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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING

The Tenth in a Leadership Series

IREM® White Paper

By Shannon Alter CPM®

BUILDING LEADERS

RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING:
Solutions You Can Use Now

By Shannon Alter CPM®

"Building product is not about having a large team to manage. It is about having a small team with the right people on it."
– Fred Wilson, New York City-based venture capitalist and blogger

It's been a Monday. You haven't even had your coffee yet and you just want to put your head in your hands. On your way into the office, one of your managers located in another city called to say she just fired her assistant—over the phone. As you turn on your computer, you hear two of your top managers in the midst of a verbal tussle. Immediately, you see an e-mail from your accounting manager regarding a missed deadline. And before you have a chance to pick up that coffee cup, your best customer is on the phone with—you guessed it—a problem. Whew. You're weary already.

You're beginning to feel more than a little panicked. Your company is finally to the point where your business is expanding and you are beginning to attract more (and better customers) and you know that having a great team is paramount. How do you do it?

Here's the news: it *all* starts with hiring. The outcomes and results your company has—from business strategies to client development to financial performance—all of these begin with how and who you hire, and whether you can retain them. People, not products, are the face of your company. The ability to put the right people in the right place, at the right time, is crucial to the success of *any* exceptional company.

TAKE THE TIME TO REASSESS

How much time do you spend on hiring? More importantly, how much time do you ultimately *save* by hiring someone who is a great fit for the job and for your company? Now, take a step back and reassess your current hiring and staffing process. Not only will this allow you to hire the best talent, but you'll be able to reconsider any non-performers or dead wood at the same time. Often, when we are busy and our companies are going through changes (either hiring up or scaling back), jobs tend to morph. People in a job sometimes take on greater (or different) responsibilities. As a result, when we're trying to fill an open job, we may tend to look at the *person*, rather than the *position* we want to fill.

Diane, for example, has had a really good assistant property manager for the last few years. Enthusiastic and eager to learn, the assistant manager could be counted on to pitch in on almost any assignment and was fast at learning her way around property financial reports. When the assistant decided to make the leap to a competitor to take a position as a property manager, Diane was left trying to fill the vacant slot in her team. What did she want? She wanted the great assistant she'd had before, of course. Before filling the job, she had a little bit of homework to do first.

When you're looking to hire, here are a few questions you should answer before beginning the process:

- What is the best way to determine what staff I need?
- How can I attract the best candidates for the job?
- How can I assess them well through the interview process?
- What is the best way to make hiring decisions?
- How can I improve my hiring and staffing skills?
- What do I need to know about hiring different generations?

Of course, we all want to attract the best candidates. For the purposes of this white paper, we'll assume that you are working with your Human Resources (HR) department to ensure all legal guidelines are met. Here's how to get started:

GET YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW

Since it seems that budgets are always right around the corner, you'll want to get ahead of the game when it comes to staff planning. During your annual planning or budget process, it's helpful to revisit all of your job analyses and job descriptions. Don't have them? Now's the time to put them in place.

First, it pays to get all of your ducks in a row. Remember Diane, the manager whose assistant property manager left for another opportunity? Because the

position had changed over time and she didn't have an up-to-date job description, it was difficult for her to imagine this vacant position *without* the assistant in it. In order to assemble an A+ team, it's essential to focus on what the job requires *first*, rather than the person who is actually in the position. Start out on the right track with a job analysis and a job description (samples are included here). Why? A solid job analysis has two purposes:

1. Preparing one at the get-go will give you a clear picture of what the position requires—both in terms of job duties and in knowledge. Once you have this, you will be better able to attract a high-quality pool of applicants because you have accurately and adequately described the position. Your goal is to give a realistic preview of the expectations for the job.

2. Since the information you collect for your job analysis will roll right into the job description itself, you will be able to make sure that the information you include in the job description is job-related.

The job description is the tool you'll use to summarize everything you've collected in the job analysis. Typically, this will describe job duties, responsibilities and requirements, as well as the minimum qualifications you'll set for the job, and any physical requirements. And a sound job description does double duty: it will give current staff clear guidelines and will offer potential employees a comprehensive picture about the job.

SET YOUR VISION STRAIGHT

It's your responsibility to define the goals, roles, and expectations you have of those roles within your company. In his book, *Transformational Leadership*, Chris Lee notes that today's leaders must shift to a new platform to stay ahead of the competition (*Transformational Leadership* 2012, p. 97). Before you start thinking about how to attract the best talent, make sure you put the 3 Cs in place:

Consider culture: Corporate culture is a lot like shoes—you want the perfect fit when you select new talent. Unlike shoes, however, it's often difficult to make a switch if you've made the wrong choice. Listen to what your current corporate culture says—whether you nurture it or not, your company will have a culture. Taking the time to define what Steve Jobs called a "clear, compelling vision" can make all the difference. So pay attention.

Clarity counts: Top-tier executives often spend a considerable amount of time defining their vision for their organization, only to find out that it's clear as mud when it reaches the front line. And when your employees (and perhaps the marketplace) don't understand what and how you do what you do, it makes it challenging to continue to attract great talent.

Now is the time to determine how well you articulate the company vision. To make sure everyone is on the same playing field, try this: ask your team to jot down in 30 words or less what your company does and who your customers are (think of this kind of like an elevator speech). You may be surprised. This is also a useful exercise to try at your next planning meeting—fine tune that elevator speech and your vision will be instantly recognizable to your future talent.

Clear the clutter: Like most of us, these firms spend a lot of time and attention on strategic planning. What's the difference? This group gets rid of the clutter and turns strategies into action. If the employees you're hiring just don't seem to stick, take a hard look at what *isn't* working first—that will help you determine what you really do want in prospective hire.

USE A MODEL

What kind of employees do you want on *your* team? Most leaders would likely agree that they want the best team members they can possibly attract for any job. To see what that looks like, first take a look at the world's most admired companies.

The World's Top 10 Most Admired Companies according to *Fortune Magazine*:

1. Apple
2. Amazon.com
3. Google
4. Berkshire Hathaway
5. Starbucks
6. Coca-Cola
7. Walt Disney
8. FedEx
9. Southwest Airlines
10. General Electric

What makes these companies the most admired, and why is that important for *your* company? In an increasingly digital age, they manage to do what most other companies can't, and they have happy employees, to boot. Here's a tip we can learn from them: cultivating a solid reputation and great talent within your company encourages other rising stars to come on board.

According to *Fortune* magazine's study, these companies also share a superior quality of management and people management that make them the absolute best at what they do. Think about not only what your company does, but think about what business you're actually in. Richard Branson is credited with saying that flying people from place to place is what Virgin does, but it's not the business they are in—they are in the business of providing exceptional customer service.

Sure, you may provide property management or leasing, or perhaps you're a retailer who sells goods. No matter what your business is, your company's success all comes down to the bottom line—your people. Are they *passionate* about what they do? We all want people who will essentially wave the company flag for us—that not only inspires your current team but attracts potential team members.

Now's the time to revisit the key principles that are crucial for your company and how you can recruit the best people for you team, and for your culture. Think about what's already embedded in your corporate culture, and what you would like it to look like in the future. When you're thinking about what *you* can do, ask these 5 questions:

1. Does my company have a strong, solid reputation in its marketplace?

2. Is there a strong, unifying culture?

3. Are we flexible enough to quickly adapt to our market?

4. Do we have a productive, supportive environment?

5. Is my team innovative?

THE SEARCH IS ON

Imagine you could hire your ideal candidate. What would that look like? All you have to do is look at the sheer number of job search websites to see what employers *think* is their ideal candidate. Now take a look at reality. Think carefully about what the position you're hiring for really requires. A great way to do this is to as-

sess your best in-place players. What characteristics or attributes do they have that makes your organization unique? What special characteristics, qualities, and experience does the job really require?

Business these days is not only about financial viability, it's all about being client—and employee—centric. If your team provides stellar customer service and on-point follow-up, for example with a team that loves what they do, that's what makes your company truly the best in class in your industry.

Of course, you will want to use all of your resources when you're looking for the best talent to add to your team. Here's one thing you can do today: call four or five of your peers in the industry and suggest getting together for lunch to talk about hiring trends. Not everyone is going to divulge everything, but it's a great way to see what's really going on and who's hiring who. Plus, there may be a bonus: one of your peers may not be able to use a candidate who may be just perfect for you.

You may have heard the saying "attract the best and they'll do the rest." Well, that's not completely true. Before you begin your search, think again about the world's most admired companies. The way they build and solidify a strong, unifying culture is by working on it constantly, 24/7. When you're thinking about who to hire, not surprisingly, what's "old" is new again. No matter what generation you're in, it's still all about great leadership, the ability to grow, and good communication.

Here are 10 top attributes you'll want to consider when choosing your company's new leaders:

1. Knowledge

2. Problem solver

3. Enthusiasm

4. Engagement

5. Work ethic

6. Cultural fit

7. Customer service mindset

8. Ability to build relationships

9. Collaborative skills

10. Ability to be persuasive

CAN'T WE ALL GET ALONG?

Move over, Baby Boomers! For the first time since 1947, the biggest age group in the U.S. population has shifted from Baby Boomers to Millennials, according to a recent report from NBC News. It's time to get ready for your NextGen employees, since the highest concentration is now among 22 year olds.

Millennials today make up almost 36% of our workforce, and there is much talk about hiring and retaining our newest generations. No matter what generation you're in, workplace morale is crucial today. How can you create an outstanding workplace morale in your company? Try the following tactics on for size. As a hiring manager, you'll recognize that some of these concepts aren't necessarily new, but they are definitely worth a second look.

Look for common ground

Every generation in our workplace wants and benefits from great leadership, the ability to grow, and stellar communication. Sure, we've all heard that the best way to retain almost *anyone* is to build and solidify a strong, unifying culture but this takes work, 24/7. Need more convincing? Take a second glance at our most admired companies.

Look for differences in motivation

It's true that different generations are motivated differently. Diane, the Baby Boomer manager, for example, prefers in-person communication—she likes to talk with her employees in person or on the phone. Potential Gen Y (millennial) employees, on the other hand, are at ease communicating primarily through e-mail and text. As an employer, you may need to focus on tailoring your approach with millennials, for example, as the way they learn is different from other generations.

How can you engage these new young professionals from the get go? Think about how you can offer the opportunity to learn through mentorship. Besides the obvious benefits of more experienced professionals guiding newer managers, mentorship can be a two-way street. Encouraging a rising star with a few years' experience to mentor a newbie right out of college is a great way to offer leadership development right within your ranks.

When we're looking toward our company's future, we all want exceptional millennials to choose our company as the place they most want to work. Here's the secret: think about what's important to *them.* If you're

> "If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings and put compensation as a carrier behind it you almost don't have to manage them."
>
> *–Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric*

thinking money, you're not entirely wrong, but more importantly, take time to consider what really matters to them. Flexible working hours or the ability to take time to give back in your community can go a long way.

NOW YOU'VE GOT THEM! OR DO YOU?

Whew, you have your interviews all lined up. It's Wednesday, and you've got a slew of interviews jammed into an already crammed day. Looking forward to it? Like many of us, you may (or may not) be excited about the prospect of interviewing. And, like most things, it takes a little practice to be a good interviewer.

Have you ever been in an interview (as an interviewee, perhaps) where the interviewer didn't seem prepared, or talked only about themselves? Jack, for example, was a manager with a very relaxed, easy-going, likable demeanor. This was great, except for the fact that he was not a good interviewer. Why not? Although he was indeed likable, he wasn't well organized and was almost famous for reading the interviewee's résumé on his way in the door to do the interview. As a result, he wasn't prepared with questions and typically asked only "tell me about yourself." Jack had the right idea—he tried to create rapport with the candidate. The problem was that the way he structured his interviews made it difficult for him to properly assess and compare candidates.

This was what is called an *unstructured interview*. A completely unstructured interview can create inconsistencies among candidates and make it difficult to compare their qualifications. A *structured interview*, on the other hand, will give you a better way to compare candidates, as each candidate is asked the same series of job-related questions based on the job analysis you have already prepared.

When you prepare for a structured interview, your questions will fall into three categories: behavioral, job knowledge and worker requirements. As your grandma may have once said, always be sure to know the answer to a question before you ask it. The same applies here: think about and develop potential answers (both desirable and undesirable) before you interview. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Question Type: Characteristics

Behavioral: This is where you'll ask candidates to describe how they behaved in certain work situations. If you are interviewing an administrative assistant or tenant coordinator, for example, you might ask: "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a tenant complaint." Or, "Tell me about a time when you received an emergency call from a tenant."

Job Knowledge: Here, you'll want to assess if the candidate has the necessary knowledge to perform the job. When you're interviewing for a maintenance tech or engineer, you might ask "What is the procedure for changing the filter on a ventilation duct?" If you're interviewing a property manager, you may want to ask "How do you prepare your annual budget?"

Worker Requirement: Because every business is unique, you'll want to gauge the candidate's willingness to perform under certain job conditions. If you're interviewing for an apartment resident or leasing manage, you may want to ask the following: "Weekends are an extremely busy time for our business. What are your feelings about working on weekends?"

So how can you be prepared? Of course, you can read what's on a candidate's résumé for yourself. Your job is to find out what's *behind* the résumé. To do that, prepare some open-ended questions so that you can a) find out more about the candidate and b) determine how the candidate will fit into your working environment.

We've all heard about some crazy questions asked by a few of the world's top companies. No doubt you've heard that it's best not to ask just "yes" or "no" questions and that's true: you want to be able to elicit additional information from potential hires. An exception is that you may need to confirm certain information that does require a Yes/No answer, such as "You were with XYZ Company in 2014, correct?"

Try these open-ended questions:

- What were your responsibilities in your last job?
- What career goals do you have for the future?
- How do you think ABC Company (our company) is unique?
- Can you elaborate on that?
- I'm not sure I understand. Can you please clarify that?

WHAT CAN I ASK? DOS & DON'TS

Have you ever been conducting an interview and been unsure of what you can or can't ask a prospective candidate? There are a lot of tips out there for interview*ees*, but it's helpful to have some tips for interview*ers*, too. It's easy to make a misstep and unintentionally ask an interviewee something you shouldn't. Check out our list of sample acceptable and unacceptable questions so that you'll be more comfortable before starting the interview process. Of course, you'll want additional guidance from your Human Resources department.

What is the reason some of these questions may be considered unacceptable? For example, an interviewer asking what year a candidate graduated from college may be trying to figure out their age without asking directly. Or, a hiring manager who asks how many children an interview has may be trying to make up their own mind about whether that person will be on time due to potential child care issues. Either way, such questions could be construed as discriminatory and are best left out of the interview.

For additional resources, visit Society for Human Resource Management at www.shrm.org.

Topic	Do Ask	Don't Ask
Attendance/reliability	What hours/days can you work?	How many children do you have?
Citizenship/national origin	Are you legally eligible for employment in the U.S.?	Where are your parents from? Or: what is your maiden name?
Credit record	None	Do you own your own home?
Language	What languages do you speak & write fluently (if job requires this)?	What is your native language?
Education	Do you have a high school diploma/ university or college degree (if relevant to job performance)?	What year did you graduate from high school (or college)?

HOW CAN I BE SURE A CANDIDATE WILL FIT INTO MY COMPANY'S CULTURE?

One of the most common attributes our list of most admired companies share is that they have a strong, unifying culture. It's what brands them, makes them infinitely recognizable to customers and desirable for employees. If you want to foster a culture of encouragement in your organization, it pays to take notice of your company's current culture. Your job as a hiring manager is to choose employees who will fit easily into, and grow with your company's culture. What should you look for? When you're considering which attributes will work best, consider these qualities:

- **Likability**—will customers and employees like working with this person? Will people trust them?
- **Learnability**—does the candidate exhibit a willingness to learn from others? Can they successfully pass their knowledge onto others on their team?
- **Leadership**—is this person an emerging leader you can bring into the fold? What is their leadership potential?

SHARE WHAT IT'S *REALLY* LIKE

Jennifer, a corporate attorney, ruefully recalled how she hired a newly minted lawyer who seemed eager and ready to roll. That is, until he slipped out the door before lunchtime on his first day—and never returned. What went wrong? Jennifer's firm was busy expanding, which was a good thing. The downside, however, was that they literally ran out of space. With no place to put Jennifer's new hire, he was given a desk in a storage closet (along with everything already in the closet). He evidently concluded rather quickly that that was not the working environment for him.

We all make hiring mistakes, to be sure. Even if you don't have a 100% perfect hiring record, one good way to come close is by offering a potential hire a Realistic Job Preview (RJP). If you've ever looked for a job and realized after an interview that you had no idea what the job was all about, try these tips:

What to Share

✓ Describe a typical day on the job for this position

✓ Discuss the organization's mission, vision and culture

✓ Relay aspects of the job that have been challenging and/or rewarding for other employees (i.e., stress, long hours, development of professional relationships, advancement)

✓ Talk about any unique aspects of the job

✓ Describe the steps in your selection process and the realities of compensation & benefits

Many companies also use group or panel interviews to help them better assess potential candidates. This actually works both ways—offering interviewees a chance to meet and talk with other current employees offers them a better idea of the potential opportunities and challenges they may face. This is also a good way to overcome any potential interviewer biases. One often challenging potential bias is that of "liking." This occurs when we choose to hire someone because they are just like us. Although that can be positive in some ways, it is also helpful to look for strengths in a potential employee that will complement your own skills or those of others on your team.

For example, Diane, our manager in need of an assistant, found a candidate she really likes. As Diane explained to her boss, Lisa, she seemed to hit it off with Jackie, right from the start of the interview. Diane happily relayed to her boss that Jackie seemed to have a similar personality, work ethic and sense of humor, as well as the same strengths. Lisa agreed that these were all good things. She wondered: were Diane and Jackie *too* similar?

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Get Everyone Onboard!

Diane has finally hired her new assistant, Jackie. But Diane has been so busy interviewing and just catching up that she really hasn't had a chance to devote much attention to her. "It's ok," thought Diane, "she'll figure it out." What do you think Jackie's chances of success are?

Everyone wants to know that the work they do has value and that it matters to you and to your company. The way you transition in, or onboard, your new team members can make all the difference when it comes to retention later on. Think, too about how you started out and remember that feedback and participation are essential for today's employees. If your company is in a growth mode and hiring has taken a leap forward, consider creating an actual transition team to get everyone on the right track.

Make Sure Your Company Remains Relevant

Do you want to make sure your company remains relevant? Michael Brown, division vice president for Camden Property Trust, described how his company takes action to make sure they remain relevant, gain valuable feedback from millennial employees and foster leadership development.

For example, Malcolm Stewart, Chief Operating Officer of Camden Property Trust, began holding informal meetings several times a year with a group of millennial associates. He named it the "Hip committee"—that is, until staffers convinced him kindly that "hip" was, well, a little out of fashion. Renamed the "In-committee," this group of up-and-comers meets twice a year and is relatively unstructured.

The goal is an open forum in which each committee member can bring their ideas, questions and comments to improve the company and its operations. Executive participation is limited (so that open expression is not); the president pops in occasionally, but Stewart is the only executive who regularly attends. This group of 16 includes 12 members who rotate in one-year terms so they can attend two consecutive meetings.

Does it work? You be the judge. Setting up your own in-committee may just give your company a competitive edge.

Plan for Succession

What will you do if that stellar new manager you recently aced from your biggest competitor just as suddenly departs? It's a fact: in today's constantly changing business climate, the need for leadership strength and a solid succession plan is no longer optional; it's critical. Companies prepared with a leadership continuity plan are the most likely to succeed. If you've been putting it off, your annual planning session is an excellent time to rethink your approach. Your goal here is to make your succession planning intentional—putting your best talent together is a good starting point.

Recruitment and Staffing—*Develops and uses selection systems, processes, and best practices to hire the right people for the right positions.*

KEY BEHAVIORS

1. Decides on the best approach for recruiting and attracting prospective candidates

2. Evaluates candidates based on the criteria that determine job performance

3. Structures the interview process to assess candidates well

4. Makes hiring decisions based on qualifications, fit, and competency as opposed to who is liked

5. Links business strategy and projected financial performance to hiring forecasts and selection systems

6. Establishes job requirements or competencies for individual jobs or job families based on legally defensible procedures

7. Establishes selection systems that consistently result in superior performers being hired

DEVELOPMENT TACTICS

1. Before each interview, I will review the criteria that determines job performance. I will go into the interview and evaluate the candidate based on those criteria. I will keep a log of how often I do this.

2. Before making a hiring decision, I will review the necessary qualifications, fit and competency of the proposed candidate. I will compare this to the ideal candidate and make a decision based on these criteria. I will keep a log of how often I do this.

3. Each Friday, I will decide on an action for the following week that will improve my hiring and staffing skills. I will record the action I took the past week.

4. I will ask my manager, my peers, and others to describe my strengths and weaknesses regarding hiring and staffing.

5. I will have lunch with and interview someone who is excellent at hiring and staffing, and ask them: how they became good at it; for examples of different ways they select candidates; what skills they use; and advice they have to help me improve my ability to make effective hiring decisions.

6. I will keep a log of actions and ideas to improve my hiring and staffing skills.

7. I will keep a log that demonstrates how I have linked business strategy and projected financial performance to hiring forecasts and our selection systems.

8. I will make an inventory of my strengths and weaknesses regarding hiring and staffing. I will decide upon at least one action to improve the quality of my hiring and staffing.

9. I will structure the interview process to assess candidates well, and keep a log of how effective the interview process was.

10. I will take action to ensure that effective job requirements and competencies are established for open positions.

11. I will take action to ensure that our organization has a selection system that consistently results in superior performers being hired.

12. will use at least three different assessment tools and approaches when interviewing candidates to assess their capability and competence.

13. Once a month, I will take some action to identify best practices for recruiting and attracting prospective candidates.

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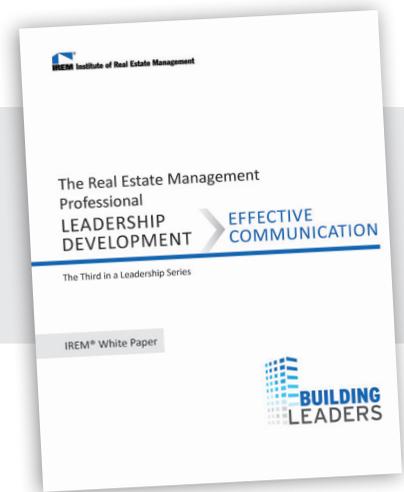
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