

# Never Having to Say You're Fired!...Hiring the Right Employees

By Carol McDonell

We all associate those two words with a popular multi-millionaire, but many small business owners find themselves having to say, “you’re fired!” more often even than Donald Trump. According to Linda Gartland of Corporate Insights and Development, the top two things managers and small business owners least like to do are hiring and firing. In addition to being an unpleasant task, there is a substantial cost associated with having to replace employees. This cost can range from 1.5 to 2.5 times the employee’s annual salary. Substantial turnover has intangible costs such as poor morale, lost competitive advantage, and lost business. With reports that business owners are poised to begin hiring again, it may be time to take a look at your hiring process.

Surprisingly, given the unpleasantness of the task and the substantial costs in firing employees, many business owners do not have a well thought out process for hiring the right people. While it is not possible to predict a candidate’s success in a job with 100 percent accuracy, there

are things the owner can do to increase the chance of hiring the right person.

According to HR consultants, Ginger Rae and Donna Lowe, we hire people for what they know and fire them for who they are. Business owners must not only determine if the candidate has the skills, knowledge, education, and personal characteristics to do a job, but as important, they must determine if the job candidate will fit in with the company’s culture. Gartner recommends listing your company’s top three values or three words that best describe your culture. Is the atmosphere formal or informal, fast-paced, very structured or more flexible? Also, ask yourself what traits successful employees share. Are there any special challenges or unique demands in working for your company? Why have some employees not worked out in the past?

Once you have a good understanding of your unique work environment, how does the owner determine if a candidate will fit in the company’s culture? Ask the job candidate to describe a work environment they have enjoyed. Ask

them to describe their ideal boss. Also ask them to describe situations where they were unhappy in the past. A candidate who describes a boss who allows him/her to make decisions could be a bad hiring choice for an owner who does not delegate authority. On the other hand, a candidate who likes to be told exactly what to do may not be happy where he/she is expected to take the initiative to solve problems.

If taking initiative is one of the traits important for success in the job, the owner should ask the candidate to describe situations in the past when they demonstrated this behavior. Or if the job requires working under tight deadlines, ask him/her to tell you about a time that they had to complete an important project with little time. According to HR professionals, past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. That is why they recommend this type of behavior-based interview question. One common mistake employers make during the interview process is that they do most of the talking. With behavior based interviewing, the candidate does

most of the talking. This gives the employer a much better chance of getting to know who the candidate is. And with this knowledge, the employer is more likely to select the right person for the job and for their company.

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