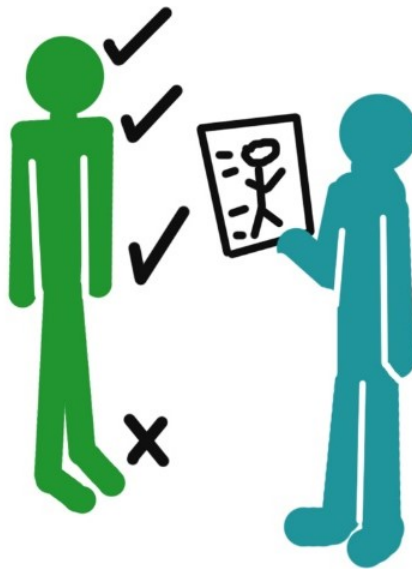


SPARTADIA

A BATTLE PLAN FOR TODAY'S BUSINESS

E-Book

HIRE THE RIGHT PEOPLE



By Ray Martin

E-Book: Hire the Right People excerpted from:
Spartadia: A Battle Plan for Today's Business
by Ray E. Martin

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Hire the Right People

A business that reflects its core values and passions not only has a much greater chance of succeeding, but it will also make everyone involved happier. It is easier and more enjoyable to run a company that is well matched in terms of inner passion, outward performance, clarity of tasks and employee fit. When these elements are present and aligned, employees at all levels tend to feel more invested and committed to the longevity and health of the business. When a company fully exists according to demonstrated core values and passions, it tends to attract like-minded people, as employees, suppliers and customers.

To find the right employees, the next step, after defining the jobs, is to be completely and brutally honest about what the company's needs actually are in terms of staff. For example, senior individuals come with a great deal of experience, but they also expect a correspondingly high level of compensation. They arrive with pre-existing notions and attitudes that might—or might not—conform to the current vision. Less experienced employees, by contrast, are less expensive, and are generally more available and willing to be molded and shaped.

It is essential to be fully aware of what needs to be done onsite, what level of expertise each position requires, and how many people are required to achieve the objectives. This organization and categorization must be done at the outset, and the hiring manager must enter into the job description and the interview/hiring process, with an eye not only to the immediate, but also to any predictable future needs that the position may have to answer. When a mission is unexpectedly changed mid-course, the result can be a team of unhappy, confused and frustrated people. The need to stop and deal with those kinds of issues is time-consuming, a distraction that no business owner or manager can afford. So getting it right the first time with new hires is critical.

Consequently, when seeking people to join the business, the needs of the company, department and/or position must be identified in very plain terms. When advertising a position, the required skillset

must be clearly conveyed and the company environment clearly described.

During the interview, it is crucial that the people conducting the interview do not ask random questions, but instead ask very deliberate ones that make it easy for a candidate to answer clearly and unambiguously. It is important to probe, to get a sense of a candidate's on-the-job performance and behaviour. The objective remains to hire people for who they are inside, and not for what they have previously done on a job performance level. As opposed to specific leading questions, it is better for an interviewer to keep his/her ears open for cues and signals. For example, the prompt, "give me an example of when you were trained really well/poorly", or "tell me about person that you admire" are open-ended prompts that allow an interviewee to talk more candidly, while the interviewer connects the words to a larger picture of the individual's potential.

During the interview/hiring process a manager must reiterate his/her need for a perfect blend between company culture and the people who are going to work within it. The company's core values and principles must be communicated in black and white as much as possible.

A company owner has to take an active part in designing the ideal mission for each employee. Often, hiring mistakes occur when a job opening arises, and the hiring manager makes a hasty decision, choosing the apparent "best" out of a number of candidates and hoping that the new hire will conform to the job as described. This is something I disagree with.

The purpose of a new hire is to fulfil a specific mission. The jobs that the employee is assigned comprise a set of tasks that would allow him/her to achieve the mission. When an employer hires someone, they hire for a specific purpose, but the tasks or jobs that a person will do to achieve that purpose might vary. The matching process should start with the person, not the job. It should identify three key elements in each interviewee:

1. Strengths;
2. The triggers that activate those strengths; and

3. The individual's learning style.

When I interview candidates, and they ask me what the job will be specifically, I often find it hard to answer. My answer is generally more of a question, as in "What can you do best? Because that's probably what you will end up doing if you are hired. If what you do best is not what we're looking for or won't benefit our company, you will probably not be hired."

This means the interview itself should not focus too heavily on past activities. It should be more of a behavioural job match audition, during which the onus stays on the hiring manager/interviewer to uncover the hidden clues to a person's true self. An interviewer must listen for the adjectives as much as for the nouns; for example, when a candidate describes how s/he likes to play basketball, that's only part of the story. It demonstrates athleticism and the capacity to be a team player. That's nice, but this fact is likely already noted in the résumé. The bigger question becomes; why does this person play basketball? What is in this person that makes playing a team sport so attractive? From such details comes a bigger, clearer picture.

Clear job definitions must exist, but to shoehorn a candidate into a position for which they are clearly not suited does no one any favours. Therefore, in addition to having clear roles defined it is essential that candidates applying for work match the values of the company before actually matching up to a job.

No matter how good a candidate looks on paper, if he or she doesn't share these values, or at least have the capacity to come to share these values, it won't work. The candidate will become resentful and unhappy, and morale will suffer, probably for everyone. Just like a well-co-ordinated military phalanx, a business means people working in teams, so the right fit is absolutely essential.

Download additional e-books at: spartadia-recruit.com.

SIDEBAR: Interview, Audition and Filter

At Qualifirst, when we identify a promising candidate, we make the initial interview a symbolic process and keep it short. Its purpose is to filter out the worst candidates, not to find the perfect fit. We recognize that someone who interviews poorly can turn out to be the best employee on the team. Thus we cannot put total stock in the interview process alone.

Almost every new full-time employee starts out in the warehouse. We want people to learn our business from the ground up, and I believe in promoting capable people from within. When we have openings, we do a quick interview to get a sense of the person, and then we test them in the warehouse.

Many of our best employees—including myself—started out there. It's a deliberate strategy. It's the best way for a new hire to become familiar with the products we carry, the customers we serve, and their habits and preferences.

Though warehouse operations is an essential department in our company, retention has been historically low, which is a problem. The work itself is difficult. It's more physically demanding than many job candidates count on, and is mentally taxing. Remembering where each SKU is stored, for example, and being able to get to each one quickly when next-day orders queue up is more difficult than many newcomers bank on.

We changed our interviewing process from a Q & A session to a brief audition. We ask the job candidates a few questions, but then we pose a practical test. We give each person a tour of the warehouse, pointing out products, then we ask them to pick an actual order, or pull each item listed for fulfillment, and we time them. This gives us an idea of how intelligent the candidate is and how he or she behaves under pressure. We get to see if

the prospect moves quickly—or dawdles—and if they will enjoy the environment. Ten or so minutes is the benchmark for a candidate who is likely to be successful in the warehouse, and we pay close attention to what they say about the work after the test. If they complain about the work being too menial or, just the opposite, too difficult or demanding, we pass and move on to the next candidate in line.

In a very short time, we learn how well the potential employee will interact with the job if hired, and if they're motivated to succeed.

There can be a huge disconnect between what you think people can do based on an interview, and how they actually perform on the job. A small test will give you a glimpse of the person in action—a much better indicator than how well he or she answers cleverly posed interview questions.

