

Peregrine  *Pathways*

HIRING

A Practical Guide
for Selecting the
RIGHT People

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HIRING:
*A Practical Guide for Selecting the **RIGHT** People*
by
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Brenda Bishop, Mick Thomas, Richard Mansheim

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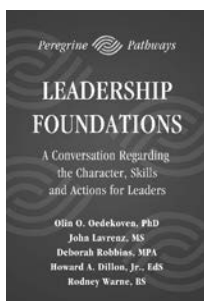
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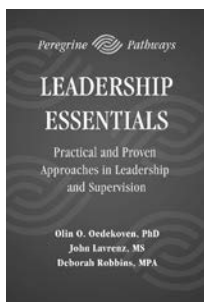
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OTHER BOOKS BY PEREGRINE PATHWAYS



Oedekoven, O. O., D. K. Robbins, J. Lavrenz, H. A. Dillon, Jr., & R. Warne. (2017, 2015). *Leadership Foundations: A Conversation Regarding the Character, Skills, and Actions for Leaders*. Gillette, Wyoming: Peregrine Leadership Institute.

Written by leaders for leaders, *Leadership Foundations* is an extensive dialogue on leadership designed to promote values-based leaders at all organizational levels, from first-line supervisor through senior executive. As the name implies, the book establishes the foundation for successful leadership, people who know their skills, exemplify their values, and do leadership that inspires others to achieve their potential.



Oedekoven, O.O., Lavrenz, J., & Robbins, D.K. (2017, 2014). *Leadership Essentials: Practical and Proven Approaches in Leadership and Supervision*. Gillette, Wyoming: Peregrine Leadership Institute.

Successful leaders understand that leadership is all about walking the talk. Leaders must fight through the chaos of the moment to see and understand the perspective of the situation. *Leadership Essentials* provides relevant, practical, and substantive tips and techniques to walk the talk of leadership by knowing the values of the leader, the skills of the leader, and the actions of leadership.

The unsung heroes of many organizations are the human resource managers. These dedicated men and women focus on selflessly serving the needs of their companies and agencies through their staffing, compliance, and workforce-development actions. HR managers and representatives are often the keepers of the organization's history and are usually the first (and frequently the last) representative of the firm that every employee sees during their organizational journey. These HR leaders maintain the standards and provide strategic input to critical decision-making.

We dedicate this book to all HR professionals. You are our mentors, colleagues, co-workers, and friends. You tirelessly make a difference in the quality and culture of your organizations. This book is for you—to help you continue to create a values-based workforce and ensure that dreams do indeed become realities.

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Acknowledgments

As we look back on our long and often arduous leadership journeys, recalling those mentoring moments of our lives forever etched within us, we would not be where we are today without our families. Thanks to each of you for giving us life and showing us the way, instilling within us values and ethics, the bedrock of knowledge that we used to write this book.

Foreword

The hiring you do today will determine the kind of culture, service standards, and reputation you have tomorrow.

It will determine your future success, and that of your customers and business partners.

The proposition is undeniable: You cannot build a great company without great people. How many companies are as rigorous about hiring or as comfortable evaluating job candidates as they are deciding on an investment proposal? The all-too-common reality is that far too many companies do not invest in ensuring a well-designed and implemented hiring process.

Making the commitment to hire great people raises an even more basic question: How do you know them when you see them? Over the last few years, some companies have asked themselves that question. They have analyzed what separates their winners from their losers, good hires from bad hires. These companies compete in a wide range of industries—from airlines to steel, computers to hotels—but they all arrived at the same answer: What people know is less important than who they are. Hiring, they believe, is not about finding people with the right experience. It is about finding people with the right mindset. These companies hire for attitude and train for skill.

Just because finding great people is about the soft stuff — mindset, attitude, personal attributes—it does not mean hiring becomes an exercise in amateur psychology, executive intuition, or gut feel. It is possible, in fact necessary, to be as rigorous and disciplined when hiring as in other strategic business processes. By designing and implementing a rigorous selection process, organizations not only hire great people, but they also set them up for success—for themselves and the organization.

Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill

Truth #1: Most organizations hire for technical competence and expertise, hoping that the technically gifted will bring with them the right attitude and approach to their work.

Truth #2: Usually organizations hire people for what they know and what they can do, yet most often fire people for who they are.

Truth #3: What people know is less important than who they are. What we know changes very fast in an information-based world; who we are changes over an extended period of time.

Truth #4: Hiring someone with the wrong attitude who is technically competent and expecting the organizational development or training department to change them is a decision you'll pay for over and over again.

Truth #5: Poor hiring decisions have a negative impact on fellow employees.

Truth #6: The most admired companies in the world are absolutely rigorous about hiring decisions—it is a strategic priority for them. They know the price they will pay for just filling a position.

The New Model for Smart Hiring

1. What You Know Changes, Who You Are Does Not

Popeye was right: “I yam what I yam.” The most common—and fatal—hiring mistake is to find someone with the right skills but the wrong mindset and hire them on the theory, “We can change ’em.” This is often a mistake. The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Core personality traits do not change.

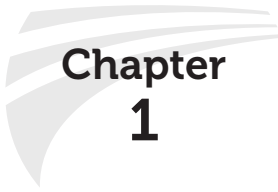
2. You Cannot Find What You Are Not Looking For

There are many dimensions for success on the job: continuous learning, teamwork, managing stress, sales ability, attention to detail, adaptability/flexibility, and motivation, to name a few. If you are not targeting the traits most important to the position, then you won’t find them.

3. You Can’t Hire the Right People if They Do Not Apply

Companies that take hiring seriously also take recruiting seriously. Successful companies seldom lack for job candidates. The goal is to have the right job candidates, not the most

candidates. Another approach to recruiting goes one step further—on the theory that blood is thicker than water. Most companies with advanced hiring systems encourage family members of standout employees to apply for jobs. The logic is simple: If who people are is what matters, people related to your stars may have similar values and characteristics.



Chapter 1

The Hiring Environment

The hiring you do today will determine the kind of culture, service standards, and reputation you have tomorrow.

Why a Quality Recruiting Process is So Important

We live and work in a world where business success, and sometimes survival, depend on employing people who are committed to our mission and serving our customer well. We want employees who are able to continuously improve productivity and minimize costs while ensuring high quality of products and services, and find ways to add value for the customer. This requires more than technical competence. It requires employees with the right mindset and commitment to take personal responsibility for offering sensational service. It also requires people who are willing to think and act like owners.

A Quality Recruiting Process is Essential

With information and technology growing at an explosive rate, many companies have made the mistake of hiring technically gifted people under the assumption they can modify

inappropriate attitudes through training and coaching. As customers become more informed, more sophisticated, and more demanding, the future increasingly belongs to those companies that hire people who are already predisposed to assuming ownership of service, productivity, and profits—people with a “can-do” attitude! We no longer can focus only on technical skills in the hiring process. More importantly, we look at the characteristics we cannot train: integrity, honesty, cooperation, collaboration, and dedication.

With information and technology growing at an explosive rate, many companies have made the mistake of hiring technically gifted people under the assumption they can modify inappropriate attitudes through training and coaching.

Even in the most technical jobs, knowledge and skills are only part of what is needed to be successful. For example, Southwest Airlines frequently is listed in *Fortune Magazine's* Top 100 Best Places to Work in America. It has stringent minimum technical requirements when hiring pilots. The airline requires every pilot to have a “737-Type Rating” before being considered for hiring. This Federal Aviation Administration rating means they are qualified to captain a Boeing 737. And, it means that all Southwest first officers are qualified to fly as captains, even though it will take at least six years to achieve captain status.

However, technical competence is only half of what Southwest Airlines looks for when it hires new pilots. Southwest also fo-

cuses on the right kinds of attitudes. Southwest knows what happens when a pilot with a poor attitude boards the aircraft. The pilot's attitude directly impacts the flight crew members, who in turn reflect that in how they interact with their customers. If your aim is to differentiate by offering consistently sensational service, this does not set the flight crew up for success. On an airplane, a captain carries the weight of a CEO; his or her attitude sets a powerful tone for the entire trip and for the customer's overall service experience.

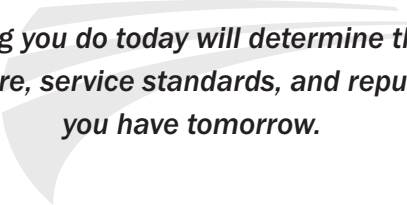
What about those positions that are entry-level or unskilled positions? Southwest has a unique way of filtering through the 10,000 applicants received for 750 flight attendant openings. The position requires applicants to be at least 20 and possess a high school diploma.

Southwest uses multiple interviews to pare down candidates. The first interview is a group one where the airline looks for outgoing, fun people through watching how they interact with others. The second interview is an individual behavior-based interview where Southwest screens specifically for cultural fit and attitude based on a profile of who it wants to hire.

There are many recruiting lessons to be learned from Southwest, such as hiring for attitude, training for skills, and understanding who you are and what you are looking for. Your recruiting process does not need to rival Southwest's complex and expensive system to be successful; sometimes cheap and simple works just as well.

The hiring you do today will determine the kind of culture, service standards, and reputation you have tomorrow. It will determine your future success, and that of your customers and business partners. Will it be a culture you are excited about or one you simply tolerate? Will it be a reputation you are proud of or one for which you seem to constantly struggle to improve?

What people know changes a lot faster than who people are. The pace of change is so rapid that much of what we know is considered outdated in three to four years. A person's knowledge will improve through experience, education, and on-the-job training; but who they are is unlikely to change, and if it does it will do so slowly.



The hiring you do today will determine the kind of culture, service standards, and reputation you have tomorrow.

Hiring someone with the hope that you will change their core character and the fundamental values that shape their attitude when they come to work for you is a bad decision. Many marriages fail for the same reason. We like some things, but not everything about our potential spouse, and we hope that when we tie the knot, we can change them! Well, we all know how flawed that thinking is (either through our own personal experience or through knowing someone who has tried it and failed).

We cannot afford to make hiring mistakes. The business world is too demanding and not accepting of mediocre performance. Organizations can ill afford to spend valuable time attending to personnel problems that emanate from bad hiring decisions when they should be spending that time on things that add value for customers and improve competitive advantage.

Why is Hiring the Right People So Difficult?

Start with a clear picture of what you are looking for.

Often, organizations have difficulty hiring people with the right fit because they haven't been sufficiently rigorous in defining what the best looks like for them. A great starting point is to first identify the people in your own organization who exemplify the kind of attributes you want. Find the superstars in your company. Ask their customers, employees, peers, and superiors what makes them so effective, so easy to work with, and so competent. Next, review your organizational vision and values to identify the attributes you want your employees to display consistently. Then build a profile that integrates the common attributes of your superstars and your organization's core values. Seek to hire based on this profile.

The profile you build today is dynamic in nature. As your organization grows and changes, so do your needs for different skill sets and attitudinal characteristics. For example, a

startup company hiring in the first five years may look for employees who are flexible, adaptive, customer-oriented, and not afraid to empty the trash cans as well as the regular work.

As the organization grows, the type of employees hired in year 10 may have characteristics stronger in detailed skills, teamwork, process improvement, and communications. Recognize that the profile you develop today will need to change based upon a variety of factors, such as your organizational needs, client needs, new products, new markets and the size of your organization.

Find the superstars in your company. Ask their customers, employees, peers, and superiors what makes them so effective, so easy to work with, and so competent.

Hiring is a pay-me-now or pay-me-later endeavor. By investing the time up front to think critically about the attitudes you want, and then hiring rigorously against those, the rewards can be invaluable. If, on the other hand, insufficient priority is afforded to this aspect, there will be negative consequences. Attitudes are contagious, both the desired and the desirable ones! As you go through the process of filling positions, ask, “Is their attitude worth catching?”

As a leader, you are an ambassador for your organization. You have the power to set the tone for your organization’s success in recruiting, screening, and hiring world-class people

with world-class attitudes. Ask yourself the same question: “Is my attitude worth catching?” What kind of legacy are you building?

Hiring Moment

I was working with an organization searching for an electrical engineer. The original US national search had produced 12 applicants, all qualified based upon the requirements defined in the job announcement. Although this had been a difficult position to fill in previous years, it seemed this time, the pool of candidates was exceptionally small.

We eliminated eight applicants and conducted phone screenings with the remaining four. We narrowed the possibilities to two and invited them to interview. During the interview process, both candidates seemed disconnected to the interviewers and asked no questions about the work culture or the people they would be working with. Upon discussing the candidates, the interview panel recommended re-opening the advertisement and continuing to search, or possibly using a professional search firm.

The hiring manager, frustrated after three months without an electrical engineer, was unwilling to begin the process again. He decided to hire one of the candidates; his rationale being they were highly qualified individuals. Again, the recommendation of his panel

interviewers an offer was made and accepted. We relocated the engineer across the country and he had an immediate positive impact on the workload. The new employee was capable, smart and displayed a strong work ethic. All great things to see in a new employee.

With two to three months, the electrical engineer's peers and work team were complaining about how difficult it was to work with him. He was strongly opinionated, saw only one right way to do things and ignored processes that had been in place for years. The manager began to coach and mentor the new employee, but without success.

Eight months after hiring the engineer, we terminated his employment. His termination had nothing to do with his intelligence, skills or abilities. He was terminated because he did not get along with others, was uncooperative, demanding and others refused to work with him.

As I reflected upon this hiring decision, I realized that we did not want to take another three to four months to find the correct person, with the skills and cultural fit we wanted. In the end, that decision cost us an additional eight months of limited productivity, difficulty managing the employee and a lot of lost sleep for many employees who had to work with him. Employee selection is better looked at as a long-term decision over a short-term fix.

—Debbie Robbins

Costs Associated with Poor Employee Selection

Hiring for attitude is all about implementing a high-quality hiring process that is grounded in finding people with attitudes that match the organizational values, and minimizing the risk of hiring those who do not exhibit those attitudes or, worse still, exhibit attitudes at odds with them.

Making poor hiring decisions is costly, both in direct and indirect costs. Sometimes we tend to overlook the indirect costs because we are not writing a check for them each month. Indirect costs can have a greater impact on the organization than direct, tangible costs.

The Direct Dollar Costs

1. The cost of rehiring—such as advertising, interviewing and travel costs, medical exams, drug screens, relocation, bonuses, and recruiter fees.
2. The cost of terminating employment—such as the payout of accrued vacation and sick leave, exit interview time, administrative time for exit paperwork and collecting equipment (such as a computer, phone, etc.), and temporary employee pay.

The Non-Quantifiable Costs

Non-quantifiable costs should not be overlooked. They affect the workflow, morale, and reputation of the organization, as well as the long-term costs of doing business. Some non-quantifiable costs can affect your direct costs, such as when

unemployment or workers' compensation rates increase, which can result in your direct costs for unemployment rising the next year. Consider:

1. **Time spent training.** This includes items such as new employee orientation, and the time for a trainer or peer to demonstrate work processes and teach the employee how to conduct the work. It also includes time for someone to show the employee around, introduce them to the work team, and for the supervisor to orient the employee to the work group.
2. **Time spent coaching and addressing performance concerns.** New employees take time to learn processes, procedures, quality expectations, and people. Whether it is the supervisor or a peer, someone is spending time coaching the new employee on how to maneuver through the organization. Depending on the type and level of the position, this may take months and affects the quality and quantity of the supervisor's or mentor's work.
3. **Disruption to the workgroup.** Group dynamics change when a new person is added into the mix. It takes some time and often some conflict before the new team emerges and is back online with productivity. Fitting the new employee into a workgroup can cause strong emotions with team members who may believe they are falling down the chain of importance. Frequent changes to a work group can disrupt the flow of work to a point that becomes frustrating to all involved.

4. **Impact on task/project completion.** Introducing a new team member into an existing workgroup may affect the ability of the existing team to keep on task and meet task/project completion timelines. The time it takes to bring the new member up to speed can vary greatly based on their skills, communication abilities, and team philosophy.
5. **Impact on customers and business partners.** An intangible cost that often is overlooked is the impact new employees have on customers and business partners. Work slows down during training, and teaching your specific customer-service focus requires patience on everyone's part. New customers may get frustrated and not return. Other long-term customers may be more understanding. There is also the potential of a lost opportunity when the focus is on training the new employee and not on the market conditions or client concerns.

Summing Up

We live and work in a world where business success, and sometimes survival, depend on employing people who are committed to our mission and serving our customer well. We cannot afford to make hiring mistakes, as the business world is too demanding and not accepting of mediocre performance. Hiring is a pay-me-now or pay-me-later endeavor.

By investing the time up front to think critically about the attitudes you want, and then hiring rigorously against those, the rewards can be invaluable. Even in the most technical

jobs, knowledge and skills are only part of what is needed to be successful and the hiring you do today will determine the kind of culture, service standards, and reputation you have tomorrow. It will determine your future success, and that of your customers and business partners.

Reflections: A Focus on Workplace Applications

- Knowledge and skills are only part of what is needed to be successful in an organization. Are you willing to take a closer look at your organizational needs for the future and use that when recruiting?
- The hiring you do today will determine the kind of culture, service standards, and reputation you have tomorrow. It will determine your future success, and that of your customers and business partners. Are you willing to develop and follow a recruiting plan to hire the candidate that best fits your future needs?
- A great starting point is to first identify the people in your own organization that exemplify the kind of attributes you want. Have you identified the superstars in your company? Develop a plan to ask their customers, peers, and superiors what makes them so effective, so easy to work with, and so competent.
- Ask yourself: “Is my attitude worth catching?” Write down the kind of legacy you are building.
- Identify the direct and indirect costs associated with recruitment in the last calendar year. Share that information with your senior leadership team.