

STAFFING BEST PRACTICES

CREATING A STAFFING SYSTEM

Consider these findings:

- *Global competition for customers and employees will be the biggest issue facing organizations in the coming year.*
- *The importance of people as a source of competitive advantage is intensifying—with decreasing numbers of skilled workers.*
- *Employees continue to feel less firm loyalty.*
- *Firms need to be more flexible in responding to the fast pace of change, and HR functions need to become better at delivering results.**

* The 1999 Human Resource Planning Society's State-of-the-Art and Practice Report

Your organization's ability to hire, develop, and retain employees may be the single most critical determinant of your success in the next two decades. The current labor crunch is not projected to end any time soon.

According to Nancy Ahlrichs, Director of Organizational Evolution for ONEX, Inc., "Based on demographic trends, the supply of labor will not exceed demand again until the year 2020." To assure your long-term success, your organization must devise a way to fulfill its personnel needs. The solution: a well thought out staffing system.



A STAFFING SYSTEM

To improve the quality of employees at all levels of an organization, staffing must be a strategic priority. "The [executive team] of an entrepreneurial firm has two basic jobs," says Barry Shamis, Managing Partner of Selecting Winners, Inc., "to set the vision and strategy and to hire the people to achieve them. Therefore, [senior management] needs to drive the implementation of a staffing system and hold people accountable for results."

A staffing system, or a staffing plan, is a template, a model and a process for those who recruit, screen, interview, and hire new employees. When properly designed and implemented, it leads people through the hiring process from start to finish, telling them what steps to take, what order to take them in, and what needs to be accomplished with each step. A staffing system standardizes personnel practices, assures that everyone in the company is consistent in hiring policies, and thereby becomes a formula for removing some of the risk and uncertainty from the process. "Without a staffing system, you might as well roll the dice and take your chances," says Shamis.

An effective staffing system consists of five essential steps:

1. Painting a picture of the ideal candidate
2. Developing a cadre of qualified candidates
3. Screening the candidates
4. Interviewing and checking references
5. Making the hiring decision



"In today's world, companies have to hire fast because the market will not allow you to take a month to hire a top prospect. At the same time, you must hire effectively by maximizing your resources and avoiding snap decisions that will cost more time and money, should the new employee fail to work out. Without a staffing system, you dramatically reduce your chances of achieving these goals."

- Barry Shamis

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL STAFFING SYSTEM

The staffing model you design should reflect the nuances of your industry and your organization. Here are a few guidelines and basic criteria from the practice experts that may help you work through the process.

Build your staffing system upon objective, performance-based criteria.

- Create job profiles around measurable criteria related to ideal performance behaviors.
- Benchmark job performance using your company's standards as well as standards of the top performers in the market place.
- Eliminate bias from decision making.

Use a structured interview process.

- Plan the content and method of candidate evaluation to ensure equal treatment.
- Focus on a candidate's past job performance, not personality.
- Elicit information that compares candidates against performance-based criteria.
- Seek examples of specific behaviors that are deemed critical for success.

According to Shamis, this structured interview process not only helps you determine the right fit for the position, "more importantly, it takes much of the risk and uncertainty out of the process by providing a standard approach that ensures that everyone in the company hires in a consistent standard." It also can be useful if the courts ever challenge your hiring practices.

Develop a staffing plan.

- Plan staffing requirements based on your strategic or business plan.
- Hire proactively based on planned needs and expected attrition.
- Maximize your organization's existing resources.
- Determine the gaps in current resources and develop strategies to fill them.

"All companies should have a staffing plan, but especially those on a fast growth track," advises Shamis. "When companies hire in a reactive mode, managers feel pressured to fill the open slots. They lower standards and hire in haste in order to get the warm bodies to keep up with the growth. A staffing plan provides order and discipline to a process that too often feels rushed and chaotic."

While preparing your plan, Barry Shamis suggests you ask yourself these key questions:

- How many new employees will be needed during the coming year?
- Why will those employees be needed?
- When will they be needed?
- How long will they be needed?
- How much will it cost the company to hire new employees?
- What value will they bring to customers and the organization?

And finally, be sure that your hiring managers embrace, adopt and are trained in how to effectively use your staffing system.

BENEFITS OF A STAFFING SYSTEM

“The success of any organization depends upon choosing the right people for your team,” comments Arthur H. Bell, PhD, professor of management communications at the McLaren School of Business, University of San Francisco. Staffing expert Ed Ryan agrees, adding that the steps that one takes in putting

together a cohesive corps of personnel begins with a well-devised staffing plan. The benefits achieved from this design far outweigh the time spent devising it.

A well designed staffing system:

- Significantly increases your odds of hiring the right people.
- Creates consistency in hiring decisions throughout the organization.
- Supports management development.
- Helps to improve benchmarking throughout the organization.
- Reduces costs of the hiring process.
- Limits liability.

“You can’t make immediate wholesale changes in the quality of your people,” says Ryan, “but by implementing a staffing system, you establish behavioral benchmarks and standards for each position in your company. As people leave, you start hiring to those standards and gradually improve the level of talent. Over time you will see a dramatic improvement.”

YOUR STAFFING SYSTEM

“Start thinking creatively about your workforce because the standard rules no longer exist,” advises Shamis. “Consider alternatives to traditional employment because the traditional 40-hour-a-week employee will eventually vanish from the landscape.”

Your staffing partner can help you weigh the alternatives. As staffing specialists, we are intimately involved with the dynamics of today’s workplace. We understand the recruiting challenges you face and your need for top performers. Every day we help companies find the right people—for short-term assignments, long-term projects, and full-time needs. We have the experience to help you design and execute an appropriate staffing system for your business.

We can help you:

- Manage the uncertainty of growth.
- Minimize growing pains.
- Increase focus on your business and your company’s vision.
- Reduce overhead.
- Decrease employment costs.
- Reduce risk of bad hires and legal issues.

Put our resources and expertise to work for you!