want to advocate to change that no to a yes, starting with what you have, where you are and impacting the change you're able to impact again within your own sphere of influence and control while you're working on those other changes that may take a longer amount of time?

Finally, think about what lessons you have learned along the way.

If you've been hiring for any amount of time to look back at people you've hired, those who have worked out really well and those who have not worked out so well, are there any patterns that you can use as you go forward?

Are there things during the hiring process that did raise a flag for you, but you decided to proceed with the candidate anyway or where, what were the things you really noticed in a positive way about the candidates you ended up hiring that were a signal to you and an accurate signal to you that this person was going to work out well?

Like anything we do when it comes to change, how willing are you then to experiment a little bit?

One of the things I hear so much is how long this process takes and the bigger the bureaucracy you're in, the more red tape the longer it takes. But what I say to a lot of organizations when they say, oh, we go through so many rounds and everything's an hour and it takes so long, and they're telling me that it's still not working, one of the questions I ask is, well, if your process is so long and it's not working, what would happen if you made it a whole lot shorter?

Does it keep it the same? Does it make it better? Because if you're putting in all this time and it's not working, then what's the answer? Is it to put in even more time? Is it to say the time we're putting in, is it effective time or we're not doing the quote unquote right things? Or is it to say there's an element to hiring? This part's a little leading, but there's an element to hiring that no matter how fantastic your process is, not every hire is going to work out and by work out what, what does that mean to you?

If you hire a great person and they stay for a year, is that a successful hiring for you?

What does it mean to be- excuse me- to be successful?



Is that the same for every position or do you have certain positions where the expectation is they're probably only going to stay a year, maybe 18 months, or do you just need some help for the summer and that is perfect for what you need?

Or are you expecting every staff to be there five years from now?

Those candidates are different candidates, and those processes likely need to be different processes.

Really customizing and making those processes make sense for what your desired outcome is. There's a lot to this I know and it's hard even in the best of times in challenging times like these, even more so.

You want to be practical, and you want to be, I don't want to say idealistic, but you want to remain positive about what you can do with your staffing in a way that satisfies what you need, what your organization needs, what your clients need, and certainly what your staff needs. This is hard, complex stuff that is impacted by a lot of things and at the same time impacts a lot of things.

You want to be thoughtful and intentional and keep at it and keep trying to figure out what's going to work best for everyone involved with an understanding that you can't control everything and no matter how effective and intentional and wonderful you get your process to be, there will still be hires that don't work out however that workout means to you.

That doesn't mean that your process is a bad one or it's flawed. It may be a signal that you need to adjust. It may also be a reminder that we can't get it perfect every time.

I don't think we've done one of these when I haven't mentioned the word balance. So here we go again.

That balance between saying how do we continually and continuously do our best to improve what we're doing and understand that we can't make it perfect all the time, every time.

Balancing both that continuous strive for improvement and a bit of an acceptance of we're never going to get it perfect, and we want to do it the best way that we can.

Let's keep talking about this because this is a constant in any organization and work that we do. Really understanding how to do this in a more effective and efficient way so that we can do the work that we are meant to be doing.

I hope this was helpful to you. I hope this continues the conversation.

I wish I could fix everything for you in one session.

That's just not the way it works.



And this is an important part of how it works, that we continue to talk about it and think about it and share the challenges and share what's working and what's not working and keep supporting each other and figuring out how to do it better.

If you'd like to include your own trouble, either come on here live or submit your trouble for us to talk about, please reach out via email and we will be happy to include you.

Also, please go into the forum and take some time to share your thoughts after this and continue this conversation. This one is an ongoing one, probably forever, so we just need to keep talking about it and keep helping each other grow and improve this very, very difficult and important work.

Hope this was helpful.

I thank you for being a part of this and I look forward to seeing you next time.