

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF HIRING

By Sean Gogan



It seems like finding the right person to fill an open position should be a relatively easy proposition. After all, unemployment remains high and who wouldn't want to work at your attractive property? The reality is tougher than it seems, according to a property manager recently stumped by the process:

"First we placed an ad and didn't get any qualified responses. Then, we changed the ad and got lots of resumes but few of them met the requirements. It took hours to cull thorough the stack of resumes, but I did find some that looked good.

Arranging and conducting interviews took several weeks and

still didn't generate an ideal candidate. So, I went back to the drawing board to select more people to interview.

When I found someone I wanted to hire, he didn't pass the company required drug test. By then, my second choice had found a job. So, I settled on my third choice out of frustration."

During the past two years of layoffs, employers have been faced with more job seekers applying for positions that they aren't truly qualified for. This has limited the supply of the most qualified applicants, which is compounded by the "best" employees' unwillingness to change positions due to

the unstable economy and companies' efforts to hold on to their most productive or "star" employees. As a result, managers have had to develop more effective ways to screen candidates and identify the best match for an open position.

There are ways property managers can streamline the hiring process and increase their chances of finding the ideal match. Consider these suggestions next time you plan to add a new staff member.

Hire for Success

When you embark on the hiring process, take the time to go through the steps that managers

have found to increase hiring success. Rushing can cause you to select someone who is mismatched to your corporate style, has a personality that doesn't mesh with your office, or does not possess an adequate skill set given that you have very little time for training.

When accepting a new position, employees have the best intentions to be successful with your company. They have carefully considered their options and have perhaps left positions that they've held for a while. They are willing to take the risk of joining your company because they believe that they'll be productive members of your team and will benefit from working with you.

A careful screening helps both the employer and employee to evaluate each other and determine the likelihood of a successful match. Your due diligence during the hiring process is a service to both you and the new employee. Done right, it can result in a long-term, mutually beneficial situation for both your company and the employee.

Create a Detailed Job Description

Increase your chances of success by starting with a job description that specifically outlines the tasks, responsibilities and qualifications required for the job. Consider what made the person who last held the job successful and incorporate those skills into the job description.

Ask several employees who will work above, below or alongside this position to review the draft description and offer input. Take into account the expectations of co-workers and resolve any problems or misunderstandings about employees' roles before you bring a new person on the scene. Outlining the responsibilities of the new position in writing will prevent confusion.

If you have a small property, ask some of your associates to

give the description a "once over" and offer some suggestions. The clearer you are about what you are looking for, the easier it will be to find the ideal candidate.

Conduct Research on Salaries

It pays to do some homework on current salaries, so you have an idea of industry standards. State employment bulletins and the Bureau of Labor Statistics are available on the Web and can provide some background. Other web sites such as www.salary.com can be helpful. You can also gather information from professional associations and by asking your associates who work for other companies what their standard salary ranges are for certain positions.

Craft an Ad that Attracts Qualified Candidates

Before you place an ad, do your research by reviewing newspaper ads, as well as industry job banks and Internet job postings that are being used by your competitors. Which ads seem to visually jump out at you? Get an idea of the style and length of ad that appeals to you and fits in your budget.

Next, take a closer look at the wording in the ads you like. How do your competitors describe the requirements of the positions and the benefits of working at their companies? Use this information and the job description to draft an ad. Remember that it must sound appealing enough to encourage qualified applicants to respond, so be sure to describe the advantages of working for your company. To limit applications to those who are most qualified, remember to state requirements such as three years experience, CPM or drug test required.

Select the Best Resumes

Looking at the job description, rank your requirements so you know

which are mandatory and which are ideal, but not absolutely necessary. Prioritizing requirements and checking off those each candidate meets, enables you to fairly evaluate and compare skill sets. As you review resumes, watch for typos and unclear descriptions of job duties at each company. If applicable, look for a consistent career track, with each position showing progressively increased responsibilities. If there are employment gaps, you'll want to explore the reason for the inconsistent employment. "Job hopping" used to be considered a negative, but today it is a common occurrence and shouldn't prevent you from considering the applicant.

Conduct Effective Interviews

When you call the candidates to schedule interviews, let them know who they will be meeting, how much time will be needed and what other information may be required to fill out the employment application. Before the interviews, prepare a written set of questions to ask all of the candidates. This assures that you can make a fair comparison. To prevent confusion, make notes about each candidate's responses. Then review the notes after all the interviews are completed.

During the interviews, find out why they left previous positions, who they reported to and who reported to them. When asking about salary history, be sure to ask about bonuses, commissions and housing expenses.

You'll also want to ask for specific examples of how they dealt with a variety of situations. You might ask,

- "Tell me about a difficult customer you had to deal with and how you resolved the problem."
- "When you got extremely busy in a past position, how did you set priorities?"
- "When told to cut your budget, what process did you go through

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to make tough decisions?”

- Explain a situation where you had to discipline an employee.”
- “Tell me about a mistake you’ve made and what you learned from it.” or
- “Describe an assignment that was a totally new experience to you and how you went about getting the information you needed to perform the task.””

Keep the interview as objective as possible based on specific criteria. Sometimes managers make the mistake of hiring people who they like when the best person for the job may be someone whose personality is different from the hiring manager’s.

At the end of the interviews, give applicants an opportunity to ask questions about your company and the position. Also, remind them that you will be conducting background checks and requiring drug tests. Explain the next steps in the hiring process and let them know when you will be getting back to them.

Administer Background Checks Fairly

If you plan to check references, conduct criminal background checks, ask applicants to take skill assessment tests or require drug tests, these must be required of all the candidates being considered for the position, or it will be considered discrimination. Former employers are only required to verify the dates of employment. You may be able to get a response to questions such as, “If this person was available, and you had a position open that required his or her skills, would you rehire the candidate?” There are many services that offer background and credit checking online. You may also purchase skills assessment tests online. For drug testing, look for local industrial medicine clinics.

Sell Them on the Opportunity

When you are convinced that you have the right candidate, you need to determine if he or she wants to work for you. You may want to set up a second interview. Schedule it in the morning, so the candidate can experience what it will be like commuting to your job site. Show the candidate the work area and let him or her talk to some of the other employees.

During the second interview, some companies ask that the prospective employee meet with every member of the work team to make sure that current employees are in agreement with the hiring decision. Allow time for the candidate to ask additional questions about the position and your company. Carefully review all compensation and benefit issues. Finally, ask the candidate what would prevent him or her from taking the position to uncover any objections to accepting the offer. Address these concerns and reinforce the advantages of working for your company.

Make an Offer

The formal offer should be in writing and include the start date and job title, as well as clearly state the compensation as an hourly, weekly or annual amount. It should also include the work hours and whether it is exempt (does not qualify for overtime) or non-exempt (does qualify for overtime). In addition, outline the commission schedule and applicable benefits plus the start date in the offer letter. Finally, state a time limit on the offer, so the applicant knows that the offer must be accepted or declined within 48 or 72 hours, for example.

Prepare Employee to Give Notice

When the candidate accepts your offer, you should discuss how and when to give notice to the current

employer. Generally, two weeks notice is standard. You should also prepare the candidate that the company may make a counter offer in an attempt to discourage a career move. Explain that statistics show that 70% of the people who accept a counter offer from their present employer end up leaving within one year.

Avoid Costly Hiring Mistakes

Take the time to carefully hire new employees who truly have the skills to meet job requirements and whose personalities fit with your corporate culture. If you hire hastily, you may waste a lot of time training someone who isn’t a good fit and leaves after a few months. In addition, a new employee who leaves prematurely disrupts office morale. In contrast, a good hire will quickly enhance productivity and help you meet business objectives. **PM**

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BEFORE YOU HIRE NEW EMPLOYEE:

- Write a job description
- Research salaries
- Write an effective ad
- Select the best resumes
- Ask telling questions in the interview
- Check backgrounds
- Sell candidates on working for you
- Document the offer
- Prepare the candidate to give notice

AVOID ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION

During an interview there are several questions that are considered discriminatory. You may accidentally bring up these topics while getting acquainted. To prevent inadvertently asking discriminatory questions during an interview, avoid the following:

1. Marital status

- Are you married?
- Is there a husband or wife we can call in an emergency?
- How would your husband feel about you traveling?
- How long have you been married?

2. Children

- Do you have children?
- How many children do you have?
- How old are your children?
- What are their names?

3. Home

- Where do you live?
- How will you get to work from your house?
- How long have you lived at your present address?
- Do you own your home?
- What was your previous address?

4. Heritage

- What a lovely accent, what country are you from?
- What is your native language?
- Where were your parents born?
- What church do you go to?

5. Personal information

- How old are you?
- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?
- Do you have a disability?
- Have you ever applied for workers' compensation?
- Have you ever gone to a psychologist?

6. Other information

- Have you ever been convicted?
- What rank did you achieve in the military?

Questions you CAN use in an interview

When developing a list of questions that you might ask candidates, you are within your legal rights to ask the following:

1. Application (Assuming it meets legal requirements).

- Can you tell me more about (something that is on the application)

2. Former Employment

- Why did you leave?
- What might references say about your work?
- What were your job duties?
- What did you like or not like about the job?
- What did you think of your supervisor?
- What past job experiences would be relevant to this position?
- How many promotions did you receive?

3. Ideal Employment

- What job duties are you most interested in?
- What kind of a supervisor do you like to work for?
- How would you like your employer to handle customer complaints?
- How much do you expect an employer to communicate to you?
- How would you want this communication to take place?

4. Compensation

- What were your wages at your prior job?
- How frequently were increases given?
- How were raises determined, by merit, productivity, or something else?
- How many merit increases did you receive?

For further assistance, you can contact the California Chamber of Commerce, State of California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, or call Sean Gogan, General Manager, Renoir Staffing Services., Inc. at (800) 573-6647 or www.renoirstaffing.com.