

You Have an Open Position: Take These Steps to Ease Your Next Hire

By Steve Harvey

You can use audit skills to streamline the hiring process, reduce stress, and to improve chances of getting the best fit for your team and yourself. These helpful proven methods will make your next hire faster, easier and more productive.

The time is coming when a key person will leave your audit team or when you will finally get the opportunity to add staff. Most of us do not look forward to this process because we are not prepared, and it is something that adds more work to an already busy schedule. There is never enough lead-time to refill the position so the rest of the team needs to work harder as a result. When will you find the time to review the résumés, conduct all of the interviews, coordinate the hire, and then train this person?

Well, right now is the time to begin the process to make your next hire easier and increase your probability of getting the best professional. Review your current internal processes and try to blend some of the following ideas into your approach. Remember as the manager you are responsible for strategic planning for not only the audit function, but also the human resources needed to perform internal audit responsibilities at the highest level.

Planning

- Update your position descriptions every six months, if possible
- Review current short term, as well as long term needs
- What new skills does your team need to complete effectively any new responsibilities and projects?
- What new skills will complement your teams?

- Where can you find individuals that have received the latest training?
- Perform “What if scenarios?” to develop strong contingency plans in emergencies.

By adding these six simple functions and constantly evaluating your situation, you will have a finger on the department’s pulse and your specific needs.

Other Considerations

Does your organization have an interviewing process that reflects positively on you, your department, and the entire organization? Do you project and implement a well run process that sells the organization? Is there a system that evaluates each candidate in the same manner? Will the existing communication process leave the candidate feeling he/she was treated fairly and professionally? Now is the time to consider these questions to ensure all aspects of preparing for your next hire are in place.

By establishing a plan, you will be able to identify effectively the key characteristics you will need and this will be tremendously helpful when reviewing résumés.

Process

Now you need to consider the interview process.

- How many interviews will you need to effectively screen candidates, to assess their skills, and whether they will fit into the organizational culture?
- What individuals should interview each candidate and at what time during the hiring process? You will want people that need to be in the process to assess skills and personality fit, as well as those individuals who can promote your organization and department honestly and passionately.

Instant Flags That Might Identify a Weak Candidate

- spelling errors
- dates that are not accurate
- slots of time not accounted for
- a lack of specific accomplishments

- What questions will you ask the candidate and what questions will each of your interviewing team ask? These need to be completed beforehand and they will need to be asked of each candidate. Interviewers should have a particular area you want them to focus on.
- It is highly recommended that you choose up to three questions that you ask potential finalists to answer in writing. Give them no directions except to answer the question. This will enable you to see their writing skills, as well as logic and clarity of presentation. Many companies have started to include this during their process and find it very useful.

Of course, you will need to consider:

- How will you as the hiring manager assimilate all of this feedback to determine which candidates to move forward with?
- Does your organization perform behavioral interviews? If they do not, then it might be time to evaluate this with your human resource department. Many companies have begun to use behavioral interviews in the hiring process and believe it adds tremendous value.

- Is there a promotional package of information including a history of the organization, detailed benefit overview, community and schools, housing and real estate, as well as local attractions, and activities?

By improving your department's internal recruiting process now, you will reduce future stress and can increase chances of attracting the best individual.

Attracting Candidates

Now that we have discussed how to improve the planning and interview process, focus can shift to finding the right person. Networking is a key element of the recruiting process and is something for which you are responsible. The Fall 2005 issue of *New Perspectives* carried a great article titled, *Your Golden Rolodex: How to Network for Results*. You should re-read the article because developing networking skills and your network of contacts is invaluable to the successful recruiting process.

If you plan to advertise the opening on your own, be sure to place the ads where they will get the most exposure. Recognize that the best people are not actively looking and will need to be enticed and recruited. That leads to the last point, which is to have a contact with a good professional recruiter who specializes in healthcare or auditing. Remember the goal is to hire the best person for the team and you need to use all available resources using networking, advertising, and recruiting.

Résumés

Résumés are very difficult to review. Each one is different and you need to know where to focus attention. A résumé is nothing more than a history of the candidate's positions and organizations of employment.

- The first thing to look for is a well-written cover letter that shows the person investigated your position and organization. If it is a standard cover letter then it already tells something about the person.
- If the résumé is not well written or does not quickly provide you with the information that needed then we recommend putting that résumé at the bottom of the pile. A good auditor should be able to write in a concise informative manner.

Don't forget to refer back to your plan. Consider the key skills needed to improve your team at this time.

- Does the résumé identify those key skills you require and does it contain accomplishments that show a positive record of accomplishment? Don't focus exclusively on credentials, but on the experience the candidate can bring to the table.
- Do you dismiss a résumé because of too many job changes in a short time period? Should you talk to them if they seem to have great skills, but have changed jobs too often for your liking? These are tough questions, however a short pointed phone conversation may be beneficial before eliminating someone from the screening process.

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Interviews

Here are some questions to ask each candidate to help improve the screening process:

- What is your primary reason for considering making a career change at this time?
- What do you think are the most important traits of a good auditor?
- How would you approach an audit in an area that you have limited knowledge and how you would prepare for that assignment?
- Please discuss a situation that required you to make an ethical decision.
- Please describe an audit that you performed in detail from planning to completion.
- Please discuss some of the most difficult operational audits you have performed.
- How do you go about interacting with others in your role as an audit professional?
- Have you presented to senior management or a board of directors?
- In your current situation, how does your audit team interact with the compliance team?
- After completing your audit findings, have you had a situation where you had an angry response from someone and how did you handle it?

Meet with your interview team as soon as each interview is complete. It is recommended that the team write responses back to you that detail answers to specific questions, as well as providing an overall summary of their impressions of the candidate. With both timeliness and documentation requirements, your team will understand the seriousness of the task and you will have more factual information on which to base your decision. As you finalize the decision-making go back to the original plan and make sure you are basing decisions on needs and not on one or two aspects of an individual's background or presentation that stand out.

Also, be sure someone in the organization communicates feedback to the candidate in a timely manner.

Wrapping It Up

Once a final candidate has been decided on, we recommend bringing the finalist back for one last meeting. Arrange the meeting for lunch or dinner so there is an opportunity to see them in a different environment. Before extending an offer this is the perfect time to get answers to any final questions to make sure you have the right person. Be sure to tell the candidate the offer will be contingent on acceptable final references and passing a background check.

Don't delegate references, but conduct reference checks personally, so you will hear the answers and can determine what can be read into the responses. Be sure to use a form approved by the human resource department, but also be sure to ask the person you speak with pertinent questions that tie back to your original plan concerning the specific requirements for both technical skills and personality fit.

Summary

In this very competitive market, implementing these steps will help streamline your hiring process and improve the chances of attracting the best professional for your organization. Good luck with your next hire! ■

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