

"THE HR PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO DEAL WELL WITH OTHER PEOPLE, KNOW HOW THEY LEARN, HOW TO MOTIVATE THEM, HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO WORK WELL TOGETHER, AND MYRIAD OTHER INTANGIBLES."

HOW TO SELECT HUMAN RESOURCE PEOPLE

BY ABBOTT SMITH

Hiring for the human resource function is more art than science. It probably calls for more care, caution and special know-how than anything short of hiring a company president. Engineers, accountants, production workers of all types either know their jobs or don't, and employers try to hire simply the most competent in each specialty. For them, broad educational backgrounds, certain kinds of intellectual skills, and a high need to "get along" are not critical in most cases. But the HR professional needs to be able to deal well with other people, know how they learn, how to motivate them, how to get people to work well together, and myriad other intangibles. Evaluating the competence of candidates for the HR function in your particular organization may indeed be a sort of "art."

Nevertheless, the selection of HR types can be done under the same general rules as any other kind of hiring, but there are, or should be, some special variations



and additions. In our relatively simplistic system, we follow the three basic principles of recruitment which I choose to call *Process*, *Personality* and *Professionalism*.

We must have a *Process* for finding a pool of people from which to

make our choices. We must determine in advance the kind of person who will work effectively with his/her peers, superiors and those whom he/she will supervise, if any . . . What I call the *Personality* principle. And finally, we must know what kinds of knowledge and capabilities are essential to the successful performance of a particular Human Resource job. I label this *Professionalism*. We do not pretend that this formula, which we call "The Three Ps", is the best formula or only available guideline. It is simply one that we have found useful and effective over the years.

If applied conscientiously, this can help all of us to avoid overlooking some critical element that might spell failure and cause unnecessary turnover. Hopefully you will find in what follows some tips to preventing poor hires in your Human Resources department.

What Sources Can You Turn to?

Obviously it would be ideal if everyone could have a large file of back-up candidates for all HR positions, and thus avoid the need for

advertising, searching on your own, or turning to a recruitment firm. Since that is unlikely in all but the largest companies, what sources can we turn to for HR people?

We believe the first place to turn is to the professional associations to which desired candidates would be likely to belong. Publications of nearly all such associations accept advertising for positions in their special areas of expertise, and many members look to such ads first for opportunities to advance their careers. As most readers of this publication know, we use it consistently to keep members aware of us. We also recommend that our clients place ads describing their needs. Other publications that will help you tap the pool of available talent in the training and general HR field are the American Society of Personnel Administrators (ASPA) publication and, for instructional technologists, the National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI) *Journal*. There are numerous successful "trade" journals in training, A-V sales training, and other related fields.

All of you are very adept at using your own contacts and friends within the profession as sources for special talent. If in your company all first-stage recruiting (getting a number of candidates to consider) must be done through the Employment function, you can provide your company recruiter with these contacts. Then let his or her "fingers do the walking" through directories to make appropriate calls. If you are permitted to do your own recruiting, you can of course make those calls yourself.

Some companies use extensively such outstanding publications as *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune* and other great employment advertising papers in various parts of the country. While we recommend such advertising for special situations and needs, we always point out that there is great cost, "the waste circulation" this expense must buy, and the great number of inappropriate resumes to scan.

I am aware that other profes-

sionals in the recruiting field will criticize the emphasis we place on the Personality factor in HR recruiting. I hope they will realize it is hyperbolic for a deliberate purpose. In our concept, Personality covers a multitude of attributes, critical and minor, which make the whole person. We believe that 85-95 per cent of personnel selection rests on this. Given two or more people with similar backgrounds and experience, any of us as employers will hire the person we "like more" than another or the person we feel we can "live with" most comfortably in the business sense. This fact of business life has nothing to do with discrimination in racial or sex terms.

Also, our screening process as a recruitment firm is usually carried on in terms of how we feel the ultimate employer will "react" to the people we submit. We know, for example, that a certain boss has zero tolerance for beards or extreme feminine coiffures; that another will not hire someone so

bright as to be a threat to his or her own job; while another has a long-time prejudice against graduates of a certain institution. These are really matters of taste and should probably not affect hiring, but as a practical matter, they do.

In our contacts we have had some amusing experiences in terms of Personality. It works both ways. "I wouldn't work for that stuffed shirt at any price," or "I want someone from an Eastern college, not a graduate of one of those Western trade schools." Other kinds of prejudice surface also: "I felt like I was in a jungle during that interview. Nobody seemed secure — everyone seemed to be running scared." In the latter case, we know that all four people the candidate saw have been in the company for years. The candidate must have made the various interviewers uncomfortable. "Why did you waste my time with someone who has already had four different jobs and is only 35?" was the other



Perhaps Not.

A training tool often overlooked is the computer.

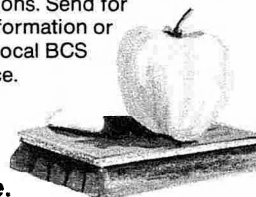
Boeing Computer Services hasn't overlooked it.

Our SCHOLAR/TEACH 3 (S/T3) Computer Based Instruction (CBI) System makes the computer system a truly effective training resource.

Developed by industrial educators, S/T3 is a comprehensive system combining both Computer-Aided

Instruction and Computer-Managed Instruction.

SCHOLAR/TEACH 3 CBI has already helped train thousands in finance, transportation, and manufacturing organizations. Send for further information or call your local BCS sales office.



The best reason to go outside.

BCS

BOEING COMPUTER SERVICES COMPANY

A Division of The Boeing Company

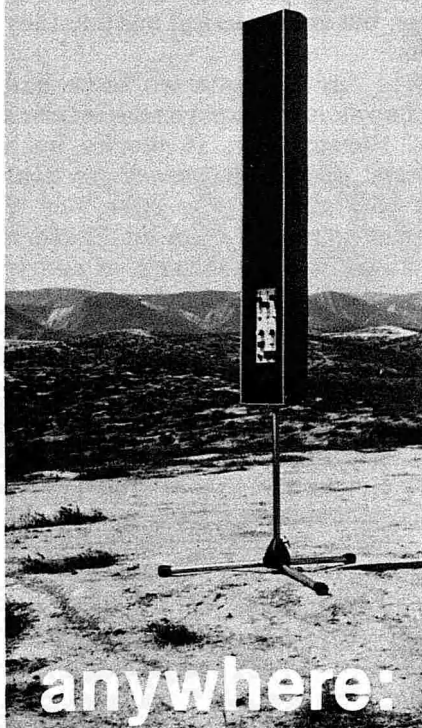
For more information about SCHOLAR/TEACH 3 contact:

Education and Training Division
P.O. Box 24346, Seattle, Washington 98124

(206) 655-6575

Circle No. 671 on Reader Service Card

EDCOR does it...



anywhere:

- EDCOR'S SC-100 SOUND COLUMN CAN BE USED ANYWHERE.

The sound column packs neatly into two compact cases and weighs 35 lbs. total. Set up in only 3 minutes.

- EDCOR'S NEW SOUND COLUMN HOUSES EVERYTHING IN ONE CONVENIENT UNIT.

No more stringing wires between amp and speakers, because they're all contained within the easily portable, compact Sound Column.

- EDCOR'S BATTERY PACK LETS YOU BRING YOUR OWN POWER.

You don't even need an AC power outlet—the optional Edcor DC Battery Pack will power the system for 10 hours without recharging.

- MOREOVER, EDCOR HAS DONE AWAY WITH ALL THE WIRES.

No more stringing wires from the microphones to the amplifier, because Edcor Wireless Sound Systems use Edcor's Wireless microphones. Radio waves instead of wire, with complete freedom of movement. Edcor systems are a "Sound" investment and a "Sound" Idea!

Send for more information on Edcor's "Sound Ideas" today.



3030 Red Hill Ave. Costa Mesa, Ca 92626
(714) 556-2740

"The average or even extra-good recruiter is not qualified to recruit for many of the specialties within the Human Resources function."

side's comment. These are things that keep a recruiter's life interesting.

I hope you will agree that no other aspect of business has such an absolute need for the "people factor" as Human Resources. It means people who like people, who can work with others comfortably and effectively, who are communicators in the most total sense.

Degree of Professionalism

The degree of professionalism of HR types is the third leg of our tripod. I feel strongly that the average or even extra-good recruiter is not qualified to recruit for many of the specialties within the Human Resources function. It is difficult, for example, to determine the proficiency of a writer of programmed instruction if you've never done it or don't even know what PI is! Similarly the validity of the claim of an OD specialist to total competence in Gestalt theory can be tough even for some top trainers.

Fortunately, most truly professional recruiters rely heavily on department heads to take over this judgmental responsibility. Implicit in these examples is a need for HR managers to handle recruiting for their own staff, and a recommendation that they "sell" their associates in the employment function on letting them do this.

Often, determining the degree of professionalism isn't easy even for another "pro" in the field. Aside from probing deeply in an interview, there are few things one can do. All too often, candidates talk a good game, know all the right jargon, but the depth of their knowledge and competence is hard to evaluate. A good candidate can be triggered by our questions to "run off at the mouth" about his/her particular specialty within

a specialty. Then the potential employer thinks, sometimes mistakenly, that the candidate is too narrow, or that he/she talks too much. A good approach in this event is to ask for the names of the candidate's professional peers (not in the same company) whom we can chat with about him or her. In certain areas of competence we almost always ask to see samples of work.

A final comment or two about evaluating professionalism. We like to present a relevant problem and see how the candidate *approaches* the solution.

We don't care if his or her solution differs from ours, or even if it's wrong by our standards. What we are very interested in is the candidate's *system* for analyzing the problem and for arriving at a solution.

Further, if we choose a good problem, we are impressed favorably or unfavorably by the application of past training or experience to the solution.

I have tried here to take only broad brush strokes at the problem of hiring Human Resource professionals.

Hopefully my own experience with both candidates and clients has provided at least a skeleton or basic formula on which, with variations and improvements to meet your own needs, you can base your own practice.

A training specialist and consultant for 30 years, Abbott Smith established his own firm in 1966. Three of his books have been published by Prentice Hall, and numerous articles have appeared in professional magazines. He frequently addresses groups in the training profession. His consulting assignments have been from such companies as AT&T, General Electric, Phelps Dodge, Ford Motor Company, and General Motors Corporation.

Circle No. 661 on Reader Service Card