



Why I Recruit

The Way I Do:

Recruiting for Innovation



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Why I Recruit the Way I Do: Recruiting for Innovation

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A: Why Do I Recruit Differently?

At The-Right-Talent.ca, we work with clients to find talented people for start-ups, rapidly growing, and highly innovative organizations. Our approach is unique, and very different from most of the recruiting that goes on today.

Hiring managers in well-established organizations are reasonably served by traditional recruiting processes.

But if you need to find talent for that rapidly evolving job, where the talent to create and to respond to rapidly changing circumstances, is key, recruiting for well-established positions will not work for you.

In what follows, I describe traditional recruiting and explore why it works for well-established organizations. I also dive into why the Recruiting for Innovation approach is the right one if you are hiring talent for a start-up, a rapidly growing, or a highly innovative organization.

The-Right-Talent.ca approach to recruiting works for those critical hires where a hiring mistake really hurts. I developed it out of hard experience. I made far too many hiring mistakes early in my career as a manager and an executive. In those days, I simply did not know any better. Now I do.

Recruiting for Innovation is a process that incorporates:

1. learnings from too many hiring mistakes,
2. a systematic effort to figure out to avoid these mistakes over a decade of recruiting,
3. and relevant finds from social and cognitive psychology research.

If you have a well-established role in a well-established organization, the way most recruiting is done will work. If you are a start-up, rapidly growing / rapidly changing, or highly innovative organization, you need to change the way you recruit. Read on to find out why and how.

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B: Hiring for Innovation is Not the Same Thing as Hiring for a Well-Established Position.

The Search for a Recruiting “Silver Bullet”

Recruiters are constantly looking a “silver bullet” – something that will allow them to magically match up candidates and open positions. Despite the:

- huge investment by Internet job board companies such as Monster Board and Workopolis, in resume scanning and requirements matching software,
- endless promises by Internet based psychometric tool vendors that their instruments will simplify the candidate to job matching process,
- endless rhetoric by recruiting firm and executive search business development folks about the extent of their candidate databases,

there is no “fool proof” way to recruit.

Most hiring continues to be for “good enough” on-the-job performance in well-established roles by a newly hired individual. This type of recruiting takes:

1. a proven recruiting process, that establishes clear roles and decision-making boundaries between recruiters and hiring managers,
2. the personal discipline to stick to this process on the part of recruiters, and particularly, hiring managers,
3. personal talent on the part of the recruiters,
4. experience with selecting and onboarding people on the part of hiring managers.

Many people in the recruiting industry look to various forms of software to somehow make the recruiting process fool proof. Improvements in recruiting software have made huge contributions to more mechanical parts of the recruiting process in the past 2 decades. But software cannot make the hiring process fool proof. Hiring will always involve judgments made by people.

. Instead, hiring for well-established positions depends on a simple but proven principle.

**Good enough performance in a past role
which is very similar to the current open role
is a good predictor of good enough performance
in this open position.**

This principle has proven itself to be true for decades!



What is Recruiting for Well-Established Roles?

Well-established companies generally have their work flows mediated or shaped by business software. Business rules in this software establish clear limits to individual decision-making authority. The working interactions between individuals in the work also are structured by such software. Work hand-offs between individuals are defined by the way in which information is moved from individual to individual by the software.

New hire performance in such well-established roles is largely a function of previous experience in similar positions. Recruiters in well-established organizations are specialists in matching a candidate's experience to the requirements of open positions in them.

Today's resume scanning does a good job of selecting possible candidates with appropriate backgrounds out of the many resumes received in response to a posting. Recruiters review these selected resumes to pick a number of candidates to interview.

During the interview, recruiters check to ensure that the person's resume is an accurate reflection of the candidate's actual previous experience. They do this largely by asking questions about the jobs listed on those resumes.

They may also ask more general questions such as "Tell me about a job in which you experienced some difficulty or produced exceptional results" to try to get some further insight into the fit between person and the organization. Such questions generate verbal behavior on the part of the candidate.

The recruiter then makes a judgment about how a candidate's verbal responses relate to the open position's needs and to the organization's culture. This judgment is largely made subjectively. Well-established organizations seldom take steps to cross-correlate how individual recruiters make these decisions. As a result, they are made without a high degree of inter-recruiter consistency. But this really does not matter, if the recruiter does a good job of verifying that the candidate has previous experience with is high correlated with the requirement of the open position.

Based on their impressions of the candidates interviewed, recruiters select a few likely individuals to pass onto the hiring manager.

These candidates also fit some "implicit" internal, not always explicitly "clarified", set of presuppositions the recruiter holds about how candidate's demeanor – i.e. dress and ways of behaving during the interview – relates to that person's potential performance on the job. Smart candidates take advantage of this. They learn how to adapt to the interview to the subtle verbal and non-verbal cues that the recruiter sends out about these pre-suppositions. They "build rapport" with the recruiter during the interview.

Research has shown again and again that the greater **a candidate's ability to generate a high level of "rapport" or connection with the recruiter** during the

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interview, the greater the likelihood that the recruiter rate this person as relevant for consideration by a hiring manager¹.

The hiring manager picks a final candidate out of the recruiter's recommended individuals based on what are again very subjective considerations (e.g. "I like this person." "I think this person will do a great job." And so on.).

This process, with all of its subjective elements, has been used for more than a few decades. **It works because of the principle set out previously.** Although there are occasional hiring mistakes, by and large, the majority of the hired individuals will survive probation and continue to perform at a good enough level in the job.

This way of recruiting for well-established roles process works well for a surprising percentage of the recruiting which goes on - probably more than 80% of all recruiting.

Hiring For Innovation

Hiring for less well-established roles requires a very different recruiting approach. But this need is seldom recognized by either recruiters or hiring managers in well-established organizations.

When I was a manager, I personally hired or oversaw the hiring by my direct reports, of hundreds, if not thousands, of people. Almost all my recruiting has been done for roles:

- in highly innovative sub-parts of well-established organizations,
- in new groups, without well-established work flows,
- in parts of the organizations which were failing and needed to redefine the way in which work in them was being done,
- in new organizations, either start-ups or spin-offs,
- in newly merging organizations which were redefining the ways in which work was to be done.

I learned the hard way that the recruiting for well-established role process described above simply does not work for this kind of hiring. So, I developed different ways of doing recruiting, focusing first on candidate performance fit, and then on candidate culture fit.

When I talked about these new recruiting processes with recruiters and hiring managers, I got a contradictory response from them.

At networking events, client meetings. and public presentations, I repeatedly said:

¹ See <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.2044-8325.2011.02036.x/full> for just one of the many academic articles which demonstrate this finding.



“The only thing that a candidate’s behavior in a hiring interview allows me to effectively predict is how well that person will do in another hiring interview. It tells me little about how well that person will do on-the-job. Don’t you think that we need to move beyond resume reviews and one-on-one interviews to do better recruiting?”

Most folks sagely nodded, or agreed with this verbally. Then most of them went on to tell that they know that when a candidate is “right” for their job just 30 seconds into an interview. These two responses just do not add up. Given that the hiring for well-established roles recruiting process delivers potential candidate who are highly likely to deliver good enough performance on-the-job, they are seldom faced with evidence which undermines this belief in their interviewing ability.

What are the reasons so many recruiters and hiring managers think that they can make “successful” hiring decisions just 30 seconds after meeting someone for the first time in a recruiting interview?

Instinctive Human People Skills and Recruiting

[Sandy Pentland](#), Director of the Human Dynamics Laboratory at MIT, in his book [Honest Signals](#), provides clear insights on why people make these kind of snap or instant decisions about people in recruiting and other business situations. Without

- a clearly laid out process,
- and a publicly agreed upon set of decision-making criteria,
- and the motivation to stay disciplined and follow it,

humans revert to using the instinctive skills² with which evolution has equipped us when they first interact with strangers.

For tens of thousands of years, we lived as hunter-gathers in small tribal groups. Under those conditions, when you met a stranger in the field or in the bush, you had only seconds to make a “fight or flight” decision. Doing so correctly was a survival skill. These evolved instinctive abilities³ are hard wired into our pre-conscious brains.

² An instinctive skill often happens or is processed in the parts of the human brain that developed – evolved – before the part of our brain that deals with language and language mediated social interactions. Unless we take steps to over-ride these instinctive skills using the more conscious – later evolved parts of our brain, these instinctive skills will shape much of our behavior.

³ See [“The Anatomy of Fear and How It Relates to Survival Skills Training”](#) by Darren Laur for just one example of the extensive literature on the Internet on this whole topic. Read [Gavin de Becker’s “The Give of Fear”](#) to understand how this instinctive skill is as relevant in the modern world as it was in the days of the hunter-gatherer.

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Today, when we meet a person for the first time, we read a lot of non-verbal cues from that person very rapidly. Based on this, we make a rapid first impression judgment about the individual. It is not about survival anymore. But it still gets expressed in terms of “liking” or “knowing that the person is all right”. We still use these instinctive abilities to make all kinds of day-to-day decisions about the new people we meet.

Such decisions don't negatively impact hiring for well-established positions. They simply pick one person out of a group which is already highly likely to perform well enough when the selected person gets on-the-job. Previous experience in a similar or closely related position is main determinant of good enough performance in such a new position.

But these instinctive abilities are not an effective basis for picking a final candidate for an organizational position in a highly innovative, rapidly-growing, or start up firm.

Recruiting Metrics and Recruiting Success

Hiring is something that all organizations must do. Most organizations evaluate their hiring practices by metrics such as average cost per hire and average time per hire. Such organizations are generally hiring for well-established roles. Because recruiting for well-established process delivers good enough candidates because of its very nature, they can focus on such efficiency of hire metrics.

Organizations that hire for roles which are not well-established need to evaluate their recruiting activity against quality-of-hire metrics. They must focus on the quality of the hire, not the average cost or time per hire. For them, today's hiring quality is one of the key contributors to their long-term capability to survive, to compete and to excel.

Start-ups, rapidly growing organizations, and highly innovative groups, whether in new or well-established organizations, all need to recruiting processes which specifically address hiring people for roles which are not well-established. They need recruiting metrics which focus on the effective of recruiting, not its efficiency. Doing the wrong thing more efficiently is simply a way to get into trouble faster.



C: Learning the Hard Way: Making Hiring Mistakes

Taking Responsibility for Hiring Mistakes

During the 30 years or so that I have been involved in recruiting, I have had to deal with the consequences more than a few hiring mistakes. They always hurt the person hired, the person who made the hire, and the people around them. Often the hurt was drastic, impacting careers in extremely negative ways.

I made, and oversaw, more than a few bad hires⁴, especially in my early years.

Because the jobs for which we were hiring were not well-established, we did not get sets of final candidates who were highly likely to do well enough on-the-job from the recruiters in HR. We believed this was because HR's recruiters did not understand our jobs. So, we hired our own recruiters, people who had experience in our technical disciplines. We still made far too many hiring mistakes.

As I reflected on these hiring failures, I started to question how we were recruiting. The hiring mistakes I had personally made destroyed my belief that somehow, instinctively, I was an excellent predictor of a candidate's future performance on-the-job.

I started to examine each step of our hiring process, systematically looking to understand what worked and what didn't. As I did so, I began to realize that I, and my hiring managers, were really making yes or no hiring decisions in the first 30 seconds of our hiring interviews. We were using our instinctive "survival" skills inappropriately. Because we did not have a "better" process, we really did not have much choice.

I experimented with "show us what you can do" recruiting processes⁵ that would allow us to avoid bad hires⁶. We took advantage of the fact that some of our work could often be done by contractors to select long term employees out of those contractors who were successful in our world.

We also systematically measured our hires against 5 key longer-term quality-of-hire metrics.

⁴ See "the "Avoiding Bad Hires" section in the book [Performance Appraisal is Dead – Long Life Performance Contracting](#) (available from Amazon),

⁵ Because we were IT professionals, used to codifying work flow and business processes, we took a very systematic approach to turning our learning into useful tools and disciplined techniques.

⁶ Because motivation is such a large contribution to on-the-job performance, we also questioned the way that we managed our people's performance. We became performance contractors, rather than performance appraisers. Our insights are encapsulated in the slogan "Contract for Performance: shape the future, don't appraise the past". Our approach defining to defining position requirement using performance profiles and managing probation in the 1st 12 weeks directly derives from this. See Roelf Woldring's book "[Performance Appraisal is Dead – Long Life Performance Contracting](#)" (available from Amazon) for more information on performance contracting.

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1. Candidate performance on-the-job in the first 3 months (e.g. during probation).
2. Candidate performance on-the-job in year 1 and year 2 after being hired.
3. Number of newly hired candidates released for performance reasons in years 1 and 2.
4. A candidate's ability to take on increasing levels of accountability (e.g. take on and succeed after being promoted) from year 3 on.
5. A candidate's length of stay with the organization.

We learned that recruiting is not the most important factor impacting the last 3 metrics. We say that high quality new hire on-boarding had a big impact on new hire performance in the first 3 months and in the first year. We determined that manager-subordinate interactions were crucial in determining performance on-the-job after the first year.

As the executive responsible, I realized that, without high quality hires in the first place, things like:

- the quality of a manager's supervisory behavior,
- the manager's coaching of subordinates,
- and the professional development investment an organization makes in an individual

don't get a chance to make the impact on performance that they can have.

Everything started with the quality of hire. High quality individuals benefit far more from great manager behavior and professional development investment than poor quality ones. Hiring quality has a multiplier effect on everything that comes after it.

Four Concrete Things I Learned About Recruiting and Hiring

1. **Current performance is the only effective predictor of future on-the-job performance.**

Watching a person perform today not only gives you insight into what they can do, but also into HOW MOTIVATED they are to do it. Motivation is a critical contributor to future performance on-the-job.

2. **The single best source of high quality candidates is referrals by people who are already working for you.**

The referrers needed to be positive about their experience with your organization.



The best referrals came from your best performers.

Referrals by people who already know the organization have in built in organization culture filters. The referrers are living in the culture already. They know it. As a result, they can filter through the people they know, and select ones who could potential fit.

3. No matter how qualified a candidate, and no matter how well their current performance predicts great future on-the-job performance, it will NOT HAPPEN unless the person is motivated to deliver this performance.

Carefully crafted exit interviews provided more insight into motivation than anything else.

Motivation comes 3 sources:

1. Cultural fit between the person and the organization,
2. the person's own value set⁷,
3. the ability of the person's manager to inspire and motivate the person.

New hire motivation can be dramatically increased by a well-structured on-boarding / new hire mentoring program. Inspiring and maintaining high levels of new hire subordinate motivation is a key managerial skill.

4. Getting hiring managers to formulate / articulate a clear picture of what constitutes effective performance on-the-job in the first 3 months, and in the first year, is critical to recruiting high quality, performance fit candidates.

Focusing on future required performance tasks rather than skills in planning recruiting dialogues with hiring managers dramatically reduced our hiring mistakes.

By asking

“what is the new hire in this role was going to do in the first 3 months, and then in the 9 months following”,

we developed a clear picture of what was needed in final candidates. They needed to be people who could do these things.

This was far more insightful than asking about what skills candidates required.

By following up with questions about

⁷ Testing for candidate motivation is a key component of recruiting. We developed ways of doing that throughout the recruiting processes we use at The-Right-Talent.ca.

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“how are you, as this new hire’s manager, going to determine success or failure on each task arena”,

we got deep insight into the ability levels required in the role.

Managers also became much better at inspiring / motivating people once the managers themselves were clear on how they were going to measure performance, a fabulous side benefit.

Research⁸ has discovered that managers are not always clear about how the people who work for them who deliver top level results. That is not surprising, since managers are busy people, who are not trained “see below the surface” of an individual’s behavior into the internal cognitive abilities they are use, and into their levels of internal motivation.

In the same way, high-level performers themselves often are not clear on “how” they deliver their high levels of performance. They focus their energy on delivering the results, not on understanding what precise skills they use to achieve these results. When asked about them, they often provide general descriptions which reflect what they learn in college courses, general conversation about how “people do things here”, and reading they have done.

Recruiting for Innovation needs to address these findings. It needs ways of directly evaluating the performance fit of potential candidates to the requirement of the open position.

The Attempt to Do Something Different: Adler’s Performance Based Recruiting

[Lou Adler](#), the originator of Performance Based Hiring, in his books “[Hiring with Your Head](#)”, and the recent “[The Essential Guide for Hiring and Getting Hired](#)”, lays out one recruiting procedure for hiring for performance potential.

I agree with much of what Lou Adler says. His books present many of the same conclusions about how to predict future performance on-the-job that I came to in my own efforts to improve recruiting for positions requiring innovative people in earlier decades. But he does not go far enough.

The recruiting process I use today to hire for innovation explicitly acknowledges that each individual involved in evaluating candidates will use the instinctive abilities that

⁸ This important finding is reported as part of the Hay McBer group’s substantial report of their many years of workplace competency research and consulting in “[Competence at Work](#)” Models for Superior Performance” by Lyle M Spencer and Signe M. Spencer is usually totally overlooked by readers of this key stone book in the workplace competency literature.



[Sandy Pentland](#) describes in "[Honest Signals](#)". This two-step recruiting process evaluates performance fit first, and culture fit second. Candidates are evaluated on their ability to "do" the things described in a performance profile first. A selected number of these candidates, the ones who can do these things, are then engaged in ways that provide insight into their fit into the culture of the work team and organization.



It also moves beyond job descriptions, which are a key element used in recruiting for well-established positions. Job descriptions give the recruiters for these roles the insight they need into the work being done in the job. They also provide them with information about the beliefs about the skills required to do this job successfully.

Unlike job descriptions, performance profiles clarify what precisely what needs to be done in the coming performance period in a role.

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D: Performance Profiles and Hiring For Innovation

Why Job Descriptions Don't Work When Recruiting for Innovation

A Job Description describes the main generic tasks or activities that make up a job. It may or may not include information on the skills, experience or competency required to do these tasks or activities.

Job descriptions are often misleading about what it takes to perform at high levels in a job. As well as setting out what needs to be done in role in very general terms, job descriptions generally include a list of skills needed to perform the job.

Recruiters who ask managers which skills are needed to do a job are bound to get less than accurate answers, simply because the managers don't know⁹. Once a set of such skills, as identified by a position's managers or by a HR professional, are listed in a job description, the list becomes a shared belief system about what is required to perform in that job.

Like all beliefs, they may be correct or incorrect, but organizations do not spend energy on verifying whether these beliefs are in fact correct. They simply accept them. Given that research has shown that managers and individuals are seldom accurate in their knowledge about what skills it takes to deliver high levels of performance in a role, such lists of skills are generally misleading during recruiting.

The personal and cognitive skills in a job description listed are often extremely generic or high level (e.g. leadership). They seldom indicate the specific level of skills required. Instead, they often just state a number of years of experience required for a skill. This is largely meaningless in determining the quality or the caliber of an individual's ability in this skill area.

However, once embedded in a job description, people in an organization simply work with the list of required skills. They seldom change it until another manager or HR professional replaces it with another belief about what is required to do the job.

Because these skill lists are used as "keyword filters" by recruiters as they structure resume scanning algorithms, a belief about what it takes to do the job became a key candidate filtering system. Often potential candidates who don't appear to have "these

⁹ Once again, read the people who first reported this important finding as part of Hay McBer's substantial report of their many years of workplace competency research and consulting in ["Competence at Work" Models for Superior Performance](#) by Lyle M Spencer and Signe M. Spencer. This crucial finding is usually totally overlooked by readers of this key stone book in the work place competency literature.

My own experience indicates that managers often know the technical competencies needed for performance in the job, e.g. writing JavaScript code. But they seldom have insight into personal and cognitive abilities which lead to high performance in a job. e.g. understanding how to structure JavaScript code so that it adapts dynamically to different users of the software.



skills” are eliminated early in the recruitment process. Many times, some of these “eliminated candidates” can in fact perform well in the job.

Job descriptions cannot accurately describe what it takes to deliver innovative performance in a rapidly changing job. Job descriptions assume a job is well defined.

What is the Difference Between a Job Description and a Performance Profile?

A performance map lays out the accountabilities and associated deliverables for which a job or role is responsible **in the coming performance period**. As well, it describes the metrics that will be used to measure whether each accountability or task areas will be achieved by the incumbent in the role. A performance profile is results oriented and looks ahead. It does not focus on skills or competencies.

A complete performance profile also adds authorities. It describes the authority that an incumbent in a role or job has to do things – to make required decisions about expending resources, assigning work to people, doing or not doing things and so on. The authorities are shown in ways that are specific to each accountability or task area in the performance profile.

A performance profile is necessary for effective performance contracting, since it:

1. gives the person handling the role or doing the job clear insight on whether there is appropriate alignment between what needs to be done and how achievement in this area will be measured.
2. clarifies whether, or the degree to which, the individual has the right to make the decisions and to engage the resources needed to do the things that need to be done.

Managers generally have little difficulty accurately describing what needs to be done in the coming performance period. If they do have such difficulties, it is usually for one of two reasons.

1. The role is so new that there is little understanding of what will be involved. In fact, the hiring is happening because of the need to find someone who can define what needs to be done. There is an understanding gap that needs to be eliminated or closed.
2. The manager involved does not have a clear picture of the future performance on the part of the role’s incumbent that they must manage, even when it is reasonably clear to others in the organization. Getting them to see that is often the first step to getting them to address or to eliminate this lack¹⁰. Often, the

¹⁰ Such managers are not performing well as managers. This is a problem for the people managing them, the manager once removed.

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manager's manager – the manager once removed – must be involved in the conversation needed to resolve this.

Although people hired for new innovative roles often need to provide ways to eliminate or to close such gaps, the fact that they are expected to do so is itself a crucial component of a performance profile for such a role. Thinking through what others will see when this a gap is closed or eliminated is the metric for these kinds of task areas in a performance profile.

Here is an example.

Accountability: Develop a way of attracting new inbound potential customers using Internet based content marketing that leads to a steady increase in the number of our existing customers.

Metric: the number of customers we have at year-end is at least 20% greater than it is today.

Managers may need to be guided about how to clarify metrics the first time they are asked to do so. But once they have done this once, they generally have no future problem describing how they will measure performance on each task or accountability.

Sometimes, a performance profile can be started with content taken from a job description¹¹. The basic description of the job can be turned into performance language¹². On-line libraries of job descriptions may provide a place to start¹³. The metrics then can be added through dialogue with one or more of the hiring managers.

Recruiters who recruit for innovative roles need be skilled at creating performance profiles. These recruiters must be able to the following.

1. Turn a job description into a first draft of a performance profile. Use it as a beginning point in the following interview to save the manager's time.

¹¹ Job descriptions are not likely to exist for roles in highly innovative or rapidly growing organizations. These roles often change so fast that it does not make sense to create job descriptions for them.

¹² A full sentence that starts with a verb, and includes a sentence object that indicates what must be produced, created or delivered. A metric or measure for such a performance objective indicates what will be observed or how the output will be evaluated if it is produced. An example ... Translate the relevant elements of the organization's annual plan into specific work assignment for all direct reports. Metric: Direct reports, when canvassed, indicate that they are aware of what work they have do each day, week, month, quarter or year, and how their completion of it will be measured / evaluated.

¹³ See <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions> and <https://resources.workable.com/job-descriptions/> for example.



2. Interview a hiring manager if no job description exists to find out what the person hired into the role needs to do in the coming performance period – usually the first year¹⁴.
3. Draft the first version of the performance profile.
4. Meet with the hiring manager to review it and to add the specific metrics for each task area or accountability. These measures or metrics are strongest when they are concrete and observable by anyone in the organization¹⁵, but sometimes, they must remain subjective¹⁶.
5. Go through the latest version of the performance profile again once metrics are added to add the authority the incumbent has to carry out each task area or accountability.
6. Review the final version with the hiring manager to finalize it. Often, this means reviewing the performance profile with the manager once removed (the hiring manager's manager) as well.

Using Performance Profiles When Hiring for Innovation

Hiring for Innovation replaces job descriptions with performance profiles. Performance profiles can be used to create the required resuming scanning keywords, except that they will focus on things that need to be done by a candidate, rather than on skills.

Performance profiles also provide an informed base for the recruiter to use in reviewing the resumes selected by the resume scanning software. Although the recruiter may not have the hiring manager's job experience, the performance profile creation process gives the recruiter a concrete understanding of the role.

Recruiters can then formulate candidate interview questions which focus on “how will you do X if you get this role” rather than “what did you do in your past jobs”. This shifts the candidate interview focus substantially, emphasizing the future rather than the past.

Performance profiles are also key to formulating performance tasks and challenges for final candidates. By asking the final 2 or 3 individuals to demonstrate how they will

¹⁴ Once a performance profile exists for a role, it is a great basis for updates to a current version. Simply update it to consider the changing circumstances, as well as the results of the performance in the past period.

¹⁵ For example, more than 20% of sales calls on individuals that called us asking for more information leads to new business for us.

¹⁶ For example, all the documents you write will be clear and understandable to anyone in our organization. Your manager will make this determine whether this is so no later than w week after you complete a specific document.

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tackle these challenges once they are on the job, the recruiter and hiring manager will get much deeper insight into the performance fit of the final candidates.

These final candidate review sessions become more like mini-working sessions than one-on-one resume based job history review interviews. As a result, the hiring manager and the candidate can “feel out” what it will be like to work with one another. Each is therefore better equipped to make a judgment about their “culture fit”, which is key to the eventual performance on-the-job.

Performance Profiles are Key to Recruiting for Innovation



Performance profiles are the key to the first step in the Recruiting for Innovation process – establishing performance fit.

Once performance fit has been established, the more subjective factors of culture fit can be addressed.

Sharing the Performance Profile with Final Candidates

When final candidates have an opportunity to review the performance profile before this final mini-working sessions, the following things happen.

1. They could become clear about what they will be expected to do in the role, and how it will be measured. Future oriented performance contracting becomes the norm from day one.



2. Rather than talk about past jobs, they can prepare themselves to talk about “how I will do this” if I get the job. Motivated candidates will be excited by this opportunity. Less motivated ones will not be prepared to the same degree. As a result, recruiters and hiring managers will deeper get insight into each individual’s role specific level of motivation.
3. The final candidate interview process implicitly starts the new hire on-boarding process. New hires come to the job primed to perform. They can address any “knowledge” or skill gaps they might have to achieve this performance as part of their on-boarding.

Assessing Performance Fit Based on Performance Profiles

Final candidates are asked to perform in some way during their final evaluation session. They may be asked to make a presentation on how they would address an aspect of the accountabilities set out in the performance profile. They may take part in a mini working session which “simulates” what they will be doing on-the-job.

When candidates are prompted to “behave” in this way, performance fit judgments are relatively straight forward. If a small group of people are asked to interact with the candidate during this activity, the power of the performance fit evaluation increases.

The hiring manager can easily follow up such a session with a one-on-one chat final candidates after such a session.

When more than one individual interacts with a final candidate, individual judgments of fit on the various relevant performance factors can be recorded on a form such as one on the following pages¹⁷.

It is important to get people to record their impressions on forms like this **INDEPENDENTLY**, before they talk to other about the candidate. Humans can modify their judgments once they interact with others charged with making the same judgments. The group dynamics between them can alter the way in which they see candidate performance.

The recruiter can create a visual collective picture of the individual evaluations on performance fit (see the second form on the following pages for a simple example).

¹⁷ By documenting or recording something personal in an external visual way, e.g. on a form or piece of paper, humans go through a process that psychologists call disassociation.

People are often less emotionally involved when they see a thought or idea they have documented in this way. The disassociation process allows them to look at things from the “outside in”. As a result, they are often readier to change it when it is compared or aligned to information provided about the same thing by others.

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After the candidate has left, the individuals involved could discuss why they evaluated the candidate they did using this visual profile. Exploring the reasons for the different viewpoints, especially if hiring decision-makers are involved, will deepen the understanding of the potential performance fit of the candidate.

The richness of this type of discussion builds on the instinctive people evaluation abilities of individuals in powerful ways. The predictive power of such a “structured dialogue” about a final candidate’s future performance on-the-job is significantly more likely to be right than an individual judgment¹⁸.

Adding Culture Fit Assessment

Culture fit assessment is largely done in subjective ways by individuals. Instinctive human people abilities come into play even more when making culture fit assessments. Steps can be taken however to make sure that there is a similar degree of “interpersonal objectivity” as described previously around performance fit.

1. Ask hiring managers and the others involved in an interaction with a final candidate to individually fill out the following simple form. It captures their subjective impressions of culture fit as they finish interacting with each final candidate.
2. Collate the responses – usually there will be a least two – the hiring manager’s and the recruiter’s. Include the data from others who have interacted with a final candidate. Once the collective visual profile exists, ask these people to talk though and compare their judgments.

By sharing these results with one another and the hiring managers involved, the individuals move beyond an internal judgment about the candidate.

There is a simple example of such a form on the following pages. It can be more elaborate but generally should be no more than the equivalent of 1 page¹⁹.

¹⁸ This process taps into an effective way of making prediction about the future. Asking a group of people who have relevant information to INDEPENDENTLY predict something, and then collating their results, is has been shown to be an effective way of making future predictions.. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi_method

¹⁹ This type of process is built upon two important findings in psychology. One is about short-term memory. Humans generally can retain no more than 7 things concurrently in their short term memory See <https://www.simplypsychology.org/short-term-memory.html>

The second has to do with predicting the future. Asking a group of people who have relevant information to INDEPENDENTLY predict something, and then collating their results, is a powerful of predicting what is likely to happen in the future. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi_method



Example Blank Performance Fit Individual Judgment Capture Form²⁰

Position _____
Candidate _____

Performance Fit

Performance Area	Rating							
Technical Ability	<p>This person has the skills and experience to do the work that is part of this job</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table> <p>Not the case at all Very much the case</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Priority Setting	<p>This person will be able to set the priorities that need to be set in order to effectively perform in this role.</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table> <p>Not the case at all Very much the case</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Informing	<p>This person will keep the right people informed, without flooding them with irrelevant or less-than-useful information.</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table> <p>Not the case at all Very much the case</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Drive for Results	<p>This person has what it takes when it comes to having the DRIVE to produce the results that we need in this role.</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table> <p>Not the case at all Very much the case</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

The performance elements listed will be different for each role and derive from the performance profile.

²⁰ Gestalt psychology makes it clear that humans naturally move from the “fore ground” – the detail involved in one judgment or act to the “back ground” – the overall pattern in such acts – when they can see the overall picture visually.



Position _____
Candidate _____

Cultural Fit

Fitting into the Team	<p>This person will fit in well with us, and work well with our immediate team and with the rest of the folks in the organization</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table> <p>Does not fit at all Excellent Fit</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Longer Term Fit	<p>I think that this person has the potential to make a longer term contribution to our organization, beyond this immediate role.</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table> <p>Has little or no long term potential Excellent long term potential</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

Sometimes, it is as simple as putting these elements (performance fit and culture fit) on a two-sided sheet– the performance fit elements on the front, the culture elements on the back.

There is No Role for Psychometric Tests in Recruiting for Innovation

In the last years, Internet based vendors have lauded various forms of psychometric tools as another “possible silver bullet” in recruiting. Psychometrics that assess “current” abilities in specific technical cognitive abilities that are when used by properly trained recruiters. But in general, personality tests and other such psychometrics do not have a valid role in recruiting²¹.

Psychometric tools are generally based on theories about personality traits or personality preferences or the other internal psycho-dynamics of people. Psychometric

²¹ Another class of psychometric tools measures abilities. They provide individuals with tasks, and evaluate how well people do in completing these tasks. Both short and long forms of intelligence tests fall into this category of psychometric tool, as do many other abilities measuring tests.

When there is clear evidence that an ability is related to performance on-the-job (e.g. the ability to apply abstract reasoning to problems – an ability that is very useful in many forms or computer programming), then such psychometric tests may have an appropriate place in a properly trained recruiter’s tool kit. Generally, such training includes training in the principles underlying psychometric tests and the relevant forms of statistical theory, as well as specific training in the use of the specific test. Many current “Internet” vendors of such ability tests gloss over these training needs in their marketing.

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instruments which are based on these ways of thinking and talking about human beings can be great tools for properly trained specialists to use in research, counseling, coaching, and professional development environments. But they are not the best tools for recruiters to use to make predictions about how well a candidate will perform on-a-job²².

Behavior Based Fit Assessment Tools

At times, especially when the hiring manager understand the strengths and limitations of it, there a use for “behavior pattern fit assessment” tools in Recruiting for Innovation.

The-Right-Talent.ca’s CWBP (**C**ore **W**ork **B**ehavior **P**atterns) tool falls into this category. It can be used to SUPPLEMENT the recruiting process described above. It provides an additional piece of information about the potential fit between a manager and a hiring candidate that may be useful in the selection decision-making about final candidates.

CWBP focuses on 3 core work place behavior.

1. How a person deals events – either proactively or reactively,
2. How a person responds to organizational authority – independent of or accepting of,
3. How a person likes to work – in a group or by oneself

It provides insight into behavior preferences on these three dimensions. Preference as not personality traits or fixed patterns. They are simply preferred ways of behaving. We all can behave in ways that are different from our preferences.

CWBP works by comparing a manager’s prediction of what preferences on these three behavioral dimensions are needed for performance in a role with an individual’s description of their personal patterns on these preferences.

There is nothing fixed about this. CWBP is based on the commonsense and research based finding that when a manager’s belief about something overlaps or aligns with a new subordinate’s belief about something, there is an increased likelihood that they will find common ground for understanding.

²² Google Big 5 Personality Factor for more on this. The follow academic paper by Barrick and Mount on the relationship between Big 5 Personality Traits and Job Performance has been cited over 4000 times by academics. Its 1991 findings ARE still useful today. [“The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Job Performance: A Meta-Analysis”](#). At first blush, all that this academic article does is confirm the common-sense insight that conscientious people (i.e. hard working, thoughtful, take care people) perform better in all jobs than non-conscientious people.



CWBP is only useful in Recruiting for Innovation when a hiring manager understand these limitations and treats it as an additional piece of information in the final hiring decision.

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E: The 12 Steps in the Recruiting for Innovation Process

Recruiting for Innovation comes to an end when a new hire is productive on-the-job. It therefore involved the following 12 steps.

Although some of the elements are the same as those that make up the Recruiting for Well-Established positions, there are deep differences. They are shown by the green boxes in the schematic that follows.

The degree of difficulty of any one recruiting activity is always a function of an unknown – candidate availability and interest. Fortunately, more and more people are interested in roles that give them the opportunity to shine at work. The time elapsed from start to completion of offer-acceptance can take anywhere from 4 to 12 weeks on average. Fast recruiters, which move forward without sacrificing hire quality, are always better.

Recruiting can take time. Sometimes, the dream candidate shows up early in the search. That can short circuit the time required, but not often. When compared to the cost of a hiring mistake²³, the cost of Recruiting for Innovation is a good investment.



These 12 Steps are described in more detail in what follows. The “I” refers to the recruiter. The “you” refers to the hiring manager. An in-house recruiter would modify the Engagement Agreement step slightly.

1. Engagement Agreement:

We talk about what talent you need and why you need this talent.

²³ There are all kinds of estimates for this- ranging from 3 times the 1st year’s compensation to survival if the mistake is made for a key role in a start up, a rapidly growing, or a highly innovative organization. The impact of a hiring mistake on the morale of the other people in the organization is often the single greatest uncounted cost.



You get a recruiting agreement outlining terms, anticipated steps and time table, and projected costs.

2. Performance Profile:

I create a performance profile which sets out what the person will have do on the job.

I add the metrics that tell you and the person you hire what success on the job means.

I review the performance profile with you. We talk about authorities.

I add authorities to the performance profile. You get the final version.

3. Compensation Check:

We outline the compensation that you are prepared to pay.

I let you know what your chances are for finding the talent you want at the price you are prepared to pay.

4. Sourcing Plan:

We outline how we will together to find these people. We will need to do more than just post. We need to get to folks who are currently hired and not immediately looking (the hidden talent pool).

We look for referrals in our networks.

Referrals from people already you know (employees, contractors, business partners ...) are always best. Referrals cut recruiting costs. Individuals referred this way still need to be performance and culture fit assessed.

5. Position Posting:

I write an engaging posting designed to attract “talented” individuals.

We post on Indeed – currently the most innovative recruiting platform, and on Linked In – where everyone who is looking has their profile.

6. Applicant Scrubbing:

I scrub the applicants who respond. Resume review takes minutes.

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Potential candidate screening by phone / Internet video conferencing screening takes me-with-candidate time. I focus on what the **person can do in future**, not on what they have done in the past.

7. Short Listing:

I build a short list of 5 to 9 high probability candidates.

You get notes on why each person is on or off the list.

We dialogue to pick 2 or 3 final candidates.

8. Final Candidate Fit:

I plan a thoughtfully crafted performance and culture fit assessment process. I brief you on it.

We plan to involve a few people who will be working with this person in the role if we can. I / you brief them on their involvement.

We take the 2 to 3 final candidates through it.

9. Hiring Decision:

I dialogue with you about the final candidates, evaluating their performance and culture fit.

You pick the one person you think will fit best.

We plan an offer this person, while trying to keep the second ranked person "warm".

10. Offer Acceptance:

We send out an offer, incorporating the conditions of employment, and such items as non-disclosure agreements, property use agreements, and benefit plans.

I call the person and tell them it is on the way. I assess their likelihood of acceptance.



Depending on this assessment, I call the second ranked person, and keep up their interest if I can.

11. On-boarding:

I work with you and the other involved in your organization to lay you an on-boarding plan which will get the hired person productive on-the-job as quickly as possible. It includes:

- Equipment and facilities required,
- Compensation / benefits administration,
- Arrival announcement, and people/location familiarization planning,
- Mentoring and coaching planning,
- First week work outline,
- First 3 months work planning,
- First day reception and welcoming.

Folks in your organization act to get the elements of the onboarding plan in place.

12. Progress Check:

I check in twice with you and the person you hired over the next 6 to 8 weeks to find tune the integration process.

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F: Why Bother Anyway: Final Words

Talent is everything in start-ups, rapidly growing, and highly innovative organizations. Without talent, these organizations have no products to sell, no services to deliver, and no customers to bill.

The way things are done in these organizations is not static. It can change rapidly. People who can flex to these changes, and maintain their delivery levels, drive these organizations forward.

Recruiting for well-established positions dominates today's recruiting practice. Most recruiting, especially that done by larger organizations, is recruiting for well-established positions.

If you are a leader, or an owner, or a C-level executive in a start-up, a rapidly growing, or a highly innovative organization, you simply cannot afford to recruit the way that well-established organizations do. You risk your organization's future if you do so.

Recruiting for Innovation is your best alternative.

You can engage The-Right-Talent.ca to do your recruiting. When you are of a size to have an in-house recruiter, you can engage us to mentor/coach your in-house recruiting talent to learn the Recruiting for Innovation process.

It's simple. Choose to thrive through finding, hiring, and on-boarding the right talent, or slow down or risk your future because you do not hire the talent you need to grow.

Contact me for more information

or to start up a recruiting assignment.

Roelf Woldring

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