

Hire the right leader, the first time! *By Scott Ellis Ed.D*

The most important leadership decisions are often made without the benefit of objective data. In fact, I have been told by a few business owners that they choose top leaders the way they would choose a buddy. “Would I invite this person to a Bar-B-Que” or would this person fit in with the management team”. Many base selection of top leadership on first impressions and social skills. While these are important, first impressions are incomplete and it’s the information in our blind spots that result in poor selection choices.

To improve your ability to see into these blind spots and hire the right person the first time you must take two critical steps. Step one is to take a good look at your current leadership team’s skills and abilities as well as their readiness to embrace the changes necessary for the transformation to become a Lean enterprise. This provides you with a clear view of their current skill set and the characteristics required of a candidate to *fit* and complement the team. Prepare for the addition of a new leader by discussing the challenges you discover with the team. Let them know that you are more committed to improvement than you are to harmony. No brilliant and charismatic change agent can overcome the status quo alone, so let your team know that you are committed to removing obstacle to positive change.

The second step is to establish a standard hiring procedure for key leaders. This will improve objectivity and save tens of thousands of dollars. The cost of hiring the wrong employee has been measured at one 150% of the person’s salary and benefits. For executives this estimate grows to 400% of annual salary and benefits. It is prudent to have a hiring procedure for all tiers of responsibility. Any extra diligence invested in an objective procedure for top leadership selection will save money, momentum, and cultural fallout.

The most effective hiring procedures involve clear job requirements. In addition to these, make a list of the characteristics missing in your team’s current skill-set. Once the field of applicants has been narrowed by the appointed team of leaders (including HR professionals) far sighted employers utilize the objectivity offered by selection specialists. These professional are able to predict performance by use of skilled interview and a cadre of more powerful psychometric tests that are unavailable to the average HR department. They act as sub contractor to the employer and must perform their service in compliance with best practices for selection decisions as outlined in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* and the *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures*.

The right leader will have the skill and style to complement and challenge your team. This leader will be the one that best fits the requirements of your goals for performance and culture. So first, clarify your leadership selection criteria so that the person you hire will be able to succeed. Then use the objectivity afforded by your improved hiring process to make the choice. By following these steps the environment will be prepared

for the new member of the leadership team to get up to speed and contribute quickly and to be confidently followed by your key employees. You will gain confidence in securing the right leader and avoid considerable expense in money and cultural impact. As a bonus you will possess the knowledge of how to best manage and equip them to thrive.

Dr. Scott Ellis is co-founder of P² and may be contacted at PSquaredusa.com