

## About Producers: Part 2 “The Choice”

So, you have decided to grow your firm by hiring Producers. Good for you. The most critical step in **hiring** a successful Producer is discovering “**who**” you are hiring.

Many agency principals, frustrated by their Producer hires, can’t tell me why they hired their Producers in the first place beyond an impressive resume, promises of future sales, or a mythical book of business ready to jump ship as soon as you two have cut a deal.

There are many tools out there to help better hiring like psychometric testing, references, etc. Tools, to select someone that might have a 75-80% chance of being successful in a reasonable amount of time. The following is ONE great tool for your “selection toolbox”.

One of the most powerful “truths” I have ever learned about hiring at ANY level or position:

**“We are hired for what we KNOW, and fired for who we ARE.”**

Think about this for a minute. “We hired Bob because he is a legend in his own resume, and we fired him because he was lying to underwriters.”

The trick is to FIND OUT WHO THEY ARE as soon as possible; BEFORE you hire! The first chance is in the interview. This is also the place where many sales managers get caught after an interview and they still don’t know the candidate. Here are several the common mistakes:

1. Don’t know ahead of time “who “you want. (Survivor, teammate, ethical, etc.)
2. Not prepared for the interview by reading the resume, and developing questions.
3. Don’t involve others, also prepared, to provide another perspective.

4. Always interviewing in your office, rather than elsewhere.
5. Spend more than 5% of the time “selling” your firm to the candidate!

One of the best tools to reveal important truths about your candidate is using “**Outcome Based Questions**” in the interview. As opposed to “closed-ended questions (yes or no answers solicited)”, or even “open-ended” questions like “What motivates you?”

Outcome based questions require a **story** about what has **HAPPENED**; a predictor of future events, not just what they **PROMISE** to happen. Here are a few examples, and the trait they represent:

- a. “Tell me about your biggest personal/ professional victory over adversity.”  
(Survivor)
- b. “Tell me a story that explains how your team has helped you to grow your book of business. How would they tell the story?” (Teammate)
- c. “Tell me what you see happening out there competitively today.”  
(Marketing acumen)
- d. “Tell me about the last time your understanding of insurance helped a client or prospect.” (Technical)
- e. “What happened that allowed you to “blow by” your sales goals in the last two years? “(Sales activity and results)
- f. “Tell me a story about the last time you got “lucky” in sales out there. How did you get into the position to get “lucky” that time?” (Sales Activity)

As you can see, you are soliciting the whole “story” about the things you are interested in, and gaining depth as they lay it out for you, generating more questions. You also now have something for them to document for you, like sales numbers, etc.

No more fluff like “My biggest area of self-improvement is I work too hard...”  
Give me a break!

Changing your interview questions will go a long way to knowing who they are. In the Sales Leadership Summit™, we spend a couple hours on just this issue. If you have questions regarding this article and how you can apply it to your hiring activities, please feel free to give me a call.

The next article addresses what activities to fill your pipeline with candidates. So, get busy knowing who they are!

Good Hunting!

Phil Beakes