

**Club Resources**  
INTERNATIONAL

# **Disciplined Hiring**

*Author: Ed Rehkopf*

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## Disciplined Hiring: The Key to Getting the Right People on Your Bus

### I. Introduction

#### Hiring the Right People

There is no more critical task for managers than hiring the right employees. As Jim Collins says in his groundbreaking book, *Good to Great*, which delved into the reasons some companies outperform their competitors, that getting the right people on your team or, as he says, “getting the right people on the bus,” was an essential ingredient in all good to great companies. Further, he went on to say that

“The old adage ‘People are your most important asset’ is wrong. People are not your most important asset. The right people are.”

Implied in this statement is the requirement that companies **identify and only hire** the right people. The “wrong” people can be damaging to your business. Dr. Bradford Smart, in his book *Topgrading*, also speaks of hiring the right people for your organization, whom he calls high performers or “A Players,” as opposed to “B” or “C Players.”

Dr. Smart says,

“High performers, the A players, contribute more, innovate more, work smarter, earn more trust, display more resourcefulness, take more initiative, develop better business strategies, articulate their vision more passionately, implement change more effectively, deliver higher quality work, demonstrate greater teamwork, and find ways to get the job done in less time with less cost.”

## II. Damage Caused by the Wrong People

### Managers/Supervisors

Dr. Smart lists the many downsides of hiring and retaining C players as managers or supervisors. He says C Players:

- Embrace tradition over forward thinking.
- Have difficulty coping with new and complex situations.
- Prefer the status quo.
- Lack credibility, so others are hesitant to follow them.
- Require specific direction [from superiors].
- Hire mostly C players [A and B players are seen as threats].
- Tolerate mediocrity.
- Are inaccessible, hypercritical, stingy with praise, and late or shallow with feedback [for subordinates].
- Drain energy from others; their [inaction or] actions prevent synergy.
- Sporadically meet expectations.
- “Bend the rules.”
- Have mediocre skills [and seldom seek self-improvement].

Hiring and retaining low performing managers or supervisors can have a long term ripple effect in an organization. On the other hand, hiring A players for those critical leadership positions in a club can have long term positive effects on the organization. Because of the scope of their duties and their impact on overall club performance, the following club department head positions are considered critical and should always have A players as incumbents:

- Clubhouse Manager
- Club Controller
- Executive Chef
- Facilities Manager
- Golf Course Superintendent
- Food and Beverage Manager
- Activities Director

### Line Employees

If hiring the right people is particularly critical in hiring leaders, the managers and supervisors of the club, it is also important, though for different reasons, in hiring line employees – those that interface directly with members. The dangers in hiring the wrong people in customer-interface positions include:

- The damage they can do to member service.
- The turmoil they create in your work team while they are with you.
- The amount of time that you must spend in training and retraining them.
- The amount of time that you must spend in counseling, disciplining, and ultimately terminating them.
- The lost opportunity of using your limited time and resources to work with them – time that could be better spent on other initiatives and pressing issues.
- The cost of replacing a substandard employee – both in terms of hiring and training a replacement.
- And the emotional wear and tear on everyone involved.

### III. Hiring the Wrong People

#### Why Are The Wrong People Hired?

While there is no fail safe method of hiring only the right people, there are common denominators underlying most mis-hires. They include:

1. The failure of hiring managers to use “due diligence” in hiring applicants. This includes:
  - Failing to analyze and identify the requirements of a vacant position.
  - Failure to carefully screen applicants to ensure that their experience, skill set, and personality is appropriate for the vacant position.
  - Failure to conduct adequate interviews, particularly face to face, with applicants.
  - Failure to carefully check references.
2. Lack of supervisor’s screening, interviewing, and reference-checking skills.
3. Hiring managers not taking full responsibility for the hiring process by assigning or delegating the responsibility of hiring to another person who may not understand the needs of the position or who has no vested interest in a successful hiring outcome.
4. Failure to learn from past hiring mistakes.

#### Reason #1: Failure to Use Due Diligence

Given the responsibility managers have to hire the right people and to avoid hiring the wrong people, hiring supervisors need to exercise “due diligence” throughout the hiring process.

Due diligence is a financial/accounting term that means to conduct an investigation of a potential investment and/or confirm all material facts in regards to a sale. Generally, due diligence refers to the care a reasonable person should take before entering into an agreement or a transaction with another party and is essentially a way of preventing unnecessary harm to either party involved in a transaction.

While the term “due diligence” has come to take on the wider meaning of doing one’s homework to prevent mistakes, clearly the original definition applies to hiring employees, that is making an offer of employment to another party.

#### Reason #2: Lack of Interview Skills

A brief informal survey of club executives reveals that none have ever received formal training in how to screen and interview applicants or in reference-checking techniques. Despite the overwhelming importance of hiring the right people, it seems to be assumed that people can figure out for themselves how best to do it or will intrinsically know or possess such skills. Since Dr. Smart’s research and experience points out that 50% of all hires are mis-hires, it is clear that this is not the case.

At the same time, a survey of hiring managers shows that most managers think they do a good job of interviewing job candidates. Given the sad hiring success rate, which is no better than flipping a coin, there is an obvious disconnect between hiring managers’ perceptions and reality.

### **Reason #3: Not Taking Full Responsibility for the Hiring Process**

Before going any further, let us make one thing perfectly clear. There is only one person responsible for hiring the right people and that is the manager or supervisor of the person being hired. The hiring manager or supervisor is the one who is accountable for his department or section's performance and, therefore, is the only person who should make the hiring decision. While every leader will periodically mis-hire, those supervisors that consistently hire the wrong people should be held accountable.

Do not for one moment think that hiring is the responsibility of a Human Resource Manager or the Personnel Administrator. They may assist in the process, but their assistance is nothing more than clerical or consultative. If any person hired turns out to be a bust, the only person responsible and accountable is the hiring supervisor, and he must bear the consequences of mis-hiring.

### **Reason #4: Failure to Learn from Past Hiring Mistakes**

While it is understood that every hiring manager will make some hiring mistakes, it is essential that lessons are learned from mis-hires. This can only be done if there is sufficient documentation of the hiring process. Without a written record that includes a resume or application, thorough interview notes including questions asked and answers given, and details of each reference checked, there is no way to go back after a mis-hire to try and determine what was missed during screening and interviewing.

With proper documentation, the hiring manager can review the entire screening, interviewing, and hiring process to see what signs were missed in an attempt to improve those skills during future hirings.

### IV. Avoiding Legal Problems

Incorrect or inappropriate hiring of employees can create legal problems for a club. The following information is designed to make hiring managers and supervisors aware of some of the legal issues involved.

There are three basic requirements to avoiding legal problems in hiring.

- Perform a thorough job analysis so that you understand the position and its requirements,
- Write a job descriptions with behavioral competencies, and
- Use nondiscriminatory language in all communications and avoid asking inappropriate questions.

#### Perform a Thorough Job Analysis

Is the job necessary? Does the job description need to be modified to more accurately describe the duties and requirements of the position? Are the essential functions, those functions that are critical to the success of the position, identified? The following example from *Topgrading* demonstrates the importance of identifying the essential functions of a job, distinguishing between “fundamental” and “marginal” job duties.

*Suppose you have an opening for an accounting manager. You might feel that an essential function of an accounting manager’s job is to communicate frequently, in order to successfully change processes in the department. You might conclude from your analysis that Managing by Wandering Around (MBWA) is essential, but maybe it’s not. “Wandering” might imply “walking,” when reasonable accommodations for a wheelchair-bound person could permit meetings in a central location, or by telephone and e-mail discussions, video-taped communications, or the like. Always remember, the key to ADA compliance is not whether a disabled individual could perform the job, but whether that individual could perform the “essential functions” of the job when reasonably accommodated.*

*When hiring the accounting manager, ask people trained and experienced in doing the job you are filling to describe each function, in detail. Ask the incumbent to write out all the tasks, observe the person performing them, and ask others (internal clients, internal accountants, outside CPA firms) their opinions. Probe to determine what is not essential.*

As you can see it’s not difficult to identify a nonessential function from this position. Another example:

*“Tradition” required that managers in a distribution function to load 100-pound boxes for five minutes at the beginning of a shift. It ostensibly would show workers the manager is hands-on, not “above” manual labor. The job analysis showed the workers felt it was a silly tradition; they wanted their manager managing, planning better, streamlining processes. Lugging was eliminated, simultaneously permitting the distribution center manager job to be more productive and opening the position up to women and candidates with disabilities. Whether massive reengineering of hundreds of jobs is necessary, or simply tweaking one position, the principles are the same: Cut out the nonessentials, focus on what is absolutely necessary, reengineer for efficiency, and strive to include (not exclude) protected classes.*

#### Write Job Descriptions with Behavioral Competencies

Job descriptions can assure that both the job applicant and everyone involved in the hiring process are “on the same page” in understanding what the job is. However, it is also important that a well-prepared job description retain flexibility by including not only a listing of the duties, responsibilities, and competencies entailed in the job, but also the catchall phrase, “and other duties as assigned.”

Again, from *Topgrading*:

Where possible, job descriptions should include objective, measurable performance accountabilities. For management jobs, this might mean specifying the achievements necessary to achieve the first-year bonus – production metrics, quality goals, productivity improvements, number of product launches, maintaining non-union status, and so on. Specifying first-year accountabilities may offer some legal protection as well, by forcing a more detailed job analysis, a clearer job description, and a focus on most essential competencies.

Most courts and the EEOC agree that competencies based on soft or subjective criteria such as personal, interpersonal, and motivational competencies are acceptable where they are applied evenhandedly to all applicants for a position and when subjective competencies are job-related; that is, they meet the standard of business necessity.

Management competencies, many of them “soft,” should be made as objective as possible. Avoid “feels comfortable talking with strangers” and instead say “builds credibility quickly with customers.” You can measure in surveys whether customers feel the salesperson is a good listener, passionate about learning customer needs, knowledgeable, prepared, trustworthy, and conscientious in following up on promises. Customers would have more difficulty in assessing how “comfortable” a salesperson actually felt, and who cares? So what if the salesperson is not very comfortable but customers buy because she is passionate about learning their needs and preferences and is credible?

“Good attitude” is too vague and is hard to defend legally. Specify the behavior necessary, the behavioral competencies necessary to do the job. Use active verbs and observable results expected.

Civil rights laws do *not* say that you must hire women, or minorities, people over 40, disabled applicants, or war veterans. In fact, they do not say you have to hire them in proportion to their numbers in the community. But, if you do not hire protected classes, you must exercise sound business judgment and base your decisions on how the candidates compared on necessary job-related qualifications or other valid business reasons. If practicing a particular religion, for example, Catholicism, is essential to being an officer in, say, a Catholic charity, then you may ask if the officer is Catholic.

### **Use Nondiscriminatory Language and Avoid Asking Inappropriate Questions**

Wording ads, interview questions, and even conversational comments to focus only on specific, necessary job qualifications protects the Club legally. Phrase information you publish in ads, to search firms, job descriptions, e-mails, or word of mouth to prevent intentionally or unintentionally excluding a protected class under the major EEO laws. Don’t stop at what the words mean to you; consider also what they might *suggest to someone else* – that you are discriminating against any one of several protected groups in terms of race, color, gender, age, disability, military status, national origin, or religion. Appearances sometimes fuel the desire to sue.

Ensure that interviewers ask only those questions permissible by law; those that are job related. All questions and comments must meet one simple criterion: *They pertain to the essential functions of the job and qualifications that indicate a person’s ability and willingness to perform those functions.*

*Reference: Personnel Policy, P-200.*

### V. Other Steps to Avoid Legal Problems

#### Multiple Interviews

Dr. Smart says,

“It makes good sense, from the management perspective, to have more than one person interview the candidates. A person reporting to you has to work with other people: peers, middle-level managers, and perhaps customers. How other people see the candidates can influence how well they work together with the person you hire. From a legal perspective, you reduce personal subjectivity or bias by adding properly trained interviewers to the process; this protects you from making decisions that could adversely affect members of protected groups.”

It is a good management practice to have multiple interviews, particularly when hiring managers and supervisors. It may also be a good idea when hiring line employees if there is something in the interview process that concerns the hiring manager. A second opinion is always good to have.

#### The Education Date Dilemma

Many experts are leery about asking the dates of high school and college level education, as the responses may indicate the age of the applicant and become an issue in age discrimination suits. Given this, it is best not to ask age-identifying questions.

It is permissible to ask questions about gaps in an applicant’s work experience as these may hide important disqualifying information about the candidate. When exploring such gaps, do not feel hesitant to ask penetrating questions. Should an applicant say that they left a particular job in 2005, ask them which month. Follow up by summarizing any gaps by saying something like, “So you were unemployed from March 2005 until the present. What did you do during this time?”

#### Safe Discharges

Discharge decisions may be impacted by the manner in which someone was hired. Wrongful termination suits frequently hinge on what information, promises, or representations were given to the individual when they were hired. Ensuring that a person is hired properly will dramatically reduce problems in letting that individual go should it become necessary.

Most states permit “employment-at-will,” which means that employers can discharge people whenever they want, with no reason or any reason whatsoever, with several exceptions:

- Discrimination based upon age, race, or other protected categories
- Violation of a union contract
- Violations of state public policy laws (such as “whistle-blower” laws or laws prohibiting firing because an employee has filed a worker’s compensation claim, for example)
- Violation of an employment contract

#### Be Careful with Promises

Promises, both real and implied and oral or in writing, can create problems for an organization unless they are faithfully kept.

Again in *Topgrading* Dr. Smart says,

“Most people get into trouble during the hiring interview more for what they say or offer (or don’t say or don’t offer) rather than what they ask or don’t ask. They commit four common errors that could later lead to charges of wrongful discharge:

- They promise more than they’re personally authorized to promise.
- They fail to cover the conditions of employment thoroughly in advance, especially with regard to employment-at-will (that is, that the club has the right to fire employees with or without notice, with or without cause).
- They don’t give the newly hired employee an employee’s handbook (which should always contain the proper disclaimers that it does not create a contract, based on consultation with counsel because state laws may vary).
- They lower their guard, getting too comfortable with the candidate, and say things that can be misconstrued as promises or, too often, as attitudes toward minorities, women, legal aliens, and the like.

There are four things a hiring manager can do to avoid making promises:

1. Unless you’re the President of the club, have in writing what the scope of your authority is when extending a job offer. Personnel Policy on Employment Agreements, P-200.03, covers this nicely. It says that no one, other than the President of the club may enter into an agreement for employment for a specified period of time, or to make any agreement contrary to the employment-at-will policy of the club. Furthermore, any such agreement must be in writing and signed by the President of the club.
2. The hiring manager should prepare for the interview by reviewing all the Conditions of Employment, CRI Form 166.
3. Make sure the applicant understands that employment with the club is “at-will.” This is covered in Personnel Policy, Employment-at-Will, P-200.02, and is specifically mentioned in the club’s Employee Handbook and Managers’ Handbook.
4. Always be professional in employment interviews. The interview is not an opportunity to become friends with someone or to try to impress applicants. Never share personal information or express personal attitudes or feelings toward other people or groups of people, do not create any appearance of negative attitudes toward anyone. Any assumptions you make about the applicant’s attitudes or their regard for you may well prove wrong. Remember, anyone can serve as a witness in a discrimination or wrongful termination suit. Your careless comment to a prospective employee may come back to haunt you.

## VI. Screening Skills

This section provides in depth discussion of the various skills and steps necessary to properly screen, interview, and check references for candidates during the hiring process.

### Analyze the Job

As mentioned above under Avoiding Legal Problems, you must perform a thorough job analysis. This is done not only to avoid legal issues, but also to ensure that you have a full understanding of the current nature of the job so that you may communicate this to applicants. One way to do this is to discuss the position with the vacating person or with other employees in the same position.

Some of the key things to understand about each position are:

- Physical requirements or limitations.
- Schedules and shifts of position. Particularly important if it requires weekend, night, and holiday work.
- Personality behaviors (friendly, outgoing, personable, easy to talk to) that will make a person successful in the position.
- Required experience and skills or if not necessary due to training provided.
- Degree of interaction with members.
- How is the position compensated? Exempt from overtime or non-exempt. Strictly hourly wage or are tips included.
- Some of the challenges or prerequisites of the position – working with children or the elderly or requiring certification, as with lifeguards.
- Necessity of a driver's license to fulfill the requirements of the position (not transportation to and from work, as other arrangements may be made).
- An honest assessment of the state of the department, what challenges you face and the plans you have to overcome any challenges. This is important because the challenges and your plans will directly impact any person hired for the position. In fairness to them, they have a right to know the level of problems and turmoil in the department. In practical terms, if their expectations for the job are not met, they may resign in short order, leaving you with another position to fill. In many ways it's best to have a "no surprise" policy when describing the work environment for potential new hires.

### Review the Job Description

Once you have finished analyzing the job, the next step is to review the job description. Not only should you ensure that the job description meets the legal issues described above in Avoiding Legal Problems, you should be sure it accurately and fairly represents the position being offered.

The duties and responsibilities of each position should describe as thoroughly as possible not only the activity, but also the standards, involved. See the following three samples that describe a duty of the kitchen Sous Chef:

- Assists the Chef.
- Assists the Chef with inventories.
- Assists the Chef by conducting monthly inventories per standards established in Accounting Policy, A-4501, Monthly Resale Inventories – Food, Beverage, & Retail.

Clearly the third example provides the most information. It not only lets the Sous Chef know what he must do, but when and how.

It is also important to describe behaviors. For instance, to state that an employee must have a “good attitude” is vague and useless, since any two people will have a different understanding of what a good attitude is. It would be far better to describe the behaviors that make up the “good attitude,” such as supports club policies and procedures, does not complain about work rules, sets a productive work example for employees, is always on time, etc.

*Note: simply because you downloaded the job description from the Club Resources International website does not mean that it meets all the legal concerns mentioned above or is right for the position that you have to offer. It is still your responsibility as the hiring supervisor to ensure the adequacy of the job description.*

### **The Vacancy Posting**

Once the job has been analyzed and the job description reviewed, you should write the necessary vacancy posting for the position that will be used in local advertisements.

It's important to accurately describe the job and what prerequisites you looking for. The more accurately you can describe the position, schedule, hours, necessary experience or skills, and personal attributes, the fewer the applications you'll receive from people who clearly don't meet the requirements. So save yourself the headache of wading through hundreds of unqualified applications by being clear in what you are looking for.

### **Screening Applicants**

Screening applicants is simply the task of wading through applications and resumes to weed out those who are clearly unqualified for the position. This is one of the hiring tasks that is frequently delegated or tasked to the HR professionals. There is no major problem in having someone else screen your applications so long as you give them detailed instructions as to what are minimum skill and experience requirements for the position, or what might be a disqualifying condition, such as lack of English language skills for a dining room server.

You might also ask the screener to be on the lookout for skills for other departmental positions, or for the unusual application with alternate experience or skills that might be well suited for your vacant position, e.g., considering someone for a dining room hostess position who worked as a hotel concierge (extensive meeting and greeting the public experience), but no food and beverage experience. The ultimate purpose of the screening process is to narrow the number of people that you would include for interviews.

Once the applications are screened, you will want to review the selected applications in detail to determine how many and which ones you would consider for an interview. The usual workable number might be 3 to 5, though if you cannot find a suitable applicant in that number, you might look deeper in the pile of screened applicants.

## VII. Interview Skills

### The Purpose of Interviews

The purpose of interviewing applicants is to assess the fit between a screened applicant and the position, you (their supervisor), and the club. It does no one any good to hire someone who is not a good fit for the club culture, the organization, or you and your work team. If a major requirement for the position is to be a good team player, hiring someone who is only out for themselves will never work. There's no sense in putting yourself and the applicant through a hiring and subsequent termination process, if they are not a good fit to begin with.

There are two types of interviews that you should conduct:

- the telephone interview and
- the face to face interview.

### Telephone Interview

The telephone interview is another form of screening, allowing you to get to know a little bit about the applicant – what he is looking for in a job; why he wants to work for your club; a review of pertinent experience and skills; an assessment over the phone of his personality, communication skills, work ethic – without a major investment in time for both the interviewer and applicant. It's also a good opportunity to describe the vacant position in detail to ensure that this is really what the applicant wants to do. Usually, a telephone interview will last 15 to 30 minutes, depending upon your level of interest in the applicant.

With some applicants you'll know after just a few minutes whether you have any interest in pursuing the matter further. Often, this telephone screening will determine that the person is not a good fit or, once the position is fully described, decides he is not interested in the position.

After conducting telephone interviews with the screened applicant, the supervisor will usually cull the list of applicants to a fewer number with whom he would like to meet face to face.

### Face to Face Interview

The face to face interview is probably the most critical step in the entire hiring process. There is so much more you can learn about an applicant by meeting him in person when you can gauge position-appropriate requirements from direct observation. For instance:

- Appearance and grooming. Is he dressed appropriately for the interview? Does he make a good appearance? How is his grooming? Is the haircut or hair color appropriate? Does he have visible body piercings or tattoos?
- Personality, such as friendly, courteous, outgoing nature.
- Personal mannerisms, such as eye contact, nervousness that could indicate a lack of candor or something to hide.
- Communication and conversation skills.
- Intelligence – ability to respond to questions and dialogue.

The face to face interview provides the opportunity to explain the job and all requirements in detail and allows the applicant to ask any pertinent questions. Obviously, this would also be the time to delve into the applicant's knowledge and experience that is necessary for the position.

Because of the importance of the foregoing, you should never hire a person sight unseen.

### **The Structured, Chronological Interview Technique**

HR professionals generally agree that the best way to conduct a hiring interview is to use the Structured, Chronological Interview. Its advantages are:

- Providing an interview process that the interviewer can use time and again, all the while honing and improving the process.
- Providing consistency in interviews from candidate to candidate.
- Recognizing that the habits of a candidate's past work history are the best indicators of future performance.
- Chronologically following the candidate's growth from job to job and year to year throughout his career.

In order to conduct a meaningful Structured, Chronological Interview, the hiring manager must carefully review the candidate's application or resume and prepare a list of questions to ask in advance of the interview. This will allow the interviewer to focus on the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities he is seeking in a candidate. The interviewer should pay particular attention to those jobs and experience that have a particular bearing on the job he is hiring for. It also allows him to note any areas of concern or gaps in employment that might warrant some deeper digging.

### **Preparing for Interviews**

The most important step in preparing for face to face interview is to review each application or resume in depth. Make notes to explore or question any gaps in employment history or positions/experience that you would like to find out more about. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to ask to probe deeper into the applicant's experience or work history.

Current interviewing theories such as Topgrading encourage the use of a chronological, structured interview where the interviewer enquires into the applicant's education and work history in chronological order. The argument for this lies in the belief that the best predictor of future performance is rooted in the habits and performances of the past. By asking in-depth questions about previous work experience, accomplishments, perceived weaknesses, and, particularly, the reasons for leaving previous jobs, you begin to see patterns that will most likely be repeated.

While it's always good to let the applicant talk about their past experience, it's also important for you, the interviewer, to maintain control of the interview. You do this by asking questions to gain a deeper understanding. For instance, if the applicant talks about how he turned his department around in a previous job, question him for details as to exactly how he did it. Keep probing until you are satisfied that you understand what he meant by "turning his department around." His perception of that event and yours may be widely different once you've heard the details of what he did or didn't do.

Given the importance of this in-depth probing, an interviewer should be prepared prior to the interview with a list of questions based upon the application or resume. It's easy for a job seeker to use high flown leadership or management phrases (particularly if someone else wrote or edited their resume), while having little understanding of what those phrases truly mean. Your prepared questions should open the path for you to explore all claimed accomplishments.

It is also a good idea to ask questions specific to the knowledge and skill set of the position for which you are hiring as the following story demonstrates.

*A number of years ago while hiring for a club manager position which required an in-depth understanding of food and beverage operations, I asked an applicant to explain to me how cost of goods sold was computed. He could not do so. With that one question he was eliminated from consideration. I figured if he didn't know how CoGS was computed, he wouldn't have sufficient understanding to control his food and beverage costs.*

### **Interview Requirements**

There are certain basic requirements for conducting a job interview.

#### Quiet, Uninterrupted Setting

Usually your office will suffice for the purpose of the interview if it is a private office with a door that can be closed. It's also important to halt all calls (have them answered by another person, let your voicemail pick up, or mute the ringer) and avoid interruptions from other employees (put a "do not disturb sign" on the door). In any case, this setting will allow you to focus on what might arguably be described as your most important activity of the day, while demonstrating courtesy and respect for the applicant, who hopefully will become an important addition to your team.

#### Your Tone

Your tone and how you approach the applicant will have a lot to do with setting the mood for a good, open exchange of information, while hopefully impressing the applicant that you are a competent leader and this is a good place to work. The applicant should be treated with professional courtesy and respect. Invite him into the office, offer him a seat, and ask if he would like a glass of water (an applicant may be nervous, and since you expect him to do a large amount of the talking, he may quickly become dry).

Do your best to set the applicant at ease. The interview is not an obstacle to be overcome by the applicant. More than anything you want to gauge how the applicant might fit into your team and the club. Allowing him to be himself, to speak naturally, and to respond to your questions without a sense of duress, will go a long way in helping you assess the applicant's potential fit with the organization.

#### Explain the Job and its Context

You should always start the interview by explaining the position and the context in which the applicant may work. Do this even if you have already done so in the vacancy posting and during the telephone interview. Tell him about the club, how old it is, the number of members, a description of the various facilities, its mission and the General Manager's vision for the operation, how long you've been with the club, your plans for your operation, and any challenges that your department faces.

Explain how important the position is for which you are hiring and how it fits into the larger picture of the club's operation.

After you've done this, ask the applicant if he has any questions about the job, the club, or your department. Encourage his questions throughout the interview. Often, you can learn as much about an applicant from his questions as you can from his answers to your questions.

#### The Work History Walk Through

Once you're satisfied that he understands the job and the mission of the club, ask him to walk you through his application or resume, starting with his education and then moving through his work history (again, this must be done chronologically). If there are gaps in his work history, ask him to adequately explain them (don't be

satisfied with “oh, I just took some time off.” The gap may contain important disqualifying information, such as a brief job failure due to misconduct on his part or even a stretch in prison.

In reviewing his job history, use questions to probe into actual accomplishments – “Explain exactly how you were able to improve your department’s bottom line? What specific steps did you take and why?” This is not the time to let the applicant give you vague answers. If he does, continue to press him for specifics. Continue to do so until you feel you have a complete understanding of what took place in that job.

Continue to have him review his work history. Several key things to focus on are:

- His successes and how he accomplished them.
- Things he could have improved on or things he wished he had done differently.
- Areas of his work performance that he considers weaknesses and examples of each. There’s no fault in owning up to weaknesses, particularly if the applicant demonstrates that he continually learns and improves from his experience.
- How would his previous bosses describe his performance? Again, insist on specifics.
- Why did he leave the position? Have him explain the circumstances in detail. This is often a critical part of one’s employment history.

#### Asking for References

While in-depth probing the applicant’s work history with structured questions, make sure he understands that you intend on checking his references thoroughly. The Threat of Reference Check (or TORC) is a wonderful inducement to honesty on the part of applicants. It’s often good to remind the applicant several times during the interview that you intend on checking references. A good time to reinforce this message would be when you ask him how his boss would describe his performance, his strengths or weaknesses. This doesn’t need to be said in an unpleasant or threatening way, just a matter of fact, “I’m anxious to find out if your perceptions and your previous supervisor’s are the same.”

Prior to the end of the interview ensure that you have a list of references that are complete with name, title, current phone number and address. If the applicant has not provided a reference for a particular job that you feel is most pertinent to the position you are hiring for, ask specifically for such a reference. Reticence to provide one may be indicative that the applicant has something to hide. If he still resists, inform him that you cannot in good conscience make a hiring decision without speaking with a reference from that particular employer.

Lastly, once you have received a complete list of the references that you intend on checking, have the applicant sign a Reference Check Authorization, CRI Form 161. Obviously, this step is unnecessary if the interview has in your mind eliminated the applicant from consideration.

#### When Do You Sell the Opportunity?

After the chronological, structured interview has been completed, you should have a pretty good idea of whether or not you are interested in the applicant. If you are favorably impressed and think he may be a good candidate pending the reference checks, now is the time to ensure that he is sold on the job.

This is your chance to pull out all the stops and let the applicant know why your club and your department is a good place to work. You might even give him a tour of your department and introduce him to other employees. Sometimes allowing your current employees to speak with the applicant (so long as you’re sure they feel positively about you and their place of employment) is the best sales pitch he can get.

### Wrapping Up the Interview

The last thing you want to communicate to the applicant is that you will check references and get back to them in a specified time. Why is this important? The applicant may be entertaining other job opportunities and/or is anxious to start working as soon as possible. If you don't get back to him for several weeks, he may assume you're not interested and take another position.

If you are interested in the applicant, do not let him get away because of your tardiness or inaction. If you are having trouble getting in touch with one or more references, call the applicant and let him know that it's taking longer than you thought. You might also ask if he knows a better way to reach a particular reference.

## VIII. Questions to Ask and Avoid

### To Ask

One problem frequently encountered by interviewers is difficulty in drawing out the applicant, getting him to talk about his work experiences or skills. The following questions will help you avoid the yes/no syndrome, where the applicant simply responds to your questions with monosyllabic answers.

- Tell me about your work as a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Describe your typical work shift or day?
- What did you like best about that job and why? What did you like least? Explain?
- What did you actually do most of the time?
- What will your boss say about \_\_\_\_\_, when I call to ask for a reference?
- What were your challenges, successes, failures in that position?
- What results were obtained from these efforts?
- Tell me why you left that position?
- You understand, of course, that I must base my hiring decision on this interview. Unless you can give me more information to help me make my decision, I'll have to fill the position with someone else.

### To Avoid

Just as there are questions you should ask, there are some you should not ask. Certain questions, when answered disclose information that employers may not use in hiring decisions – typically information that identifies protected groups under Civil Rights laws. If you ask one of these questions, receive an answer, and subsequently don't hire a particular applicant, the case could be made that your decision was based upon that identifying information.

So before you conduct an interview, either telephonically or face to face, review Appropriate Hiring Questions, Personnel Policy, P-200.22, to ensure you are familiar with what you can and can't ask.

### Digging Deeper

If you are interested in a particular applicant, but something just doesn't feel right, you have an absolute responsibility to dig deeper. You can do this in the interview by going back over certain ground again with the applicant or by calling the applicant later to discuss your concerns. Here are several suggested ways to get to the point:

- Mary, I'm not sure I understand what you are telling me about \_\_\_\_\_. Can you explain again?
- After spending this time together, Pat, I'm still not quite sure how organized you are. Can you give examples of how you've used your organizational skills in other positions?
- I owe it to you, John, as well as to my club and myself, to be as thorough and professional as I can in determining if there is a job match here and, if so, how I can help you succeed. In order to do that, I really need to know as much as possible about your strengths and weaknesses, and how they relate to this position.

## IX. Reference Checks

### Responsibility

The responsibility to check references is an essential part of due diligence and may not be delegated or passed off to others. Without checking references, there is no way to check the veracity of the applicant's education, experience, work history, or claimed accomplishments.

While many people claim to have almost psychic skills when it comes to sensing the integrity and character of applicants, it must be clearly understood that scam artists and others who lie professionally are often considered to be the most genuine and convincing of people. In other words, the person most adept at being sincere and in giving the answers you want to hear, are quite possibly the applicant with the most to hide. The rule must be: Don't ever accept an applicant at face value. Do your homework and check his references carefully!

### Reference Check Principles

1. Reference checks must be conducted by the hiring manager.
2. Conduct reference checks after you have completed the chronological, structured interview.
3. Contact the applicant's supervisors during the past five years.
4. Get the applicant's written permission to check references during the interview.
5. During the interview, verify the name, title, location, and contact information of each listed reference **and** any others you may wish to talk to.
6. Ask the applicant to contact each desired reference at home, asking if it would be alright to accept a reference call from the hiring manager at home at a time of their convenience.
7. Contact each reference at home in the evening, or preferably on the weekend.
8. Promise the reference absolute confidentiality and make sure you honor that promise.
9. Create the tone of a trusted colleague, a fellow professional who knows the applicant well, who might hire the applicant, and who will be better able to manage the applicant if the reference will share certain insights.
10. Contact the current supervisor (if applicable). Some applicants may not desire this until they have an offer that is formally accepted. If this is the case, ensure that the applicant understands that the offer is contingent upon receiving a clean bill of health with no surprises.
11. Depending upon the type of position being filled, the hiring manager may want to check references with peers, subordinates, or customers of the applicant. The same requirements mentioned in items 4 through 9 above will apply.
12. Take notes during all reference checks using the Reference Check Form, CRI Form 157-1 and 2. Keep notes for at least six months so you can refer back and see how your interview impressions and the references disclosures dovetail with you actual experience with any hired individual.

### Reference Check Legal Issues

In recent years as a result of defamation lawsuits, many employers and previous bosses have become reluctant to give references or to candidly answer questions about a former employee. For many hiring managers, this has made it more difficult to obtain useful references.

While many companies have set strict rules on who may give references and what limited information may be given, they cannot and should not refuse to give negative information without legal risks to themselves. If you

were to hire an individual who was fired by another club for fighting and that individual killed someone at your place of employment, the former employer might be held liable in a suit for failing to disclose this information.

A correct understanding of the legal issues involved and a dogged determination not to hire anyone without appropriate references provides more than enough techniques to get the information you need without legal jeopardy.

At its essence, the legal objection to providing references rests with the following concern:

Asking for reference information is perfectly legal, giving out false or malicious information is illegal, and withholding certain negative reference information can be illegal.

Because of the concern for giving out false or malicious information, many companies have made it policy that their Human Resource staff are the only ones authorized to give out reference information. Also, many companies will only provide job title and dates of employment.

Further, no individual manager is legally required to accept a reference call, so if a club is willing or legally obligated to disclose reference information, Human Resources is the usually the one to do it. While this does present an obstacle to checking references, it is not an insurmountable one.

### **Reference-Checking Techniques**

The first step is to address reference-checking with the applicant during the interview process. Make sure the applicant understands that you will not make an offer without a thorough reference check. This puts the onus on the applicant to ensure that the individual references he lists will be willing to give a reference. It is also his responsibility to ensure that the contact information for all references is up to date and that it will be easy for you to make contact. Any applicant who makes it difficult to check references is probably not someone you would want to hire.

Experience has shown that references called will not only talk, but talk quite openly. You should talk with bosses, but also with a sample of peers, subordinates, and customers. Half a dozen reference calls could include three present and former bosses and three “others.”

The calls are received because people will trust you. It’s amazing, in our untrusting, litigation-minded society, but it “works.”

If you’re at all uncomfortable about asking confidential reference information while simultaneously being unwilling to give it out, consider the calls as “coaching” calls, not reference calls. By referring to questions, not as reference questions, but 360° inputs to better help assimilate the candidate into the job and the club culture, the nature of the questions and discussion is really just about that. If you have done a thorough Structured, Chronological Interview, and the results of any other interviews with the applicant have gone reasonably well, you almost certainly are not going to eliminate your candidate on the basis of these final, in-depth reference-check calls. In fact, these will be “coaching calls.” I’ve never heard of a club prohibiting managers from participating in “coaching calls.” So that’s what you are asking – not for references, but for coaching sources.

CRI Form 157 is specially devised to make your reference calling even easier. Read it carefully.

### X. Documentation

Club Resources International has developed a number of forms to help hiring managers document the hiring process:

**Required** forms to be used in interviewing for **line positions**:

- Application for Employment, CRI Form 125 (4 pages)
- Authorization for Release of Information, CRI Form 137
- Applicant Reference Check, CRI Form 108

**Required** forms to be used in interviewing for **management and supervisory positions**:

- Career History, CRI Form 160 (4 pages)
- Authorization for Release of Information, CRI Form 137
- Supervisory Reference Check, CRI Form 157 (2 pages)

Given the relative importance of management and supervisory positions, it is expected that hiring managers will do a more thorough job of interviewing candidates when hiring for these positions. To assist in the process, CRI has designed some additional optional forms to be used in interviewing for **management and supervisory positions**:

- Work History, CRI Form 152
- Plans and Goals, CRI Form 153
- Applicant Self Appraisal, CRI Form 155
- Applicant Leadership Appraisal, CRI Form 156
- Interview Continuation Sheet, CRI Form 150

Properly filling out all forms is important for two reasons:

1. The forms help organize the task of interviewing and reference checking. They provide a convenient place for you to record pertinent information. Once you have used the forms, they provide a consistent and familiar outline to help guide you through the process.
2. They provide a written record that may be referred back to when needed:
  - a. First and foremost, to allow you to review hiring decisions after the fact to help you see where you might have gone wrong, dug deeper, or learn from your mistakes.
  - b. Secondly, in case of legal action against the club, they demonstrate your due diligence in interviewing, screening, and reference-checking; and they may provide some specific detail that would allow the club to defend itself against a wrongful hiring suit.

### **XI. Making the Offer**

After all interviews and reference checks, when you are satisfied that you have exercised due diligence in your search for the right employee, you are ready to make the hiring offer.

#### **Rate of Pay**

Before preparing to make the offer, review the pay rate you are about to offer to ensure that it is one you think the leading applicant will accept. At the same time, compare the proposed rate of pay with the norms for that position within the club as a whole. The Personnel Administrator prepares an annual Comparative Compensation Review that provides ranges of compensation for various positions throughout the club.

Also, club policy requires that all hiring pay rates for start-up operations, any manager bonus opportunities, and all annual pay raises receive prior authorization from club President.

*Reference: Personnel Policy, P-100.12*

#### **Conditional Pending Outcome of Required Screenings**

Employment offers to external applicants are conditional on the applicant's ability to pass all required screenings, including the Drug Screening. Failure to pass the Drug Screening or any tampering with the test or test results will result in ineligibility for employment and termination of the conditional employment offer. The recipient of a conditional employment offer will be required to sign an Alcohol and Drug Testing Authorization, CRI Form 101, prior to testing.

*Reference: Personnel Policy, P-200.07*

The hiring manager may also indicate that the offer is contingent upon a final and satisfactory reference from the applicant's current employer or supervisor.

#### **Written Offer**

It is always best to put employment offers for managers and supervisors in writing so that there is a clear understanding of what was offered. Always include a copy of the appropriate job description. The offer letter should include:

- Title of position
- Whether position is exempt or non-exempt, salaried or hourly wage.
- Whether the position is full time, part time, or seasonal.
- What benefits the person filling the position will be eligible for – health and dental insurance, life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, vacation days, holidays, sick/emergency days, and the 401(k) retirement plan.
- The proposed start date.
- A statement that the offer is conditional upon the successful completion of all screenings – physical, drug screen, and background check.

To assist hiring managers in making written offer, Club Resources International has designed a standardized Written Offer of Employment, CRI Form 165.

*Reference: Personnel Policy, P-200.06*

## **What May Not Be Offered without Proper Authorization**

There are certain things that a hiring manager may not offer.

- No one, other than the President of the club has the authority to alter the employment-at-will status of any employee.
- No one, other than the President of the club may enter into an agreement for employment for a specified period of time, or to make any agreement contrary to the employment-at-will policy of the club. Furthermore, any such agreement must be in writing and signed by the President.

*Reference: Personnel Policy, P-200.03*

## XII. Acceptance of the Offer

### New Hire Paperwork

There is certain, specific paperwork that must be properly completed for every new hire, regardless of position. Much of this paperwork has to do with setting the new hire up to be properly paid, while other material provides the club legal protection should the new hire later claim that he did not know some essential requirement of the position or the club's work rules.

It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to properly complete all hiring paperwork in a timely manner. Further, it is the Personnel Administrator's responsibility to double check all paperwork to ensure that it is properly completed and to set up the individual's personnel file.

The club has prepared a New Hire Checklist, CRI Form 119, to assist hiring managers and the Personnel Administrator in ensuring that all required actions have been completed.

### Notifying Non-selected Applicants

How the club treats applicants for employment has a direct bearing on our standing in the community. When an applicant is not treated professionally, the word can get around that we are not a good club to work for. This may hinder future recruiting efforts.

It is common courtesy to notify those individuals who took the time to fill out an application that they were not selected. The notification comes in three formats – acknowledging receipt of the application, notification for those who were not interviewed, and notification for those who were.

1. Acknowledging Receipt of Applications. It is the policy of the club to acknowledge applications received for positions with the club. It is common courtesy to respond to individuals who have taken the time to apply for positions with the club. An easy way to do this is by using postcards with the acknowledgement printed on them.
2. Notification for someone who was not interviewed. It is the policy of the club to provide a letter of non-selection to applicants who were not interviewed for employment with the club.
3. Notification for someone who was interviewed – either by phone or in person. Since you have personally spoken with this applicant, you owe it to him to conduct a personally notification regardless of whether you have or have not selected him. Even if not selected, this applicant was obviously impressive enough that you wanted an interview. Treating him properly is important (and the right thing to do) in case your selected applicant declines the position or does not work out, you still have a good relationship with any other applicant you interviewed.

*Reference: Personnel Policy, P-900.14 and P-900.15*

### XIII. Preparing for the New Hire

Hiring managers should always prepare for the new hire's first day to ensure that they are welcomed to the club and are given all the required screenings and tools to do their jobs properly.

#### All New Hires

Physical and Drug Screen. Every employee must receive a physical and a drug screen. The employment offer is contingent upon the successful completion of both. Failure to submit to either will also terminate the employment offer.

Background Check. As with the physical and drug screen, the employment offer is contingent upon a background check that does not reveal any disqualifying events such as falsifying information on the application, felony convictions, or a history of crime, vehicular violations, or malfeasance.

Legal Status to Work. All new hires must provide proper identification and proof of their authorization to work in the U.S. by the end of their third day of employment. If such proof is not provided, employment will be terminated.

Employee Handbook. All new hires will receive a copy of the Employee Handbook which spells out the club values, employment policies, work rules, and benefits. New hires must read, sign, and return the Employee Handbook Acknowledgement and Disclaimer form to their supervisors.

Familiarization with Facility. All new hires should be given a tour of the club to help orient them to their new surroundings.

Staff Introduction. For the same reason, new hires should be introduced to current staff members with whom they will work.

Orientations. All employees will receive two separate orientations – a Club Orientation and a Departmental Orientation – again to familiarize them with their new surroundings.

#### Line Employees

Dress Code and Grooming Standards. All line employees must understand the club's dress code and grooming standards.

Timekeeping Badge. All non-exempt employees will receive a timekeeping badge or timecard and receive instruction how to properly punch in and out.

Work Schedules. All line employees will receive a copy of their work schedule and be informed when and where new work schedules will be posted.

#### Managers and Supervisors

Office or work station. Each manager or supervisor will normally be provided an office or workstation, as well as phone access.

Computer. Department heads will normally be provided with a computer with Internet access.

Keys. Some management and supervisory employees will be given keys to access and secure various areas of the club premises. The issue of these keys must always be recorded according to the requirements of the club's key control policy. When the employee leaves the employ of the club, such keys must be collected.

Dress Code and Grooming Standards. All managers and supervisors must understand and enforce the club's dress code and grooming standards.

Cell Phone or Walkie-talkie. Some managers and supervisors will be issued a club cell phone and/or walkie-talkie to assist them in the performance of their duties.

Security Codes. Managers and supervisors often will need access to areas of the club protected by security systems and will need to be issued the current security codes.

Required Reading. All managers and supervisors will be issued and are expected to read *Leadership on the Line* and the *Managers' Handbook*. Both contain important information with which all managers and supervisors must be familiar.

Guidance and Goals from General Manager/Department Head. All new managers and supervisors should receive specific guidance and goals from either the General Manager or their department head. This information lays the groundwork and direction for the new hire's contributions. This information should be put in writing so that both parties may refer back to it to judge accomplishment and progress.

## XIV. Summary

In reviewing the material in this training document, one must surely recognize that there is little if anything that is not commonsensical. The major ingredients, then, for successful hiring are twofold:

1. An understanding of the underlying key principle of the hiring process,

*The more due diligence you do in screening, interviewing, and checking references for key subordinate hires, the better your success rate in successful hiring – that is, getting the “right people for your bus.”*

2. The organization and persistence to conduct the appropriate due diligence.

Given that the only requirement to do both is the time it takes to learn the principles and do the necessary “homework,” it is clear that the only downside to hiring properly is the time investment by the hiring manager. As Dr. Smart so aptly points out in his book, *Topgrading*,

“The challenge comes from the front end investment in time to learn the discipline . . . The only disadvantage . . . is that it takes longer . . . With an improved hiring ‘batting average,’ however, in the long run you save an enormous amount of time, not only in the entire selection process, but in managing [better performers].

He concludes by saying:

Managers who say, ‘I don’t have [time] for a [chronological, structured] interview,’ should finish the sentence . . . ‘so I will waste hundreds of hours when half the time I mis-hire people.’”