How to Hire Slow and Hire Well

Description

In [Season 1 Episode 4](#) of the Growth Elevated Leadership Podcast, we discussed the famous phrase – Hire Slow/Fire Fast – after many of our CEO guests referenced it in their interviews. Firing fast is pretty easy to understand, but what does it mean to Hire Slow? In this blog, we will describe a structured, data-driven approach to a recruiting process that will allow you to hire slowly, hire consistently, and most importantly, hire well.

It's All About Structure

The key to a structured hiring process is, well, structure! We've found that these simple tools, if used consistently across the organization, can provide that structure.

- Standardized Job Description Template
- Standardized Job Interview Scorecard
- Standardized Job Interview Process

While these might seem like pretty basic ideas, I have been shocked at how many companies I've worked with allow each hiring manager to write up their own job descriptions without templates, or who don't have structured interview scorecards. Even at companies who pay for an Applicant Tracking System (ATS), interviews are often conducted with a resume and a notebook – rather than a structured scorecard.

Job Description Elements

The job description should be a standard template, with instructions for each hiring manager so that they can transform the template into a customized description for their role, while retaining the structural rigor of the template. The elements of a good job description are:

- Company Description
- Role Responsibilities & Outcomes
- Professional Qualifications
- Personal Characteristics

- Compensation & Next Steps

Company Description

(*Standardized, created by marketing, approved by CEO)*

The Company Description is a short standardized paragraph that introduces the search and provides an attractive description of the Company. This is a marketing paragraph, and it should make both the role and the Company look attractive to prospective applicants. This paragraph will explain who the role will report to and why it is important to the Company. It will also explain why the Company is an exciting place to work.

Role Responsibilities & Outcomes

(*Standardized template provided by HR, customized by hiring manager)*

This section is the basis for your scorecard. It explains the responsibilities of the role and the specific results you are looking for from the new hire. The first step in creating this is to create the long list of responsibilities for the role. For each responsibility, try to drive the description to the specific outcome that will signify success. Once you have the long list, go through an exercise of ranking them 1-X in importance. Once you have done that, cut the list down to the top 5-7 responsibilities and outcomes. Ask yourself: *This hire will be a huge success if they create which outcomes?* This will require some discipline and judgment, as there will always be other potential responsibilities and outcomes, but there can only be one most important one, and once you get to 5 or 7 you should have plenty. It is more important to focus on getting a candidate who can crush your most important objectives, than trying to find a unicorn who can check 25 boxes.

Professional Qualifications

(*Standardized template provided by HR, customized by hiring manager)*

This section is the one typically over-used and over-valued by inexperienced hiring managers. This includes the basics, like educational requirements or preferences, how many years of experience in qualifying roles, technical competencies, etc… To make yours more insightful, think about the specific experiences that you would like to prioritize and that would provide the strongest indicator that they will be able to deliver the outcomes in the previous section. Put those first in this section, then put the boilerplate ones.

Personal Characteristics

(*Standardized template provided by HR, customized by hiring manager)*

This section should include the must haves and the want to haves regarding the individual you are seeking to fill the role. Start with the must haves. These are the key attributes and abilities like work ethic, ability to multitask, writing capabilities, etc… Once you have these prioritized, think about the type of candidate you want to hire. This can include characteristics that will make them a great match with your culture, a strong match for the role and the Company. Like on all of these sections, start with the long list, rank it, and cut from the bottom to include only the most important characteristics.

Compensation & Next Steps

(*Standardized, created by HR, approved by CEO*)

This section is meant to provide final details regarding the role, like location, office attendance requirements, travel and compensation. This is also a great place to talk about your company's overall benefit programs, values and other items that would be attractive to the candidate. This section can often have a link to the website. Most importantly, this section has to be crystal clear on how to apply for the role and what is expected (resume, cover letter, references, etc…)

Job Screening

This is the first part of the process, where you review applicant resumes, LinkedIn Profiles and cover letters. The primary purpose here is to review each candidate's qualifications against the Professional Qualifications in the Job Description. Only candidates that meet the PQs should be passed along. From those who qualify, additional qualitative judgements may also be made based on the caliber of professional experience, the quality of the resume, the types of companies worked for and the completeness of the LinkedIn Profile. To accelerate the process, quickly sort the candidates into three groups: Definitely Interview, Maybe Interview, Don't Interview. Ideally, you'll keep reviewing applicants until you have plenty of Definitely Interviews. If not, you might dip into the Maybe pile. When possible, a next step will be an initial screening interview where you confirm some of the key Professional Qualifications and ask specific questions related to why the candidate is interested, and to determine if their availability and compensation expectations are consistent with the role. The purpose of the screening interview is to ensure that the candidate meets all the required criteria. Because these are usually Yes/No answers, one person can handle/manage the screening interview and it can be relatively short with time left over for scheduling the first qualitative interview.

Job Interview Scorecard

(*Standardized template provided by HR, customized by hiring manager*)

Ok, now we are ready for the most important part of the interview and where many groups get it wrong. The key thing here is that everyone interviews using the same scorecard. A good interview scorecard (spreadsheet) will have the critical criteria that you are looking to explore and potentially validate in the interview. The elements – come right off of your job description. Take the top 3-5 responsibilities/outcomes – and make sure to put them on the list. Then pick 2-3 of the important Personal Characteristics. For the most part, the Professional Qualifications should have been taken care of in the screening process so you will not have to waste time on those items.

The scorecard will ensure that each interviewer is interviewing in order to gain conviction (or not) on the same critical evaluation criteria. The scorecard should break each key criteria into several subsets of compelling evidence that could validate the candidate's ability to meet the criteria. The scorecard should also have a place to put a score indicating how strong each piece of compelling evidence is. The scorecard should also have a place to write notes about each element of evidence. In the example below, there are 3 types of compelling evidence for the criteria for financial reporting. Each has a score, and the overall score is an average of the 3 individual scores.

Criteria		Compelling Evidence
Financial Reporting		- Produced detailed r end??)
		- Attention to detail a do what it takes to ge
		- Has experience not Ledger Accounting sys

Decision Making Process

The final stage in the hiring process is the decision-making phase, where the information gathered through structured interviews and scorecards is synthesized to make a well-informed hiring decision. Each interviewer should share their scores for each criteria and be forced to defend them through the compelling evidence that they have gathered. If there are significantly different scores for a criteria by different interviewers, then they should be discussed in order to understand the differences.

If every interviewer has followed the interview process with a scorecard, then scores can be compared on an apples to apples basis for each candidate. In addition, the structure of the scorecards will be able to identify the relative strengths of each candidate and the areas where they might need additional development. Using numerical scores to rank candidates should not be the only method to make a hire, but it can be used to separate a list of finalists that were consistently scored above the rest of the pack. At this point, with the confidence that you are looking at the most qualified candidates that meet your most important criteria, you can discuss additional factors like how each candidate aligns not only with the job requirements but also with the company's long-term vision and values. The right candidate is the one who not only fits the current role but also has the potential to grow and thrive within the organization.

Remember, the ultimate goal of the hiring process is to find a candidate who will contribute positively to the company's culture and success. 'Hiring slow' is a methodical approach that prioritizes quality over speed, ensuring that each hire is the best strategic addition to your team.

In conclusion, the philosophy of 'Hire Slow, Fire Fast' goes beyond the literal interpretation of taking time to hire. It's about being strategic, intentional, consistent and data driven in your hiring process. By doing so, you ensure that each new hire is not just filling a vacancy but is the most valuable addition you can make to your team.

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