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Tips on Hiring Employees

By Luc Jones

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Read any interview with a CEO of a global multinational in the financial press and one of the key points is likely to be that it's the company's people who make the business what it is. That is right, of course. You can have a fantastic product, a globally recognized brand, swanky offices and salaries that most ordinary employees can only dream of, but without the right people in place, your business will suffer. It certainly sounds easy in theory: Just recruit the best and most appropriate big hitters, and away you go to huge success. But unfortunately, the reality is a little trickier.

Let's face it: Hiring people is a large, time-consuming hassle. Many executives would rather delegate, postpone or outsource the function or hope it will eventually solve itself. In many cases, hiring can be termed a "distress purchase." Someone has just handed in his resignation, and you need to find a replacement quickly. So you invite candidates to an interview, spend a little over an hour with him and have to make a decision on whether he is right for you and your organization for the foreseeable future.

If you get it wrong, it can be extremely expensive. When I worked as a recruiter for the CRM

software giant Siebel Systems, we estimated that if we brought somebody on board who didn't work out after three months, the total cost could run into six figures. Therefore, we took extra measures to ensure that we had the right people in place, even if this meant spending more time and resources on the search.

Speed is a crucial factor in hiring. The recruitment industry expression that time kills deals is particularly pertinent in Russia. It may be perfectly acceptable in continental Europe to spend many months on even a mid-level search, but in Moscow the candidate you spoke to at the beginning of an assignment will have probably lost interest in your vacancy or found another job by the time the interview process reaches its final round.

When you come across someone you believe is potentially a good fit, ask yourself one simple question: Do I believe that this person is both willing and able to do the job for the right reasons and not purely for more money? If the answer is yes, then don't be afraid to take a gamble. If you are using a recruitment agency, it will in almost all cases replace the person without charge.

You don't have to interview the entire market before making a decision. You can often return to a candidate you met right at the beginning of the process but weren't absolutely sure about. Holding out for the "perfect candidate" is generally futile. Even if this person does exist somewhere, it doesn't mean that he is ready to immediately jump ship and join your company.

Don't succumb to the temptation of taking the path of least resistance: hiring only people you like or get along well with. You can socialize with your friends in your spare time.

In addition, look for reasons to hire rather than reasons not to hire. I could show you a perfect candidate, and any naysayer could give me a dozen arguments why this person would be a bad employee. Also, be flexible. Until genetic engineering or cloning becomes available, you can have only what's currently available.

Remember also that in most cases, you're probably not looking for a rocket scientist here, although you're in the right country if the need ever arises. Most jobs are nowhere near as complicated as many people make them out to be, and in the majority of cases you simply need a safe pair of hands to get the job done effectively and efficiently so you can concentrate on more important things.

Most important, streamline the interview process and reduce the number of people who need to meet and approve the candidates. Is it really necessary for each candidate to be met by numerous managers who have little or no interest in whether this person is actually hired?

In addition, try to avoid wherever possible having to fly candidates to an office abroad, especially if a visa is required, or waiting weeks for a regional manager to eventually get around to visiting Moscow, as this will considerably slow down the process.

The best advice on hiring is to trust your instincts and go with your gut feeling. In the majority of cases, you'll probably be right.

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The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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