

BUILD A WINNING TEAM

Hire great people



The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the best people in the world.”

With these words, Apple founder Steve Jobs underscored the importance of putting together a team of people who'll drive your business to heights you'd never have believed possible. If you don't have great people working for you, you don't have a winning team, and if you don't have a winning team you won't be successful.

We all want to succeed, no matter what business we're in, or whether we own the company or hold an executive position. If the companies we work for or own don't succeed, neither will we.

The question: How can we hire, train, and retain employees who'll be great team players? An excellent first step is to ask your top performers for their recommendations when hiring new staff — they can be your best recruiters. You might even offer a monetary reward if you hire the people they recommend.

James Poisant, founder and the first director of the Walt Disney Company's Business Seminar Division, applied a unique approach when hiring new employees. He would gather the company's best employees from the department for which he was hiring and let them select the final candidates after 45-minute interviews. The employees knew exactly the type of people they wanted on their teams, and Poisant trusted them to identify the best prospects.

A critical step when hiring new people is to know what you're looking for — and that means developing a very specific job description that will help you identify the characteristics your new

hires will need to have to perform well.

Of course, there are definite skills the new employees should possess, but skills aren't everything. Attitude is king. It's almost impossible to change attitudes, but it's easy to train people in the skills they'll need.

Vernon Hill, founder of Commerce Bank in the United States and Metro Bank in London, said it best: “Hire for attitude; train for skills.” Hill considers attitude so important that if an applicant doesn't smile during the initial interview, there won't be a second.

We all know how easy it is to turn on the charm in an interview, but the true character of people can be determined before they even enter your office.

Before each interview, ask your receptionist to tell you how applicants treated him/her. Were they cordial? Did they smile when they introduced themselves? Were they pleasant, or rude? You want to uncover their true colors.

Once you've hired great people, it's crucial to keep them. Employee retention is vital, not only because it builds strong teams, but because it significantly lowers turnover and the time and cost of hiring new people. The average cost to train a new employee is \$1,252, according to the Association for Talent Development.

Once you've hired great people, how do you keep them from leaving? You must nurture and coach them. Ask them what they need from you. Give them timely, specific, sincere feedback regularly. Recognize their achievements — recognition is crucial to build motivation, and motivation is critical for retention. Make them feel valued.

If you take these steps, you'll create a productive, loyal team who wouldn't dream of leaving.

For more information on John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute, visit www.customer-service.com.

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John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service, and is the author of several books including Moving Up: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Success. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no cost at www.customer-service.com.

