

Avoid Costly Hiring Errors--"First Who...Then What"

As a small business owner, hiring the right people is key to your success. Hiring errors, as you well know, are both painful and costly.

In Jim Collins' best selling book, *Good To Great*, he explores the variables responsible for transforming good companies into great ones. I'm sure you have already read this book, and know that one of the most important keys to greatness is "first who...then what." Great companies begin by first getting "the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus), and then figure out where to drive it." Unfortunately, many small businesses deplete bottom line profits by making costly hiring errors. Too often they don't take the time to develop a solid hiring strategy and stick with it. (Gut instinct isn't an effective hiring strategy.)

My motto is: "Hire by design, not by chemistry." In my experience, the majority of costly hiring errors could be avoided by adhering to three primary principles (see my article *Hiring By Design, Not By Chemistry*.) These three principles include:

1) **Hire people who fit your culture.** This means you have a well-established vision, mission and core values, through which your organization functions. Your first challenge when assessing a potential employee is to explore how their core values fit with those of your organization. This is not as daunting a task as it may first appear, if you begin with a clear understanding of the basic values that drive your organizational culture. Can you list your organization's top five values? If you can, then make it a practice to ask interviewees to describe their top five characteristics of a great working environment. How do their values match up with yours?

A common hiring error is the failure to make value-matching a key component of the hiring process. Too often this is due to an organization being unclear about the core values driving their culture.

2) **Match the right personality to the task.** Different types of jobs require different types of personalities. Examine employees who are already great at what they do. What key personality traits allow them to be successful? Now hire new employees who possess those same traits. Adding a personality assessment instrument to the interview process allows you to screen for the traits needed for success. A good personality instrument requires no more than 30 minutes to complete and helps assure a great fit for both you and your potential employee. (Visit our assessment section to review some great personality assessment instruments.)

3) **Review a potential hire for skill sets, educational background and references.** These are all important, but notice they are number three on the list. Many employers place all of their hiring focus on skill sets and references. This is a huge mistake. People bring more than their skills to work with them. They bring personalities, dreams, values, and expectations. A good hiring strategy must take all of this into account. Human beings are multi-dimensional, so great hiring strategies must be as well.