



## Improving Quality of Hire: **Is it All About the Interview or Can Technology Help?**

*By Tyler Holbrook*

It's the holy grail of recruiting – finding that perfect candidate who will embrace your company culture, produce at above average levels in record time and truly add value to your organization. Finding that person for a specific salaried position seems hard enough, but finding hundreds or thousands for the overwhelming number of hourly positions in the gaming and hospitality industries seems absolutely daunting, if not impossible. But don't get too discouraged. There is hope out there.

Note the word used is "hope," because there are no absolute guarantees. As everyone in human resources knows when you're dealing with people, guarantees just aren't an option. However, as the quality of hire becomes a more prominent focus in the industry, some promising screening tools and strategies are evolving to help improve recruiters' ability to hire and retain top talent.

Because improving the quality of hire begins with hiring managers, adopting this focus and strategy in an HR department requires a fundamental change throughout the company in regard to hiring. First, as a company, you must determine what makes someone a "quality hire" in broad and job-specific terms. HR must work with hiring managers on job descriptions and requisitions to create more than just a list of skills and experience a candidate should possess. Skills and experience are primary components, of course, but attitude, behavior, motivation and a fit with your company culture are equally important in hiring for quality.

A simple way to begin determining these criteria is to ask hiring managers this question: "Do you know someone who is perfect for this position?" If you get a "yes" – and hopefully you will – that employee is your model for a quality hire. Newly created positions will be a little more difficult, but once everyone becomes more familiar with the general components to a quality hire, those will get simpler as well.

Once you've determined hiring criteria for a position, you have to find a way to effectively gather that data from applicants. This is where technology really comes into play for the first time in the form of online assessments. Skills testing has been used in employment offices around the world for a number of years and has proven extremely effective in streamlining recruiting and finding better qualified candidates. In fact, ability tests have been found to be four times more effective than the typical job interview in predicting future job success.

Until recently, however, the ability to objectively assess a person's behavior, motivations and attitude hasn't really been feasible. That's changing thanks to the same people who brought us reliable skills testing.

Companies specializing in skills testing have teamed with experts in the behavioral sciences to develop tests to provide remarkably accurate assessments of those types of intrinsic traits.

One product, Identity, offered by First Advantage (formerly SkillCheck), allows recruiters to screen for a variety of traits needed for job success at any point in the recruiting and selection process. Recruiters can pick from several "building blocks" to create a custom test that maps exactly to your job descriptions and time constraints, and add it into the recruiting process.

While you can administer assessments at any point in the recruiting process, there are reasons to support having candidates take them prior to an interview. The following are a few to consider :

"If you've already fallen in love with the candidate, it doesn't matter what the assessment says. You'll agree with the findings if they support your candidate and disagree with the findings if they describe your candidate in a less than favorable light."

"Our data indicates that the clients who assess [applicants] immediately following receipt of a resume yield nearly 50 percent more hireable candidates."

"Think of the information you'll have available for the phone interview and the first face-to-face interview."

That's not to say that you should give a behavioral assessment to every single applicant, but consider giving one to those who pass the hard skills test before you begin interviews. You'll reduce your number of interviews fairly substantially and be assured that the candidates you do interview are those who most closely match your job description for a quality hire.

But what about all those people in your database who pass the skills test, take the behavioral assessment, but don't fit that particular job. You already have their results and could potentially be a perfect fit for a different position. How do you locate those candidates? If your applicant tracking system offers conceptual searching and matching you cannot only find them, but you can also direct those candidates to the alternate open position.

Let me explain. Conceptual searching and matching uses artificial intelligence to evaluate candidate profiles based on skills, behavioral traits (if available), experience and career path to identify the best available matches in your database for your openings in a few key ways:

- **Candidate to Candidate Matching** – Once you establish that perfect candidate profile for a position, the system will search the entire database for other profiles that are most similar to your model.
- **Recruiter Suggestions** – If you aren't getting the volume of applicants you expected, or if you know that you have applicants already in your database who can fill your need, the system can suggest candidates for you based on how closely the candidates' profiles match the requisition requirements.
- **Candidate Suggestions** – This functionality allows you to suggest open positions to candidates based on their individual profiles without requiring any human involvement. Imagine tailoring your reject letter or screened out message to include specific suggestions of open positions that fit the candidate's profile.

Using this type of functionality allows you to constantly mine the database you already have for quality hires in every open position. So, not only do you get quality, but you get speed as well. It's a win-win for everyone!

After all of this talk about technology you might expect me to begin explaining why technology is the ultimate answer, and interviews are a thing of the past. Not so. Nothing will ever replace one-on-one interaction. Whatever form of technology you use should streamline and support your processes so you can focus even more on those all-important interviews. Technology can reveal a lot about a candidate. Based on assessment results and education/training, technology may rate a candidate as nearly perfect for an open position as a singer in a piano lounge. What it can't tell you is that even with all that training and ability to read music, play the piano and three other instruments, the candidate still can't carry a tune.

In the end, improving quality of hire is all about the interview. It's about knowing what and who you're looking for, and why. It's about being prepared and knowledgeable about the candidates you're interviewing so you can make an objective and confident hiring decision. By gathering and analyzing preliminary and secondary data, technology eliminates those tasks from your 'To Do' list, providing you both the knowledge and extra time you need for successful interviews.

<sup>1</sup> Hunter, J.E., and Hunter, R.F. (1984). Validity and Utility of Alternative Predictors of Job Performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 96, No. 1, 72-96.

<sup>2</sup> Kurlan, Dave (2006). 10 Reasons for HR and Sales Management to Hire Winning Salespeople Using Assessments. Objective Management Group, Inc., <http://www.omghub.com/salesdevelopmentblog/tabid/5809/bid/253/10-Reasons-for-HR-and-Sales-Management-to-Hire-Winning-Salespeople-Using-Assessments.aspx>

#### About the Author

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