



How to Hire Tough So You Can Manage Easy in Today's Turbulent Times

Executive Summary

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■ Speaker: **Mel Kleiman, CSP**, President, Humetrics

The Big Idea

Hiring great people is the most critical factor in an organization's success. Certain best practices can help a company both increase the flow of high-quality candidates who apply and predict those with superstar potential (and those without it) during the recruiting process.

Quick Summary

- Best practices prior to recruiting include making sure that hiring is indeed the best solution, and clearly defining the ideal new hire.
- Best practices during recruiting include increasing the flow of high-quality candidates by attracting the best and making it easy for them to apply.
- Also important: using a systematic recruiting process and asking the right questions to distinguish "A players" from "duds."
- Throughout the process, be aware of the worst practices, specifically ten key reasons that the wrong people often get the job.

Context

To help employers build a team of A-list players, Mel Kleiman discussed the do's and don'ts in hiring.

Key Themes

Before engaging in recruiting, make sure hiring is the best solution and define the ideal new hire.

Recruiting the right way begins with introspection. Decision makers should ask themselves five key questions:

1. *Can we avoid hiring new people by doing the job differently?* One way might be leaving the decision up to team members. Ask whether they'd like to try to do the job without a new hire (and get additional pay.) One Humetrics client increased team cohesiveness, boosted productivity, and saved money this way (four team members chose to earn \$1.25 more per hour, costing the company \$6 per hour more versus the \$8 plus benefits a new hire would require).
2. *What are ten reasons an A-list player would want to join us?* If a company can't answer this question, it should first make substantive changes before seeking A players.
3. *Would I work for me? If so, why?* If the answer is "no," the manager needs to figure out what to do differently.
4. *How will I know what winners look like when I see them?* Managers need to have a clear picture of their ideal new hire, defining the qualities that an ideal jobholder would possess. They then want to look for those qualities in candidates.

"How can you find what you need if you don't know what it looks like?"
-Mel Kleiman

5. *How will I retain the best workers when I get them?* Before recruiting, managers must know how they will retain the employees that they hire. During recruiting, they should make sure the job is one in which the candidate will want to remain.

Best practices during recruiting include increasing the flow of high-quality candidates.

The following measures will maximize the flow of high-quality candidates into your recruiting system:

—*Use all available channels and make it easy for the best candidates to apply.* The best source of proven talent is all the former employees you would like to have come back. Studies show that 20% of people invited to return to an employer will do so. The second best source of quality applicants are your current employees, especially recent new hires. Create an employee referral program (immediate rewards are most effective), spread the word that you're hiring, and describe the ideal candidate. Also advertise the position on the Internet (using both online job boards and the company website) and accept walk-in applications. Make the process easy for applicants, minimize the red tape of applying online, provide times beyond regular business hours for the in-person applicant who is already working.

—*Define the reasons A-list candidates would be attracted to the firm and communicate them.* Be sure that job descriptions list the appealing aspects of working for the company (casual Fridays, free coffee/tea/candy, etc.). At job fairs, a board listing these points is a good idea, as are laminated cards that can be easily distributed.

Also important: a systematic recruiting process and asking the questions that separate the A-players from the from duds.

It's important that your recruiting process have a carefully designed structure. There should be a system in place for eliciting the desired results or else those results will be elusive. Filling out an application should be mandatory because applications tell employers what they want to know, whereas resumes tell employers what *applicants* want them to know. Testing is an excellent way to assess capabilities.

The interview process also requires structure, with the various parts having different goals—such as relaxing the candidate, imparting general information, asking/answering questions, explaining the company's values and culture, and making sure the candidate understands expectations.

Questions should attempt to unearth attitudes about work. Try to discern dependability by asking what candidates think is a fair attendance policy or the reasons (other than being sick) that they might miss or be late to work. The interviewer should

encourage honesty by reassuring the applicant that no answer is an immediate disqualifier and all information will be taken under careful consideration.

Five questions can help interviewers see the entire person and distinguish future the best prospects from the duds. They are:

- 1 "Tell me about your first job—what did you learn there?" Asking about the last job is like hearing a story backwards, and the answer is often canned. The first job is usually the most formative in terms of work ethic and attitudes.
- 2 "What achievements are you most proud of?"
- 3 "Did your previous employer conduct performance appraisals? Where did you rate and how did you feel about that?"
- 4 "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank yourself in terms of [insert whatever characteristic matters most to on-job performance]."
- 5 "Would you like to ask me a question?" After replying, ask, "Why did you choose that question?"

Understanding the person will help managers ensure not just that the candidate is right for the job, but that the job is right for the candidate, aiding retention goals.

"If you beat the competition to the best employees, the best employees will help you beat the competition." —Mel Kleiman

Employers also need to be aware of and avoid "worst practices."

Knowing what not to do helps decision makers keep in mind what they should be doing instead. Ten key reasons the wrong people often get hired are:

- 1 *Managers don't recognize the importance of hiring the right person, so they don't invest the time needed in order to do so.* They have no idea what a great employee is worth to the company or what a bad employee costs.
- 2 *Managers don't know what a great employee looks like in terms of (in order of importance) capacities, attitude, personality, and skills.* The mental and physical capacities are most important; capacities + achievements & attitude = success.
- 3 *Managers don't have a recruiting strategy.* Simply waiting for someone to walk in the door and apply in response to a "Now Hiring" sign is not a recruiting strategy.
- 4 *Companies don't make it easy for the right kinds of people to get into the hiring system.* Holding walk-in interviews at midday sabotages the search for A-players, most of whom are already gainfully employed.

5 *Interviewers make the 14-second mistake.* A University of Chicago study showed that regardless of an interviewer's skill, most make up their minds about a candidate within the first 14 seconds of the interview. They then seek (often subconsciously) to reinforce that impression via the questions asked. Instead, ask tough questions to those you're biased toward and try to relax those whom you're biased against to test the validity of initial impressions. Also, you're your impressions and evaluate whether to toss them out later.

6 *The selection process lacks a plan or structure.* A well thought out structure for the search and interview process will guarantee the results you intend. A system gives you what it's designed to give you.

7 *Interviewers don't get great answers, because they don't ask great questions.* Questions should be constructed to ferret out the candidates' values and work ethics, including dependability.


8 *Managers don't make sure "what you see is what you get."* Recognize that that the candidate as presented doesn't always match the worker being hired, especially if the candidate is given latitude to spin the discussion favorably.


"Let's stop hiring great applicants and start hire great employees instead." —Mel Kleiman

9. *Managers often buy the package instead of the product.* Try to look beyond a candidate's qualifications and presentation and see the actual person. Try to assess whether the person is right for the job and whether the job is right for the person.

10. *Another common mistake is not setting expectations before hiring in order to decrease odds of later firing.* During the interview, time should be taken to clearly set out all on-the-job expectations so the manager and candidate can be on the same page before committing to one another.

Other Important Points

 **Job fairs.** Job fairs are excellent ways to recruit, but don't sit behind the table. Tables are barriers. Stand out in front, which will both distinguish your booth from the rest and allow you to get closer to potential candidates.

 **Critical firsts.** The first minutes, hours, and days of a new job are critical to an employee's later job satisfaction. In orientation, quality time matters (versus quantity of time). Don't have new hires start when staff is busiest—asking them to sit with a cup of coffee sends the wrong signal during this critical time. Managers should spend one-on-one time with each new hire before the workday begins.

Biography

Mel Kleiman, CSP

Through his frequent contributions to trade publications and industry websites such as *Convenience Store Decisions*, *Auto, Inc.*, *HR.com*, *the Society for Human Resource Management*, and *Progressive Business*, Mel is recognized as today's most influential expert on how to hire and retain the best hourly employees. Mel captivates convention and corporate training audiences throughout the world with specific ways to attract, select and retain the employees who comprise 70% of the U.S. workforce. Mel's clients include many well-known names like Exxon/Mobil, Time Warner, the National Restaurant Association, Pizza Hut, Coca-Cola, the International Association of Chain Drug Stores, the National Association of Convenience Stores, Comfort Keepers, Dairy Queen, Jiffy Lube, and the Multi-Unit Franchising Conference & Expo.

After successfully owning and operating three businesses and being the largest holder of Hertz franchises in the country, Mel founded Humetrics, LP, in 1976 when he realized that while there were an abundance of books, tests, tools, and systems on the market to help business owners and hiring managers recruit and select professional staff, there was a dearth of resources for those who hire hourly workers.

Mel's subsequent success is a result of his passion for helping employers minimize costly employee turnover, his extensive research work, and his development of simple, but effective tools and systems that solve common problems. His speaking, training, and consulting work with hundreds of clients over the years keeps him on the cutting-edge of today's best practices and procedures for hourly employee recruiting, selection, and retention.

In 1999, the National Speakers Association awarded Mel their *Certified Speaking Professional* designation, an honor earned by fewer than ten percent of professional speakers worldwide. He has also been a member of the Society for Human Resource Management since 1999.

Mel has authored five books including the bestselling *Hire Tough, Manage Easy*; *267 Hire Tough Interview Questions*; *Recruit Smarter, Not Harder*; *180 Ways to Build a Magnetic Culture*; and *So, You Got the Job – Now What?*