

INTERIM EXECUTIVES AND COACHES

Creative Ways Fill Positions and Increase Employee Performance, Loyalty and Productivity

No matter how much assistance Human Resources provides to its internal customers, when it comes time for hiring and firing, there can be plenty of things that responsible managers must do for themselves. Managers can become seriously challenged since they usually perform these functions infrequently and have limited relevant experience and training. They quickly learn that a lot more is involved than pushing papers. Managers need better skills and special knowledge to maximize the value they receive from working with HR. They also must expect to share responsibilities with HR professionals rather than having HR do everything for them. Fortunately, there are ways to remove some of the pain and uncertainty that accompanies these tasks. Our recommendation is to use interim executives and coaches. Both assist and improve overall results.

Hiring and firing, two difficult responsibilities of management and HR

We haven't found many managers that truly look forward to handling personnel matters, particularly hiring and firing. It is important to recognize that Human Resources cannot do their part without the active involvement of functional organizations. After all, managers are the ones with the job knowledge that is needed to create position descriptions and job requisitions. Managers also set the standards for job performance and assess employee progress. The challenge is to help managers perform these functions and to facilitate communications between them and Human Resources regarding their various needs.

No one wants to hire someone who will not succeed.

Hiring decisions that do not work out create problems for everyone. No one likes to do a bad job, risk getting fired, and get a bad reputation. Managers succeed when their subordinates succeed. When work does not get done properly, others must take up the slack. The person who made the hiring decision looks bad and is left with a mess that must be cleaned up. It can be costly, and there are legal implications. Lawsuits can result if matters are not handled properly. Hiring is a perfect example of a job that is important to get right the very first time.

Role of subordinates in the hiring process

Subordinates will be among the first to complain about a poor selection. More and more, employees expect to play a role in the selection of co-workers. Successful teambuilding may demand it and may even extend to choosing superiors when compensation is dependent upon team efforts. Matters become more complicated when hiring is by committee, especially when the committee members all have their own opinions and none are experts at making hiring decisions. Situations like these require outside assistance and guidance.

Recruiting is highly subjective and can stifle creativity.

Matching résumés with job descriptions and job requirements is a subjective process that can stifle creativity if not performed objectively. In some cases, computers are used to reduce the number of candidates that will be considered. When requisitions are prepared, superiors may unconsciously use themselves as the model or standard. The selection process then tends to favor the selection of clones. Interviews further increase this bias. Organizations are more effective when selection criteria are less restrictive and encourage applicants to bring skills and capabilities to their jobs that will foster diversity and provide greater creativity. An infusion of new ideas adds to productivity and effectiveness of an organization.

Poor performance requires prompt action.

When it is recognized that a bad hiring decision has been made, something needs to be done right away. Left unattended, the situation will only get worse. Poor performers are demoralizing to an organization. Without even trying, it is easy for them to bring a group down to a lower performance level. Don't allow the situation to persist. Recovery will be difficult. Firing is also difficult and expensive. It is best to look for remedial actions before adopting this last resort. Employees that are terminated and feel wronged will likely lash out and threaten a lawsuit. When separation is absolutely necessary, try to make it a mutual decision.

Remedial, just-in-time training can be a positive alternative to an immediate firing.

Mentors can make a difference. They can coach weak performers. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to show interest and explain the right way to do things. It can also be productive to obtain outside help to work with a team to improve its overall performance as well as the performance of individual members. Coaching and facilitation get to root causes and help identify and overcome individual and group shortcomings. Resulting ideas usually more than pay for the cost of getting help.

People approach things differently.

We have held various positions that have also been held by others. Each incumbent has provided their own, often quite different, perspective. We each found variety to be very beneficial. Each one added improvements that were broadening to successors, yet left them plenty of opportunities to add subsequent value. We heartily endorse rotations. They provide different perspectives, help to avoid burnout and stimulate creativity. Our consulting services are designed to facilitate and encourage iterative improvements to business processes by drawing out ideas from each team member. Of course, we have added our experience, too. Each of us adds something different that collectively advances and increases the value of a team effort.

Interim executives Using them extends this advantage.

Using an experienced senior consultant to fill an executive or professional position on an interim basis is a powerful, effective way to jumpstart the process and to provide improved results and benefits. Although there is always the possibility that interim can turn into long-term, a skilled consultant not only makes contributions that improve operations, but can also help in the development of job descriptions and requirements that will help with the recruiting and selection process for full-time candidates that will replace him/her. Using an interim executive avoids jumping into an employment situation prematurely. It gives an opportunity for both parties to give and receive value with minimal risk. For the executive who is hiring, using an interim candidate represents an enhancement to services offered by recruiters. The executive receives more help in identifying and communicating needs and, when candidates are available, helps in screening them. The interim person is in an excellent position to help since they will have intimate knowledge of the job and what is required to successfully fill it and make contributions to the organization.

Downturns create challenges at both ends.

During the contraction phase, it can be difficult to decide how fast to cut staff. It also impacts morale and loyalty. Similarly, when there is an upturn, capacity never seems to expand fast enough. Using contract workers, interns, and part-time employees will help to do this gradually. When change is being introduced into an organization, it is easier when employees are flexible and better able to adjust to changing environments rather than simply resuming an assignment that they may have held previously.

Summary

The ideas described above are indicative of creative ways that Rockwood Management Services helps its clients to meet their resource needs. We impact both supply and performance. Although not a replacement for a recruiting firm, we help to increase the value and effectiveness of the recruiting process by identifying the best mix of experience and skills. We add to the understanding of needs by filling important roles on a temporary basis. We train associates and team members, improve relationships and assure a thorough understanding of roles and responsibilities. We assist in screening candidates and the interviewing process. We have been there before and are able to leverage the experience and efforts of executives while reducing demands on their time.

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