

# Setting the Tone for Hiring

Bob Zahra

Are you interviewing from a perch? In other words, not shoulder-to-shoulder, but instead looking down at the nervous, résumé-toting potential employee? Expecting a show-stopping, job-winning performance as you kick back and enjoy the moment? Anticipating a parade of eager young applicants, who can be expected to wait patiently for as long as necessary until a decision on whom to hire is ultimately reached? Bet it's tough these days to secure the talent your company needs, especially the gifted talent ...

Proven history is still a better predictor of future performance than the formal candidate interview. And in a time of limitless opportunities for the topflight performer, it only makes sense to interview with wise, respectful deference to that future star of your company. Some things never change, as they say, and whether apparent or not, the candidate is interviewing your company, too, and attempting to envision what the future looks like as an employee:

1) Will personal contribution be recognized and appreciated?; 2) Is employment with your company held in high regard by family and friends?; 3) Does the geography work?; and 4) Is there enough compensation to pay the bills, put a little away and enjoy a nice life?

Just as the hiring authority is sensitive to clues revealed in the responses to interview questions, the candidate is as sensitive as a seismograph to every detail surrounding the interview. Does leadership work WITH people or does the company WORK people? The answer to that question, assimilated from interviews and in checking out the company, relates directly to the primary motivating factor above: "Will personal contribution be recognized and appreciated?"

Potential employees check references on your company and it's tough to overcome a negative reference.

There are NO employees in the big box and mass market, just partners, associates, team members, etc. Hokey as all get out? You bet it is, but the big box and mass market have declared with their words what they expect their respective workforces to be. You may not be there yet, you may not ever get there, but being partners/teammates/associates is the goal.

Is it really helpful to make a subordinate feel subordinate? This is the individual on whose shoulders the company is built, on whom the company is counting to embrace at least a portion of the business as if it were their own. The foundation for that level of commitment is established in the first interview with a candidate who's weighing a next step for his or her future.

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