

Indicators of a failed hiring strategy

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I'm the boss of a newly hired employee who has resigned after only seven months in office. Is it reasonable to assume that the human resources (HR) department has failed in its job? Please let me know your thoughts on this issue. — Accusing Finger



A first grader went on her first day to a newly integrated school at the height of a rainy day and an unexpected flashing thunderstorm. After school, an anxious mother met her at the door to inquire: “How did everything go, Honey?”

The little girl replied: “Oh, Mother! You know what? A little black girl sat next to me.” In fear and trepidation, the mother expected trauma, but tried to ask calmly: “And what happened?” The girl replied: “We were both so scared at the thunderstorm that we held hands all day.”

Let me tell you this. Instead of blaming HR, you should hold hands with it to ensure mutual accomplishment for the good of the organization. You should also discover and admit your fault as you have managed the new employee closer on the ground and longer than anyone else in the organization. HR may have done its job in screening the new hire, but it's still you — who has the ultimate decision to accept or reject any candidate in the shortlist.

It's not a good idea to start a blaming game with HR as there are many factors to consider. For one, it could be you as the boss who may have mismanaged the worker resulting in his resignation. But of course, I'm only guessing.

But first things first. You should not worry much about this one single resignation. Unless, there's a clear trend showing a bad hiring process being done by HR as reflected in a good number of resignations of new employees from different departments by different line executives, then you're probably right in your conclusion.

WHEN TO BLAME HR

Change is difficult for so many people, including HR. Even though some HR managers tend to be adventurous, many of them, to a large degree are creatures of old school and their comfort zones. Consequently, any sort of change in their working lives can sometimes be unsettling. This is particularly true when HR doesn't know the problem, in the first place.

- 1. When HR takes its own sweet time to hire new workers.** The rule of thumb is not more than one month for ordinary workers. And six to seven weeks for line supervisors or managers. But why is speed important? Simple, it's a clear manifestation of management efficiency. If HR is inefficient, then most likely, it's also ineffective.
- 2. When HR keeps "secrets" away from new hires.** Sometimes, in HR's desire to hire people right away, it refuses to give correct answers to some of the job applicants' questions like: "What's the reason for the vacancy? Why can't you promote someone from within? What's the management style of my prospective boss? What's the corporate culture? How's the turnover rate of the company?"
- 3. When HR reacts to job vacancies with nothing.** This happens when HR does not have an active database of job applicants that can be relied upon as soon as a vacancy arises. The best approach is to clean and maintain a reliable supply from different sources, including campus hiring, online sourcing, employee referrals and many more.
- 4. When HR fails to reap the benefits of internal sourcing.** This is in connection with the policy of "promotion from within" which should be upheld all the time, above all others. External hiring must be done only as a last resort and for this matter, HR must convince all line departments to train their people for future challenges.

WHEN TO BLAME LINE MANAGERS

No matter how careful or how efficient is HR doing its job, line department managers are part of an important equation on whether to hire new workers or not. Perhaps the greatest challenge in the area of management is to achieve the right balance of "people orientation" and "production orientation."

Looking over people's shoulders or alternatively neglecting them completely, can cause irreparable work issues. Therefore, both the individual worker and his manager have to consider how much or how little follow-up is needed. Normally, it is the fault of line executives if the following circumstances are present:

- 1. When line managers exercise excessive control.** It depends much on every situation. There are times, some workers prefer to be directed closely rather than perform their tasks with greater freedom. On the other hand, a great number of workers would like to be treated reasonably as human beings who can work independently and much ease.
- 2. When line managers are not helpful to their workers.** The job of every manager is to see to it that his workers can do the job easy with the help of company resources. Therefore, the “manager’s role is not to check people’s work, but rather to liberally spend time seeing how people can do their work faster, more easily, and more accurately,” according to Takehiko Harada, former president of Toyota Taiwan.
- 3. When line managers don’t share vital information.** What happens when managers withhold information to people? It’s a trust issue that creates anxiety. Employees would think they’re not being trusted much by their bosses. Sometimes, they think that silence means the situation may have gone down too bad. If that happens, there would be uncertainty that some workers may be prodded to pack their bags.
- 4. When line managers don’t recognize employee contribution.** Everyone likes to be rewarded even if with zero-cash awards. In fact, they’re much more valuable and lasts longer than cash. “Managers need to communicate with their people to find out what makes them feel good (for some, it’s a raise; for others, it’s public recognition) and then to reward them for a job well done,” says Travis Bradberry, president of TalentSmart.

But once again, let me reiterate that people management is not a blame game. Line executives must work hand-in-hand with HR to come out with the best possible hiring and retention strategies. It’s a lot easier to do rather than resort to blamestorming which could only increase the stress level of everyone in the organization.

ELBONOMICS:

When you’re blaming others, you’re avoiding the truth about yourself.

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