



p-TIPS

Moving to hire ground (Making a great hire)

Most SMEs start out staffed by the owner-entrepreneur's friends and families. But what happens when an enterprise grows toward "medium," specialized technicians are needed, or an employee leaves? Everyone has horror stories of how a botched hiring process resulted in workplace disharmony, lowered productivity, offended customers, or worse. The budget may not be in place for headhunting, but Pamela M. Belyn (http://www.allbusiness.com/articles/EmploymentHR/3880-33-1834.html?tipnews-12_2) has sensible ideas for minimizing the chances of a disastrous hire.

- 1) Write a realistic job description. Make a detailed list of tasks involved in the vacancy position, prioritize, and list the top three in an advertisement or the initial contact. If the job entails weekly post office runs, say so.
- 2) Solicit referrals. Ask likely sources if they know of anyone suitable. They may have been contacted recently by a talented applicant when no openings were available.
- 3) Read resumes with a critical eye. Are there unexplained gaps in educational and job history? Does the candidate share any personal interests with you or others on your staff?
- 4) Check references. Previous employers may only confirm dates, last rate of pay, and position, but this is still useful.
- 5) Perform background checks. These can be formal or informal, but a professional check may be a good idea if the candidate is to handle sensitive functions like payrolls.
- 6) Conduct personality testing. Such tests now give realistic results, and many consultants offer reasonably priced testing.
- 7) Screen over the phone. Ten to 15 minutes' conversation can demonstrate speaking ability, grasp of phone etiquette, and interest in the job, saving interview time later.
- 8) Be a tough interviewer. Stick to open-ended questions when ascertaining how a potential hire would respond to a specific work situation.
- 9) Be flexible. If the position is full time but the perfect candidate wants part time, try job sharing or reducing the hours. Considering employees' quality of life opens up the human resources pool you can tap.
- 10) Consider "temp to perm." Using a temporary agency takes some of the hassle out of the search for employees, but read the service contract carefully.