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Build a Winning Team: Hire Great People

BY JOHN TSCHOHL

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

That quote by Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, underscores the importance of putting together a team of people who will drive your business to heights you would never believe 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 be successful, no matter what business we're in or whether we own our own companies or hold executive positions. If the companies we work for or operate don't succeed, neither will we.

The question is this: How can we hire, train and retain employees who will be great team players? A great first step is to ask your top performers for recommendations when hiring; they can be your best recruiters. You might even give them a monetary reward if you hire the people they recommended.

James Poisant, founder and the first director of the Walt Disney

Company's Business Seminar Division, used a unique technique when hiring new employees. He would gather together the company's best employees from the department for which he was hiring and let them select final candidates during 45-minute interviews. Those employees knew exactly the type of people they wanted on their team, and Poisant trusted them to identify the best applicants.

A critical step when hiring new people is to know what you are looking for — and that means developing a very specific job description. This will serve as your road map and help you to identify characteristics you need new hires to have in order to perform well.

Of course, there are certain skills 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 need to perform well.

“Hire for attitude; train for skills,” says Vernon Hill, founder of Commerce Bank in the United States and Metro Bank in London. In fact, he considers attitude so important that if an applicant doesn't smile during the first interview, there will not be a second interview.

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

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

Once you've hired great people, it's critical that you keep them. Employee retention is important, not only because it builds strong teams but because it significantly lowers turnover and the time and costs of hiring new people. The average cost



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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? You must nurture and coach them. Ask them what they need from you. Give them timely, specific, and sincere feedback on a regular basis. Recognize their achievements. Recognition is crucial to motivation, and motivation is crucial for retention. Make them feel valued.

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



John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute — the global leader in customer service — with operations in more than 40 countries. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service and has developed 17 customer service training programs, including his book and training program *Coaching for Success*. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge at www.customer-service.com. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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