



**HIRING AND SELECTION OF
LEADERS: MAKING IT HAPPEN**

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GOALS

1. Differentiate between a leader and a follower.
2. Ascertain the benefits and difficulties of promoting existing employees to a leadership position.
3. Ascertain the benefits and difficulties of hiring new employees as leaders.
4. Avoid discriminatory behavior, comments, and other issues during the hiring process.
5. Use of a numerical formula that helps to determine a ranking status.
6. Differentiate between objective and subjective considerations during the hiring process.
7. Incorporate legal and ethical behaviors into the hiring process.
8. Complete a hiring interview without discrimination and bias.

KEY WORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Leader
2. Discrimination—Definition and Recognition
3. Hiring from Within the Facility/Organization
4. Hiring outside of the Facility/Organization
5. Consistency in Hiring Practices
6. Leader vs. Follower
7. “Two-Way Street” of the Hiring Process
8. “Goodness of Fit”
9. Legal Awareness
10. Self-Presentation

WHO IS A LEADER?

A leader is a person who assesses, directs, participates, and is held accountable for meeting leadership goals. He/she has the power to stand alone and the courage to make difficult tough decisions. It is a person that always strives to be first—and, it is the person that seeks to be the best of all who strive. This type of person gives his/her “all” for the success of the team!

The Leader is the First to:

1. Recognize a need
2. Determine and set forth a plan
3. Encourage and empower the team toward action and stability

4. Allow the team to unleash its power toward solving problems
5. Listen with compassion to the needs of others

The Leader Consistently:

1. Exhibits calm in the midst of chaos
2. Directs activities with goals in mind
3. Supports and rewards positive behavior
4. Directions and makes decisions with possible consequence in mind
5. Accepts responsibility for outcomes
6. Knows and confirms legal expectations (i.e. documentation, evaluations, confidentiality, nondiscrimination, no harassment, etc.)
7. Knows and follows the process of problem-solving techniques
8. Resists coercion, manipulation, and threats
9. Maintains positive personal relationships while making difficult decisions

Interesting—sometimes the above stated traits are consistent with those who do not set out to be a leader, but it is a quality of their personal integrity and purposeful positive actions (as stated above) that naturally identify them as a leader.

If you are looking for leader, know that they are found ONE AT A TIME. THEY DO NOT FLOCK!

Educationally, leaders are taught at the bachelor level leadership theory and Critical Thinking. That is not to say that associate degree programs do not teach some leadership skills. If the level of education were the only criterion for effective and successful leadership, then the four-year graduate would be the best choice. However, education is only one consideration. The ability to work with people using integrity is a MUST!

As performance demands change it also encourages more education to doctoral levels. Therefore, there will be more leaders prepared with advanced education (Ph.D. and Ed.D.) and more leaders with advanced training. The intellectual ability to acquire such advanced training and information denotes intellectual abilities—but not necessarily leadership aptitude. Some researchers claim that leadership abilities are *genetically inherited* and in place as a part of a person's aptitude early in life—hummm—that is an interesting finding! (Read use of leadership theories by this author.)

LEADER DISCRIMINATION

Inappropriate preferential treatment of one leader, or any potential leader (all employees for that matter) in any manner or form during any facility/organizational process can be considered discrimination. This can easily occur during (but is not limited to) the hiring process in relation to their race, religion, age, gender, physical appearance, etc. In general, it is a mistreatment of or making an exception for any person, class, or category, without considering a person's merit. (Read introduction to the hiring process by this author)

The selection of the gender for a leader (or any other position) should be a very covert and an unadvertised consideration. This advertisement of a leader's gender consideration for employment, in most situations, denotes discrimination. However, there is sometimes a quiet personal acknowledgement that one gender or the other might be the preferred. With that said—it is always best to not state or advertise preferences that would give anyone the idea of possible gender discrimination.

Research came up with some interesting findings regarding gender. They proclaim that tall men project an essence of control and power, but can be intimidating to meek employees with poor self-esteem. Females are often seen as gentle persuaders to get specific jobs done. There are exceptions to every rule, of course! Consideration of each person's merit (in addition to researched findings) would be the most acceptable approach.

Too often any employment/hiring decision results in "what feels good" or the "charisma" felt during the interview. Therefore, preparing predetermined and standards/criteria measured consistently on every potential employee will help provide some assurance of an unbiased and nondiscriminatory interviewing process. The standards/criteria should in some way reflect the job description. Keep in mind that you are looking for a leader who will be able to give directions and can answer questions correctly to others. This person is the driving force behind decisions and activities. (read setting the compass by this author.)

In order to promote leadership success, a newly hired leader must be able to perform and have relevant experience in leadership as a part of his/her history and life experience. There is a dilemma whether the best choice is to hire from within the facility/organization or outside of the facility/organization.

HIRING FROM WITHIN THE FACILITY/ORGANIZATION

Hiring a leader who knows the personal strengths and limitations of other facility/organizational employees often gives a new leader the necessary positive edge for success. The secret, at times, is to find a leader within the ranks who is recognized by others as knowledgeable about the business processes, as well as can be considered a leader by other employees. This person should have at least three recognized qualities: positive relationship abilities, task abilities, and a trusting relationship with employees.

One significant detriment is related to the possibility that the potential leader has formed relationships and exhibited behaviors as an employee that has exposed possible areas prone to staff manipulation and/or coercion. Going from an employee with overtly friendly staff behaviors to a leader might be rather threatening and daunting (and even confusing) to the entire staff. It is always tempting to "reward" employee longevity or compliant behavior with a leadership position. Too many times, leaders are "rewarded" to the detriment of the facility/organization. Often, this person has learned well to be a *follower and not a leader*. The transition can be difficult!

HIRING FROM OUTSIDE THE FACILITY/ORGANIZATION

An excellent leader can be hired from other sources other than the existing facility/organization. Sometimes, there is not a leader in the facility/organization that can meet the rigorous requirements related to being a leader and/or cannot successfully make that transition from a general staff member to a leader. The same concern for relationship, task abilities, and the ability to form trust should apply. When hiring from outside the facility/organization there is less chance of a social entanglement with inside employees. Manipulative patterns that can be used by the employees toward a leader are usually not as established.

A person from outside the facility/organization will require education regarding the mission and goals of the facility/organization. Extra time and effort by the administration will need to occur to encourage behaviors that support and enhance the facility/organization.

NECESSITY OF CONSISTENCY IN HIRING PRACTICES

Whether you hire a leader from within the facility or not, the hiring process **MUST BE THE SAME FOR EVERY EMPLOYEE INTERVIEWED**. Go through the same exact questioning and numerically score each potential leader interviewed. This provides a sense of objectivity and comparing of the applicants by the reviewing committee. This process helps to curtail potential legal concerns as to equality in the hiring process. It is usually best to interview potential employees both in the facility/organization and outside of the facility/organization so as to support the efforts of nondiscrimination.

Sometimes, having a community person(s) on the interviewing committee will help to assure objectivity of hiring decisions. The community committee member(s) and applicants often become a loud voice within the community as to the fairness and equality put forth by the reviewing committee.

In the past and with the potential employee's permission, *past employers* of the potential employee could/would provide a review regarding the applicant's history of success. This is no longer the case. There have been many lawsuits regarding the sharing of information that the potential employee or hired employee considered (after the fact) inappropriate or inaccurate. Previous or current employers will usually give you the date of hire and the previous or current employment title as well as the past or current general status of the person being interviewed. Personal references are also questionable due to the possibility of friendship or an emotional overlay.

A facility/organization might give this some serious consideration when other facilities/organizations call for an employee's current or past reference(s). The perception of slander or even the perception of incorrect information to a potential employer by a current or past employer is a "slippery slope" that could easily end in a law suit. Therefore, a *specific policy* of what to say and what not to say or write about *any present or past employee* asking or giving permission for a reference to be given to a potential future employer should always in accordance to a previously established policy. Many facilities/organizations share only the date of hire and/or length of employment, and job title.

From the writings of Paul Meehl (past educator and practicing psychoanalyst who taught at University of Minnesota), there are recommendations to be considered for hiring leaders within facilities/organizations. His simple and *pre-established statistical rules* for selecting new employees was

found to be superior to *intuitive judgements*. That is, the time spent in doing interviews is much more valuable if the hiring body consistently, for each applicant, predetermines *specific favorable job attributes and related personality traits regarding the applicant's life in his/her normal environment*. It is the statistical summaries of these separately evaluated attributes and traits of each applicant that seem to most likely help to determine which applicant will achieve high validity resulting in job success. This process, he claims, will likely more accurately measure job related attributes with a higher degree of confidence than an intuitive judgement. This shared and consistent approach to each applicant curtails any possibility of job selection discrimination.

LEADER VS. FOLLOWER

The truth is that all leaders have leaders. There is always a leader of a leader, in other words. However, to determine a leader and to be a leader, it is important to be able to perform as a leader. Conversely, it is important also to recognize a follower. The following leadership behaviors might be considered as a part of a job description and then used during the evaluation process to determine the extent of leadership success and ability.

The Comparison of a Leader and a Follower (going horizontally):

A Leader	A Follower
1. Exhibits calm in the midst of chaos	1. Exhibits nervousness in the midst of chaos
2. Directs activities with goals in mind	2. Performs activities only as directed
3. Supports and rewards positive behaviors	3. Accepts rewards often with skepticism
4. Directs and makes decisions with concern for consequences	4. Performs as requested with no concern for ultimate consequences
5. Is responsible for outcomes	5. Limited responsibility for outcomes
6. Practices, knows, and determines policy direction	6. Depends on leader to give direction
7. Utilizes legal knowledge to make judgments	7. Depends on leader judgments
8. Problem-solving follows a calculated pattern	8. Problem-solving is limited
9. Calm and ability to direct during a crisis	9. Dependent on direction during a crisis
10. Listens to and hears communication implications	10. Listens to words and just performs
11. Seeks respect and recognized integrity	11. Seeks being liked by others

GUIDELINES FOR HIRING A LEADER

To perform leadership behaviors, it is important that the outcome be someone with experience in the leadership role by showing the leadership capabilities in previous work or life experience.

Once a facility/organization has decided to promote from within the facility/organization or hire from outside of the facility/organization, it becomes necessary to understand the differences of each potential employee. Take into consideration the specific questions or expectations the reviewing committee consider important to be answered by each potential employee being interviewed. Use *open-ended questions*—that is, the answer requires a statement that shows understanding of the situation. Be concerned about any questions that could represent a gender bias! (read document on communication by this author.)

Self-presentation and verbal skills when answering an open-ended question by the reviewing committee would provide additional information to make a hiring decision. Asking the potential employee being interviewed to give a specific example as they respond to any of the following content items would provide a more accurate picture as to their qualifications. Also, try to ascertain the degree of ability to relate to people effectively and the ability to perform required tasks stated on the job description. It would be interesting to know if they have specific skills that might improve the job as they perceive the job to be.

Remember that the potential employee being interviewed is also determining if he/she wants the job. Allow time for each potential employee to ask questions of you, the reviewing committee. The interviewing process is a “two-way street”—that is, a potential employee must decide if they really want the job for which they are applying.

“GOODNESS OF FIT” TO THE LEADER’S JOB DESCRIPTION

In research, the term “Goodness of Fit” is used as it relates to a statistical model. However, in this instance it compares the degree of expected behavior/values found in the job description with the degree of actual behavior/values observed/presented by the potential employee being interviewed. It is considered a comparative review. The degree to which a person is willing to admit upon interview levels of competency or incompetency might show the ability to be objective and truthful regarding evaluation of self and others. The first indication of the “Goodness of Fit” comes from the job application, which should be completed and reviewed by the reviewing committee *before* the actual interview.

Another dimension of the job interview should be a consideration regarding the potential employee stating a willingness to meet the required expectations of the job, especially if there is some question about his/her ability noted. Attitude and self-esteem of the potential employee should also be determined. Objectivity regarding the personal ability to meet the job description will often indicate his/her ability to be objective when evaluate others.

Just as all applicants who meet the job description should be interviewed by asking the same questions, the scoring should also be regarding the same considerations. To have the *same* planned questions for each potential employee decreases the possibility of discrimination.

Present each potential employee with at least two leadership scenarios related to the specific leadership position. Note the theoretical answer—or lack thereof. Does there appear to be a legitimate process related to each scenario?

The ongoing covert thought for the interviewing committee during the reviewing session is: How will the applicant respond to future leadership problems? Keeping that question in mind, there will be an obvious ability to compare each applicant about their ability to solve and react to job related leadership problems. The reviewing committee should look for quickness and accuracy in the ability by the potential employee to state the most appropriate *expert* leadership principles/theory. Experience and theory knowledge are important. You are looking for an expert, and experience and knowledge are prerequisites for being an expert.

To be able to apply the experience and learned principles/theory (instead of just stating and doing what feels good) usually results in leadership success. It will separate the “good-feelers” from the “expert-doers.” Confidence in the giving of appropriate answers to the questions will help to show confidence in leadership behaviors.

LEGAL AWARENESS OF A LEADER

It is important for a leader to have an understanding and appreciation of a number of highly vulnerable legal issues. The following list is in no order of importance. Open questions (in no order of importance) of the potential employee regarding the knowledge/understanding of some or all of the following sensitive legal topics would tell the reviewing committee to what extent the potential employee understands legal concerns:

1. Discrimination and discriminatory behaviors
2. Need for clear job descriptions
3. Timely and comprehensive staff evaluations
4. Verbal and written communication
5. Personal and professional involvement with staff
6. Availability of leaders to guide and help staff
7. Rules, regulations, policies, and written procedures—the intended use and application
8. State and federal regulations related to job expectations and licensure
9. Sexual harassment
10. Chain-of-command application and expectations
11. Problem-solving patterns and methods
12. Congruence between personal and organizational philosophy

PRESENTATION OF SELF AS A LEADER

The behavior and dress of each potential employee applying for a leadership position should be observed. Reviewers should pre-determine before the applicant arrives what they consider to be

acceptable dress for the potential employee. The question is: “Does this applicant’s dress and attitude reflect the positive qualities of this facility/organization?” There seems to be an agreed-upon understanding that people act in accordance to their manner of dress. A professional person dresses as a professional on the job—and at a job interview.

DISCRIMINATION PREVENTION

It is often helpful for the reviewing committee to agree upon a numeric value scale regarding the assessed qualities of any potential employee interviewed. This agreement should be done BEFORE any interview occurs. The scale helps to diminish any possibility of being accused of discrimination. The scale used by the reviewing committee will ultimately provide a numeric cross-comparison of each job applicant. Be sure to keep any scoring sheets in a file in case there is ever an accusation by an employee of inequity or discrimination in the interviewing process.

Discrimination is a highly scrutinized behavior in the business world, today. Predetermined objective standards applied to each potential employee will help to provide business protection from discriminatory accusations.

The employment process is not a “hit and miss” process! It requires thoughtfulness and following of specific guidelines by interviewers. It is time-consuming and expensive! It provides the valuable information and time needed to make sure that errors in potential employee choices are less likely to occur. Scrutiny saves the facility/organization MONEY in the long run!

As the hiring process occurs, the climate is usually tense and competitive. After all, the hiring of a leader is usually considered to be a reward for exceptional skill above and beyond other applicants. The reward is usually significant with a monetary reward, increased prestige, and a wealth of responsibility. Select carefully, consistently, and with previously established expectations of a written job description and/or standards of performance.

Again, retain all records that were a part of the decision-making process, as the facility/organization could be taken to legal task over any employment decision—especially discrimination!

LAST THOUGHTS

***A LEADER IS A PERSON WHO DOES WHAT IS RIGHT WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING!**

***A LEADERSHIP POSITION IS OFFERED TO A POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE BECAUSE OF THEIR EDUCATION, GENERAL ABILITIES TO WORK WITH OTHERS, AND THE WISDOM GAINED FROM EXPERIENCE.**

***LEADERS KNOW WHY THEY DO WHAT THEY DO WHILE MAKING SELF-SERVING THOUGHTS AND ACTIVITIES ABSENT FROM THEIR DECISIONS.**

***SHH—NOW YOU KNOW THE SECRETS ON HOW TO DETERMINE AN EFFECTIVE AND POWERFUL LEADER!**

RECOMMENDED READING:

Paul Everett Meehl (3 January 1920-14 February 2003) was a clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Minnesota. *A Review of General Psychology* survey, published in 2002, ranked Meehl as the 74th most cited psychologist of the 20th century, in a tie with Eleanor J. Gibson. (Wikipedia)

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