

HR Insights

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Hire to Fit Your Company Culture

Poor hiring decisions can be extremely costly for your company, in terms of business interruption, wasted recruiting and training resources, lower employee morale and more. You may realize that an individual is not a good fit, or a new employee may choose to leave if the job doesn't match his or her expectations. In both circumstances, many of these separations are due to the fact that the hired individuals did not fit the company culture and therefore lacked productivity, creativity and/or morale.

Culture is the unifying element that holds everyone in an organization together. Unlike an established mission statement, culture encompasses the written and unwritten behavioral norms and expectations of those within the company. Culture can set one company apart from others, and it can include the value of work-life balance issues, the way the company is organized, the extent to which leaders follow through on mission statements and many other factors.

Companies looking to hire individuals that fit with their culture must first identify and understand it. For instance, if your organization recognizes personal achievements and awards individuals for a job well done, then a team-oriented employee might not be the best fit. But if your company values the total team performance versus the contributions of just one individual, then someone looking for personal recognition might not be as satisfied working for your company. Ultimately, if the fit is not right between the company and individual, then both will lose interest and the relationship will probably fail.

Importance of a Good Fit

Finding employees who are a good fit for the organization produces the following benefits:

- Improved employee retention.
- Enhanced employee performance because most individuals at the company share similar values and aspirations. When people share a common purpose and similar attitude, it can encourage people to perform better.
- Improved alignment from the top to the bottom, and employees may view leadership more positively.

Screening to Find a Cultural Fit

Developing a screening process that integrates prescreening based on your company culture can be accomplished with the following steps.

1. Ask employees at various levels of the organization how they see your company culture. Then, identify the similarities that arise among individuals—motivations, values, core competencies, etc.
 - When you can identify what makes the organization successful, you will know what to look for during the selection process. This technique is also helpful in avoiding hiring discrimination



- allegations because you have defined the key characteristics of your culture, which help you logically and fairly justify your hiring decisions.
2. Create a brand to describe your organization to potential employees.
 - Depict your culture accurately so that candidates can filter themselves in or out based on how you describe the company. If they do not see themselves fitting into your culture, they may not even apply.
 - To make branding more real for prospective employees, provide messages from executives, testimonials from various employees, virtual job tours, etc.
 3. Have candidates complete an online assessment as part of the recruitment process to screen potential candidates based on their qualifications, personality and other factors. Use properly validated assessments that meet legal and professional standards.
 4. Ask questions about traits that you cannot or do not want to train someone how to do (being self-motivated, possessing integrity, etc.). Questions should determine if candidates have values and competencies that match with the company's culture.
 - Ask behavior-related questions and then rate open-ended answers on a scale.
 - Ask for examples of situations in which candidates faced dilemmas or problems and successfully overcame them.
 5. Role-play during the interview process to observe candidates in action. Or, allow them to try out the position for a day to see if it seems like a good fit for them (and for you).
 - This step would come after all interviewing is complete, and reference checks and resume verification checks are also done.
 6. Know the laws applicable to hiring.
 7. Create metrics for measuring cultural fit by determining cost-per-hire, time-to-fill and quality-of-hire data.
 8. Make sure management is trained on how to properly interview for behaviors.
 9. Maintain accurate records of all your hiring decisions. During an audit or discrimination claim, you will need to produce valid justification for your decisions.
 10. Human resources should stay on top of monitoring, learning and studying the culture of the organization, and then design policies that align with the culture. HR should constantly be asking if the organization is truly what it claims, if it needs to modify the culture to be more competitive and if it is remaining compliant with all hiring laws.

Don't Become Drained by Culture

Although finding a cultural match is beneficial, sometimes desperately seeking individuals who align with the company culture can backfire. Here's why:

- If the company promotes itself differently than how the culture really is, then prospective employees will be lured in under false pretenses. If employees realize that they've been sold on a company inaccurately, they will probably leave shortly after being hired and will lack the morale needed to succeed while they are still there.
- People who are too similar to one another tend to lack the zest needed to be proactive. If your entire company is full of mediocre performers, no one will stand out to motivate others to work harder. Along these same lines, groupthink may set in.
- Emphasizing a company culture can become a legal exposure with regard to compliance audits and discrimination accusations. If you do not hire someone based on the fact that they "did not fit in with your culture" but have no quantitative proof to back this up, your organization may be held liable for discrimination or failure to comply with equal hiring provisions.