



# Hiring Right

BY  
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do all the hiring at my Club. No one knows how to pick 'em better than me and besides, I've been doing it for years. I can pick the good ones before they walk through the door. Interviews.... basically, they're a waste of time, especially for "unskilled" staff. Besides, who has time to talk to all those people? Last time I ran an ad for wait staff, I was flooded with applications. Only problem was, most of those who applied didn't have any club experience and most of the others didn't have a clue.

It's almost impossible to find good people anymore and when you do, they don't stay long anyway. I hate hiring staff for my Club".... Sound familiar? Each year, golf course operators face the daunting task of recruiting numerous new warm bodies to fill a variety of "unskilled and semi skilled seasonal positions". Why is it that all too often this process merely leads to frustration and time spent that you can ill afford, usually with substantial expense, just to achieve mediocre results?

*If successful hiring is nothing more than putting the right people in the right position with the right attitude, why do so many operations seem to go astray?*

Hiring is a science, not an art. The techniques involved can be learned and must be mastered with practice. Simulating the recruitment and selection process used in larger corporations does not require the expertise of a human resource manager. Just a little common sense! Knowing how is the key. Armed with a blueprint for "hiring right", the first time, you are well on your way to success. Unfortunately, many operators fail at this crucial point and there-

fore the foundations of their "Pyramid to Profit" are weakened from the start.

*The recipe for successful hiring requires a number of key ingredients. Ignore the cookbook and you'll soon be "in the stew", back at the starting line, once again following old routines and instinctive habits and likely yielding familiar results.*

Have you ever arrived at a bar or restaurant perhaps at another club just to be ignored at the door, your arrival seemingly unnoticed with no sign of acknowledgment from any of the staff at hand? You wait for a few moments wishing that the service staff had been trained in the basic art of making eye contact. Finally, you seat yourself at a vacant table and wait patiently for the service staff, who are engrossed in a conversation at a nearby side stand, to acknowledge your existence. You observe other customers around you trying to catch the attention of their server for more coffee or the bill. Oh no, not another new customer at the door waiting to be seated! You ask a passing server for a menu. They return with one and inform you that a server will be right with you. A sense of urgency overcomes

you as your tee time is but 15 minutes away. Finally your server arrives and you inform them that you have only a few minutes to dine before you dash to the first tee. A beverage and sandwich of the day is recommended. As you leave for the first tee your sandwich arrives. You muse to yourself... "If only someone cared!"

As golf course operators, all of us have experienced at least some of these embarrassing moments. When we question our staff, often their response is simply that they are busy doing other things! Too busy working to look after our guests? Imagine the green fee business we'd lose if our golf shop staff were to ignore the telephone or tee reservations in order to complete all the other "important" things they had to do. The service business is primarily an attitude. It's an ability to sense the customers' needs and a desire to meet or exceed their expectations. As owners and operators, we principally attract two types of employees when we recruit for our clubs; those who have a service-oriented attitude, who care about our guests and genuinely enjoy the industry they work in, and those who don't. The latter are those merely working for a paycheck and probably not earning it.

*"Hiring Right" is a process which begins by eliminating those who lack sincerity towards your clients and ends with the installation of an attitude of genuine concern for your guests throughout your club. Your success in this effort, or your failure, will have an enormous impact on your club's potential.*

"Hiring Right" starts with the end result in mind. You are seeking recruits to fit a mold you have already established for your Club. By developing a set of specifications for the ideal candidate, you instantly improve your chances for success. More importantly, you set your standards from the outset. Without guidelines in mind, you run a real risk of being distracted by the first plausible candidate to walk through the door. Every new vacancy in your operation represents a distinct opportunity for improvement in your ranks. Why waste it?

Once you know what sort of person you want, take time to examine the job they will be doing. This is an ideal time to make changes in your operation to improve efficiency and raise the standards. A job description is a key element in the hiring process. It matches the ideal

applicant identified above to the job and establishes your expectations for the position. A job description should provide a short summary of the position and should outline how this particular job helps fulfill your vision and values. It should detail a list of the essential functions that are to be performed and your objectives for each. The job descriptions must not be limiting. Also, it should not be confused with a task list of opening and closing duties, or policies and procedures of the club. Save these for orientation and induction.

Your existing staff can provide you with immeasurable help at this point in the process. If they are "on the team" you can bet the standards they set for the new recruit will be higher than before and what better way to get them to raise their own sights as well. Their involvement can be a vital part of the process of improvement. If you want them to play your game, let them help establish the ground rules and goal posts and help you pick the players. If you do, the chances that they will score points with your customers will automatically be enhanced.

Getting applicants is your next challenge. At this point be careful not to limit your sights by over-

## Don't ignore the recipe for successful hiring



looking the less traditional sources. Also, focusing your efforts may well yield better results than the traditional "shotgun approach" of indiscriminately reaching as many people as possible. Your employees will often have friends or relatives who might be interested in the available position. If an employee recommends an applicant to fill a vacancy, your employee has a vested interest in the applicant's success. If your employee is "on the team", you can be sure the applicant will arrive already primed. However, you may need to announce the vacancies available at your Club to encourage a response. If you don't invite applications from your staff, many will presume you do not want their help.

Your suppliers are also a good resource. Many salesmen are pleased to recommend quality applicants particularly at the supervisory level. Sales people get around to all the Clubs and they are often tuned in to changes happening long before they are formally announced. They too have a stake in providing you with solid and reliable advice.

Similarly, your colleagues in various professional associations can often provide referrals, especially if they have just gone through the process and have fresh resumes in hand. Colleges and universities provide recruitment services for their graduate stu-

dents. Depending on the position, this might prove to be a good source. And don't forget your customers. They are already familiar with your operation. If your customers can help you staff your club properly, everyone wins.

If you do feel compelled to rely on the more traditional methods of advertising, at least be sure to pick your publication and the placement of your ad with care. If you are looking for sports minded individuals to work in your bar try the sports pages. Local newspapers will attract people from your area. Student newspapers bring in students... you get the idea. Effective advertisements answer the following questions:

- **Who will I be working for....**  
The name of your club
- **What will I be doing....**  
The position title
- **When will I be needed....**  
The starting date and expected hours per week
- **Where will I be working....**  
Your address and perhaps how to get there.
- **Why are you hiring now....**  
Seasonal vacancies, grand opening, etc.
- **How do they apply....**  
With a resume, by fax, in person, or by mail
- **How much will you pay....**  
(optional) You'll have to tell eventually. Why not before you go to all the trouble of selecting them.

Also, a little time invested "crafting the ad" is time well spent. If you leave it up to the receptionist in the Want Ads department, your ad will be less likely to provide you with the applicants you want. Remember, your goal at this point is to limit the number of responses as much as possible so that you only receive applications which are worth reading.

*If you cast your net too far afield you will most certainly bring in more fish. However, you are more likely to catch the fish you're after if you are using the right net.*

Once you begin to receive applications be careful not to place undue value on them. An application provides merely a hint about the applicant's past, a snapshot which may

or may not be a good likeness. Resumes are necessary to help narrow the field, but beware of judging the applicant solely on their ability to create a resume. If you are determined to establish an improved level of service in your club which can be maintained, you will need to delve a little deeper. The interview process is an essential part of hiring right and the time invested at this stage is worth every well-planned moment you spend.

Start with a pre-employment questionnaire that focuses on character and attitude. This questionnaire, administered on the spot can be a good test. The applicant's response to questions like "who is the most important person in this Club" can be revealing at the very least. You'll be amazed how many applicants, whose resumes indicate they are "service-oriented professionals", will miss the customer in their response to this question. The pre-employment questionnaire can be a simple one or two-page document which the applicants complete before your initial interview. The questionnaire should be signed by them and will become an integral part of their application. Also, this may be the applicant's first experience with your Club's philosophy and an astute individual will learn a lot from the questions you ask. Remember, you are seeking individuals who will fit your mold. This may require some change. The important thing to keep in mind at this point is that it is the applicant who should be molded, not the Club.

If the initial stages of your pre-screening process are working properly, you will actually interview only those applicants you believe will be most suitable for the job. Interviews should be structured in advance, and should take anywhere from 15 - 30 minutes for entry level positions. On average, you should talk to not more than 3 - 5 applicants for each vacancy you fill. Any more than this and you're wasting your time and theirs. Much less than this and you won't do the job justice.

The actual interview is an extremely important part of this process. Anyone can "wing it" during the interview and make decisions based on "gut feel". The thing is,

## For Further Reading

### Blueprint for Successful Hiring

Developed by Mel Kleiman  
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given the importance of this task to the well being of your operation, only the brave and foolish will! The interview must be thoroughly planned in advance. Where will you conduct these interviews and what sort of an impression will you make in this setting? Will your interview be free from interruptions or will you be fielding calls and attending to "important work" during the interview? The questions you intend to ask need to be developed with care and should be designed to provide the applicants with an opportunity to demonstrate their attitude and character. Before the interview, you will want to answer each question in detail, yourself. Armed with the response you want, you are better able to effectively measure the response from the applicants.

*If the applicants fail to measure up, DON'T HIRE THEM! It is far less expensive at this point to cast your net again. Lowering your standards will not improve the quality of your catch.*

Interviews should be scheduled in advance with the applicants and you need to leave yourself sufficient time to make a considered selection. Hiring the first person who walks through the door is a sure route to failure. Desperate hiring yields desperate staff and results most frequently in having to do it again. Take a little time during the interview to get to know your applicant and you are much more likely to find someone who is the best fit for your organization. Also, be careful during this session to ensure that it is the applicant who is talking. You have a very short period of time to determine if this person is someone you want on your team and someone who will fit in with the others. Don't waste it. Give the applicant a chance to sell you on their merits and remember you are listening for all you are worth! Keep the end result in mind. If necessary, don't be afraid to schedule a second interview to make the final choice between comparable applicants.

Reference checking should be conducted once you are ready to make your decision. And references of only those applicants you are seriously considering should be checked. References are a final check and a valuable

opportunity to verify information provided by the applicant. When talking to a former employer, you can often learn as much from what is not said. If you receive a disappointing review from a previous employer, BEWARE. Some people do change. Most however, simply pack up their bad habits and move them down the street.

Once your selection has been made, you will need to make an offer of employment to the successful candidate and inform those who did not make the grade. Remember, not all applicants can succeed but everyone has made an effort on your behalf. Common courtesy dictates that they all get a prompt response from you. It's not easy being rejected, but it is a lot harder to wait for weeks wondering what happened. Your club is monitored for its ethical conduct, more often by the applicants who are unsuccessful, why not leave them with a good impression. When you talk to the successful candidate, in all cases make sure that the applicant understands that they are on probation for the initial period. During this time you will assess their skills, abilities, an attitude and determine whether or not you have made an appropriate choice. If the fit isn't there, the applicant must know you will terminate them. The offer of employment should lay out the "understanding" you have with the newest member of your team. This is their chance to back out, or if you have done your job properly to this point, it is their opportunity to commit to you and your corporate visions and values. Once you have their commitment, you are halfway there. Now comes the hard part.

After an employee has been hired, proper orientation must be immediate. As the saying goes, you will not get a second chance to make a good first impression on your newest team member and the impression made at this point will be deeply entrenched. The first few weeks in a new employee's tenure are your best chance to bring them into the fold. Never will they be more enthusiastic and willing to learn. Don't squander the opportunity and you will be rewarded for your efforts. This orientation period is an excellent opportunity for you to once again

involve your other staff. Let them assist with the training and help conduct peer reviews on the new staff members and you are guaranteed that both the newcomer and your existing staff will work to help you succeed. Why wouldn't they since they all have a stake in the result.

Occasionally you will not be successful. Despite your best efforts, some of the employees you had high hopes for during the interview process will not succeed during the probationary period. In this case, "Firing Right" becomes essential and most importantly, the decision needs to be made early to minimize the damage done. We all risk suffering from the "Pygmalion Syndrome" where we desperately hope the employee will somehow change or that we will be able to bring them around. BEWARE! While you delay the inevitable, the energy of your organization is drained away. Wait too long and the cost of your indecision will increase significantly.

*After orientation comes induction and the process of training your staff to become vital thinking members of your team. These people are your club's most valuable resource and they want you to take full advantage of their potential. Look to them for the answers to your success and they will provide you with solutions, and who knows, you and your staff may just succeed in achieving the elusive formula of compatible human alchemy. ♣*

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