

## Assess Talent During Orientation

It is widely accepted that, in small pockets around the world, the second iteration of the war for talent is well underway. Emerging companies in China, for example, are invading small rural villages in an effort to convert agrarian citizens into knowledge workers, and professional service firms are eagerly grasping at once undesired college new grads.

It would be logical to assume that growth-oriented firms would be devising new methods to uncover hidden sources of talent and fend off poachers from other organizations, but in reality few are. At a time when most organizations should be abandoning the conservative approach of continuous improvement and embracing innovation, too many are still focused on miniscule efficiency gains.

At no time since the final years of the Roman Empire has the world population mimicked its current state. With a huge population of aged workers and a significantly smaller influx of youthful workers, it is well known that something will have to change. Innovation will take place.

The world is full of people who look back and say, "If only I had thought of that," or, "If only I had leveraged that missed opportunity, where would I be today?" It is also full of people who routinely try to reinvent the wheel.

Unfortunately, the recruiting profession seems to be a magnet for these types of people. For years now, thought leaders have been advising organizations to embed formal competitive-intelligence-gathering activities into their onboarding processes, yet few actually have. When a recruiter learns of actions in a competitor, rarely do the managers who could leverage such information hear of it. What is even more disappointing is the lack of talent intelligence gathering that takes place during the onboarding process, and the sheer volume of missed opportunities that go unnoticed.

### **The Problem With Most Onboarding Approaches**

Like many programs in human resources, onboarding programs suffer from narrow perspective design. Quite frankly, they are designed by people who truly have no idea what value talent provides or how to maximize the value of that talent.

The most common evidence of this design flaw is the scope and direction of information flow during the onboarding process. In most organizations, information flows only one way, with the exception of benefits enrollment data. Few organizations look at the onboarding process as an opportunity for both parties to exchange in a dialogue where both parties learn something of value.

In short, we add another element to the list of missed opportunities in HR.

### **The New Perspective**

The first week on the job can play a crucial role in motivating and retaining new employees, helping them contribute not only to their own success, but their new employer's as well. Organizations often spend lots of time and money recruiting and wooing new employees, but as soon as they start they turn around and treat them like barely welcome strangers.

In the new perspective, recruiting is viewed as only half of the task of hiring. Orientation is the other, often ignored element.

The new hire's first week on the job is too important to delegate to human resources or to devote to "reading the manual." Managers need to take control of the process of bringing a new employee on board and engage in what we call "talent intelligence gathering." Just like a parent adopting a new child, the role a manager plays during the first week is of critical importance if the value of the new hire is to be maximized.

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## Assess Talent During Orientation, cont'd

### Talent Intelligence Onboarding Areas

The following is a short list of areas for which managers interested in performance should take responsibility and for which they should make use of intelligence that is gained:

- **Accelerating time to productivity.** Coming into a new environment can be stressful for even the most adept change seekers. Any delay in providing new hires with the guidance, equipment, and training they need to get started on what they will be held accountable for can slow the time it takes for a new employee to reach a minimum expected level of productivity. Each day of delay can frustrate the employee and may also mean the loss of thousands of dollars in revenue if product development or sales are impacted. During the intelligence-gathering process, managers should engage with the new hire to uncover his or her desired management style, perceptions of company processes (good and bad), and insight about how other organizations may have approached the new hire's role differently.
- **Continuous recruiting.** Having recently changed teams, the new hire has an innate interest in helping their new team succeed — and that gives both managers and recruiters a perfect opportunity to discover leads for other potential hires. By asking new hires on their first day who else is good at their former firm, managers can easily increase their supply of talent. New hires can also be asked (when appropriate) to directly help in recruiting their former colleagues.
- **Competitive intelligence.** By asking new hires about the best practices of their last firm, their new managers can gather some new benchmark ideas.
- **Setting a manager's expectations.** On the first day, it is important for the manager to make sure that the new employee knows the manager's expectations, the departmental goals, and what important contributions the employee can make to the product and the firm.

**Understanding the employee's expectations.** It is equally important for the manager to find out what expectations the new employee has in the areas of training, promotion, and preferred management and communication styles.

### Conclusion

Innovation is an activity without boundaries, so there truly are no limits as to what opportunities can be created and leveraged during the onboarding process. But organizations must abandon the useless activities that most onboarding programs consist of, and instead embrace programs that immediately create value for both parties.

Gone are the days when an organization could afford to wait six months or longer for a new hire to become productive, or when they could pay recruiters to spend months researching potential hires when the information could have been mined in a matter of hours from existing employees. Take advantage of the opportunities before you to map the competitive landscape, using the expatriates you have just recruited. A war is underway, and you need to adopt warrior-like approaches.