Hiring Guide for the Mechanical Service Contractor

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The CD included in this guide contains forms, checklists and letters which have been generously provided by fellow members of your association. Most of the items are provided in writable PDF format and their descriptions are listed on the following pages. Others are provided as Microsoft Word Templates.

The Adobe Acrobat PDF format allows users to directly enter information without altering the original template. After the information is entered, users can click on the print button at the top of each form and a paper copy of the form or letter will be sent to the printer connected or networked to the user's computer. The forms can also be used as part of a computer-based human resources effort, and with some adjustments by an IT specialist, can route information to a database.
It should be noted that these forms are provided for reference only and MSCA assumes no liability as to their completeness or suitability for use in your area. State and regional laws may differ so please check with your Human Resources Department or attorney for acceptability.

- **JOB QUESTIONNAIRE**
  Tool for updating a current job description or creating a new one

- **JOB DESCRIPTION – HVAC SERVICE TECHNICIAN**
  Sample job description outlining essential functions and responsibilities, skills requirements, physical demands, and work environment for a HVAC service technician position

- **SUPPLIERS FOR APPLICANT TRACKING AUTOMATION SOFTWARE**
  Listing of integrated software packages and online services that are designed to automate and manage the acquisition, data collection, and status tracking for applicant and related job information

- **THANK YOU LETTER TO CANDIDATES SUBMITTING RESUMES – REJECTION**
  Form letter for candidates who submit resumes but are not the best match for an open position

- **APPLICANT COVER SHEET AND INTERVIEW PLANNING FORM**
  Form for planning interview questions and subsequently using for recording candidate responses during the interview process

- **POST-INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**
  Comprehensive form for evaluating and summarizing a candidate's experience, education and skills, motivation, personality and job suitability after the interview

- **INTERVIEWER EVALUATION SHEET**
  Summary form for one interviewer to record candidate's previous work experience and job knowledge, training and credentials, specific job skills, presentation and appearance, and overall fit for the position

- **INTERVIEWER EVALUATION SHEET – MULTIPLE INTERVIEWERS**
  Form which can be used to summarize a candidate's qualifications when two interviewers are evaluating a candidate

- **SKILLS EVALUATION SUMMARY**
  Form for comparing the technical and interpersonal skills of all candidates interviewing for the same position

- **REFERENCE CHECK FORM**
  Tool for recording information obtained from a candidate's references

- **OFFER LETTER CONTAINING "AT WILL" LANGUAGE**
  Sample letter for positions requiring "at will" language in their offers

- **OFFER LETTER – ACCOUNT MANAGER**
  Sample offer letter and list of enclosures for an account manager position

- **OFFER LETTER – MAINTENANCE SALES REPRESENTATIVE**
  Sample offer letter and list of enclosures for a maintenance sales representative position

- **OFFER LETTER – PROJECT MANAGER**
  Sample offer letter and list of enclosures for a project manager position

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  Sample offer letter and list of enclosures for a project sales

- **OFFER LETTER – SERVICE TECHNICIAN**
  Sample offer letter for a service technician position which covers utilization of company van, tools and other job assignment responsibilities

- **SERVICE ORIENTATION MANUAL: GUIDELINES FOR CONTENT**
  Comprehensive 52 point checklist of items to be included when creating a customized orientation manual for service technicians

- **ORIENTATION CHECKLIST – GENERAL**
  Checklist of items to be covered with any new hire

- **ORIENTATION MEMO AND CHECKLIST – SALES**
  Checklist of items to be covered with new salespeople

- **FIELD CAPABILITY AND TRAINING SURVEY**
  A self-evaluation survey which can be given to service technician candidates as a way of assessing their troubleshooting and repair skill levels on different types of HVACR equipment

- **TECHNICIAN EVALUATION EXAM**
  A 51 question technical exam which can be given to service technician candidates as a way of assessing their current knowledge of HVACR

- **TECHNICIAN EVALUATION EXAM ANSWER KEY**
  Answer key for the exam referenced above

- **90-DAY PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL**
Form to be used for evaluating an employee's performance during the first 90 days on the job

- **PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEMO – SELF-EVALUATION**
Form memo asking employees to evaluate themselves prior to the formal performance review conducted by their supervisors

- **SERVICE TECHNICIAN PERFORMANCE REVIEW #1**
Three page sample performance review form which covers on-the-job knowledge and performance, personal traits and effectiveness in dealing with the public

- **SERVICE TECHNICIAN PERFORMANCE REVIEW #2**
Three page sample performance review which covers job productivity and performance, organization and maintenance, work habits, customer relations, job site administration, ordering, quality control, handling of returns, relationships and technical expertise

- **SERVICE TECHNICIAN PERFORMANCE REVIEW #3**
Four page sample performance review which covers technical expertise, customer relations, recordkeeping, vehicle maintenance, work habits, punctuality, appearance, training and open-ended discussion questions

- **TECHNICIAN FEEDBACK REQUEST REGARDING OTHER DEPARTMENTS**
Form for technicians to complete giving them the opportunity to evaluate company operations including: internal purchasing, availability and access to necessary tools and equipment, service department manager, labor coordinator, operations manager and sales staff

Introduction

O ne of the greatest challenges facing service companies today is finding, recruiting, and hiring the talent needed to make them successful. Today's turnover rates make recruiting a costly, competitive – and often unproductive – exercise. With time, budgets, and human resources at a premium, effective recruiting to find the most highly qualified people capable of supporting the company's operation becomes even more important.

While every MSCA company has many physical assets (computers, trucks, tools, equipment, etc.), those assets only become productive in the hands of capable, motivated people. The quality of your people – technicians, dispatchers, salespeople, administrative support and managers – will determine the quality of service your company provides and, ultimately, its future success.

Purpose of This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with tools and resources for efficiently finding, attracting, hiring and retaining the candidates that are the best match for your operation. Rather than forcing yourself into a position of taking the "least objectionable" candidate, this guide will walk you through each step of the recruiting, hiring, and retention cycle to show you the best way to build a competent and highly productive workforce.

Hiring as a Strategic Process

There's nothing better for business than a cohesive, productive team. But team synergy becomes disrupted when an important member of that team suddenly gives notice, costing the team valued skills and increasing the burden on remaining team members. Everyone goes into a panic looking for a way to fill the void as quickly as possible. Whether it's a call to the union hall or to a placement service, the result is often a time-pressured hire in which you've "settled" for a compromise candidate. The selected person may have been the "best of the bunch" but not necessarily the best qualified, either technically or interpersonally, for the job at hand.

By taking time to strategically plan for and manage the talent of your company, you will be able to break the cycle of poor hiring that results in ineffective work groups. The first

step is to recognize that talent management deserves the same level of priority as other critical business activities, and as such, it requires careful planning for effective hiring and retention of quality employees whether they are union personnel or non-bargaining employees.

Union Personnel and Non-Bargaining Talent

Many of the concepts in this guide apply equally to both union personnel and non-bargaining employees. Because unionized field service technicians are the HVACR industry's primary manpower need, however, this guide will point out the additional resources available for attracting, hiring, and retaining technical talent using the affiliation and resources of union membership. In addition to the general concepts presented here which are applicable to both union and non-bargaining employees, other union affiliation resources may be complemented, or in some cases superseded, by local union policies.

Cost of Incorrect Hires

When a valuable employee departs, the resulting production losses become all too obvious. But hiring the wrong person in a rush to replace the former employee often just compounds these losses, and the costs of bad hiring decisions can be much higher than what you might think. According to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, turnover has increased to 23 percent annually. For the construction industry, which includes technicians in mechanical services, that figure jumps to 38.8 percent.[1]

Although a difficult number to quantify, current research shows that it costs approximately $59,692 to replace an employee.[2] When that figure is multiplied by the total number of employees turned over throughout the year, it is obvious that high turnover can be a significant drain on bottom line results.

The Employee Turnover Calculator on the following page can help you estimate the impact of turnover and incorrect hiring decisions to your organization.

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[1] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 2007
[2] Emerging Workforce® Study, Spherion Corporation, 2005-2007

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER CALCULATOR	
1. In the last year how many positions at $48,000 did you fill?	_____
2. How many of them turned over in less than one year?	_____
3. Line 2 multiplied by $59,692	_____
4. Total Cost of Hiring Failures	$_____

Making Selection a Win-Win

Everyone agrees that selecting the right people is a challenge, and the longer it takes to find a replacement, the more difficult it is for everyone concerned. A systematic, planned approach to hiring may be more time-consuming initially, but over the long-term the benefits are worth the time taken to plan for effective talent management. Managers will see greater productivity due to reduced turnover and fewer personnel problems. Current employees will enjoy higher morale because they are working with people who share the same values and work ethics. Customers will receive better service with greater consistency due to the stability in employees. You can see that hiring decisions affect more than an immediate department. They impact the entire company.

Standardizing the Hiring Process

Every company should have a standardized hiring process. If your company has a formal Human Resources Department, it is likely that you have already encountered basic policies and procedures that they have established for recruiting new talent. To some it may seem as though this is an unneeded, bureaucratic process which just bogs down urgent hiring activity. On the contrary, a standardized hiring process will save you time in the long run, avoid potential legal issues, and insure that the best possible candidates are selected. To the prospective new employee, a well-organized hiring process reflects positively on the company's overall operation, and it can be a very useful influence that tips the balance in favor of the decision to join your organization. Use this guide to help you put in place a highly effective strategic plan for managing talent.

The following outlines the steps that should be part of your strategic hiring process the next time you have a new or open position to fill.

Steps of the Strategic Hiring Process

1. **DEFINE THE POSITION TO BE FILLED**
   This means creating or updating a written job description so that it accurately reflects the skills needed and the responsibilities of the job. If it is a newly created position, the wage or salary range of the position will have to be determined along with the status (part-time, full-time, temporary, regular, benefits eligibility, etc.) Most companies also have a position approval process, so make sure that budgetary approval is secured, if necessary.

2. **DETERMINE THE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY**
   There are many sources for obtaining candidates. The quality of the hire will only be as good as the quality of candidates that apply for the position. Review recruitment sources and determine an optimum recruiting strategy to generate potential candidates. Even though local union halls will provide assistance in recruiting technical talent, you may want to consider supplementary strategies for finding technical talent that may not yet be union members.

3. READ AND SCREEN RESUMES
   A good recruiting strategy will net a large number of resumes. However, being able to separate qualified candidates from those who are not a good fit for the position is a skill required of all hiring managers.

4. INTERVIEW AND SELECT FINAL CANDIDATES
   Today's litigious society requires that interviews be conducted in a legally-defensible manner. The skilled interviewer plans questions that uncover information regarding the candidate's background and experience so that the candidate that most closely matches the established criteria is the one selected for the position. In addition to the questioning plan, the hiring manager must take into consideration the interview format and location as well as other team members who should be involved in the interview process.

5. CONDUCT BACKGROUND CHECKS
   It is well known that candidates will sometimes exaggerate their background and experience in order to get a job offer. The astute hiring manager will be sure to check references, prior employment, college degrees, licenses and certificates, including driver's license and driving record for employees who are required to drive on company business.

6. EXTEND THE OFFER
   All conditions of an offer should be extended on a consistent, company-approved offer letter format. A good practice is to also follow-up with non-selected candidates as a courtesy to the individual and for good public relations or future job openings.

7. PREPARE FOR THE NEW HIRE
   Once the offer has been accepted, great care should be taken to make sure the new hire's first day is a positive experience. Many preparatory activities need to take place prior to the new hire's start date. Careful planning of that timeline will insure that the new hire is made to feel an immediate part of the team.

8. TRAINING AND ORIENTATION
   Remember to plan for any immediate training that will be required. If your company has a New Employee Orientation, be sure to add your new hire to the schedule. Plan to conduct on-the-job orientation and determine additional training required to quickly acclimate your new employee.

There is no doubt that recruiting and hiring can be a costly endeavor. That's why retention should be a strategic initiative. Assigning a mentor to help your new hire assimilate into the company culture will positively reinforce the decision to join your

company. Arranging periodic formal and informal review opportunities will immediately identify and address performance obstacles or dissatisfaction issues.

The following sections of this guide will take you through each step in greater detail. Reference forms and resources provided in the Appendix support the material contained in these sections and are available for use as is or they may be customized to meet the needs of your organization. These forms can be found on the CD-ROM contained in this package.

Job Descriptions

Before starting any actual hiring activity, it is essential that the requirements for the open position be fully defined. This section focuses on the initial steps hiring managers must take to create an effective job description that will help ensure that the best candidate for the job is selected.

```
                        1.
                   DEFINE THE
                    POSITION
      8.                                2.
   Orient and                        Determine
    Train                            Recruiting
                                     Strategy

      7.            STRATEGIC          3.
  Prepare for the    HIRING        Read and
    New Hire         PROCESS        Screen
                                    Resumes

      6.                                4.
    Extend                         Interview and
    Offer                             Select
                       5.           Candidates
                    Conduct
                   Background
                     Checks
```

The logical starting point for any recruiting effort is to make sure there is a thorough understanding of the job responsibilities, along with the employee skills, experience, and traits needed to be successful in the position. The purpose of the job description is to address these details in an unambiguous document that is clear to management and potential employees alike.

Knowing What You Want

An accurate job description is critical to the recruitment process as it represents the specification for the job, as well the employee capabilities needed for success in the position. Like any planning process, recruiting has an ultimate goal, and that goal is defined by the job description. The job description is essential because it will become the basis for your marketing efforts, interview methods and final selection process, as well as on-going management of the employee hired.

There are many online and print resources available that provide standard job descriptions for well-defined roles. Some of these are referenced in the software vendor list located in the Appendix of this guide. For an established position, there may already be an existing job description that is available. These descriptions as written might be adequate for your purposes, but they will more likely provide a useful reference or starting point to help define the job opening you are trying to fill. If no job description is available, or if the existing description is not useful, then a new job description will need to be created.

Regardless of which approach you are using, it is necessary to carefully analyze the actual requirements for the job to make sure that any job description used is consistent with what you need. In case of jobs that are filled on a periodic basis, it is reasonable to reuse an existing job description that may have been created earlier; however, it is still advisable to review the earlier job description each time it is used to make sure it reflects the present situation. This allows you to re-evaluate the requirements and success factors for the job based on any changes that may have occurred since the position was last filled, and update it based on your current understanding of what your company and customers will require in the future from this position.

A carefully prepared job description helps employees understand where their job fits in with the company's overall mission. It also helps employees from other departments, who must work with the person hired, understand the boundaries of the person's responsibilities. Finally, and most importantly, a well-written job description becomes an important foundation for establishing performance expectations.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR BARGAINING EMPLOYEES

To obtain copies of job descriptions for technical positions,
contact your local association or
Steven H. Allen of the UA at (734) 424-0725.

Factors to be considered when establishing the requirements for an open position and in evaluating potential candidates to fill those positions:

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CREDENTIALS
- Licenses and Certificates *(e.g., Valid Driver's License, Boiler Operator's License)*
- Formal education
- Degrees *(AA, BA, MA, MBA)*
- Professional designations
- Special classes or training

TECHNICAL SKILLS
- Industry/trade skills
- Operation of equipment/vehicles
- Specific skills *(e.g., PC, software application proficiency)*

INTERPERSONAL AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS
- Teamwork skills
- Salesmanship
- Organizational skills
- Time management
- Conflict handling
- Communication ability

KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE
- Applicable industry experience
- Technical experience
- Applicable legal requirements
- Professional experience, e.g.,
    - Project management
    - Finance/accounting
    - Construction/blueprints
    - Building codes
    - Office systems, etc.
- Supervisory experience, including level and number of employees

RESPONSIBILITIES
- Level of accountability
- Supervision of others
- Safety/security of others
- Confidential information
- Customer and other public contacts
- Budget authority

OTHER
- Pay and benefits
- Potential of job and training available
- Changes which may occur in the near future (e.g., location, supervisor, job content, skills, etc.)
- Job classification (e.g., full/part time, exempt/non-exempt, temporary, summer intern, etc.)
- Hours of work

Technical and Interpersonal Skills: Both are Important for Success

In recruiting for most positions, the normal approach is to concentrate on well known technical abilities or similar work experience that may be considered fundamental to the work being performed. For example, when hiring a dispatcher, the hiring manager may give more credibility to the candidate who worked in a similar position. While technical skills are important, compatibility with a company's culture is equally important.

Each company possesses its own unique culture with different standards and expectations of behavior that go beyond technical skills. Instead of focusing solely on technical skills you should also consider incorporating into your job description the cultural values that are important to your organization along with the interpersonal behavioral traits a candidate must possess.

The following reference list can help you define qualities that may be important to consider in potential job candidates. Note that it may be useful to recognize both desirable and undesired traits in a candidate that might reflect on their potential for job performance given the culture existing within your organization.

ρ Results oriented	ρ Independent	ρ Mature	ρ Positive attitude
ρ High self-esteem	ρ Decisive	ρ High work ethic	ρ Inquisitive
ρ Optimistic	ρ Passionate	ρ Self-confident	ρ Quick study
ρ Outgoing	ρ Assertive	ρ Team Player	ρ Persuasive
ρ Driven	ρ Intelligent	ρ Creative	ρ Aggressive
ρ Sincere	ρ Responsible	ρ Tenacious	ρ Warm
ρ Down to earth	ρ Demanding	ρ Focused	ρ Polished
ρ Self-motivated	ρ Proactive	ρ Likable	ρ Highly ethical
ρ Good listener	ρ Enthusiastic	ρ Logical	ρ To the point
ρ Service oriented	ρ Tactful	ρ Analytical	ρ Accountable
ρ Cautious	ρ Good communicator	ρ Personal appearance	

Use this list to help you identify qualities that you are looking for in both union personnel and non-bargaining employees. Remember, it is equally important to identify qualities that are a requirement as well as those which would be a detriment to a person's success in your company.

Now that you have an idea of what should be included in a job description, you are ready to start applying the ideas discussed above to outline the job responsibilities, tasks, characteristics, and desired employee traits that will make up the job description.

Utilizing the Job Questionnaire on the following page may be helpful in creating an accurate and well-defined job description. To make it as useful as possible, a good way to approach this is to add items to each of the list categories on this form and order each item by priority from most to least important. You should be as specific as possible, using action words whenever possible.

Once the Job Questionnaire is completed, you are ready to prepare the formal job description. For reference, a sample job description is provided at the end of this section to give you an idea of what the end result might look like. This and other resources are included in the Appendix of this guide. If you have a dedicated Human Resources Department, they can also provide assistance in creating any required job descriptions.

MSCA
Mechanical Service Contractors of America

Job Questionnaire

JOB INFORMATION

POSITION TITLE

DATE PREPARED

DEPARTMENT

PROJECT

QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETED BY

APPROVED BY

INSTRUCTIONS

1. When completing the questionnaire, please remember to emphasize the most important features of the job.

2. Attach additional sheets, if necessary.

3. Contact your Human Resources Department with any questions.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Briefly describe the overall purpose of the position.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Describe the specific duties and responsibilities of the position which occur on a regular basis. List duties and responsibilities in order of importance. Use additional sheets if necessary.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

*What type of work experience is required (minimum acceptable level) to perform the job? (This should not necessarily reflect your experience but rather, the **minimum** levels of work experience required to competently perform the job.)*

EDUCATION/TRAINING REQUIREMENT

*List the minimum education and/or training required to perform the job. (Again, this is a **minimum**, not necessarily your education level.)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

List any special knowledge, skills or abilities required to perform the position.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

List other requirements, such as frequency of overtime necessary, special shift hours, special training required.

_____

_____

_____

FREEDOM TO ACT

What amount of supervision does this job ordinarily require? (Check one)

ρ   Employee is closely supervised – all but minor variations are referred to supervision

ρ   Work is regularly checked. Follows established procedures and refers exceptions to supervision.

ρ   Most duties are repetitive in nature. Established policies and procedures are used as guides with only unusual problems being referred to supervision for suggestions.

ρ   Employee works under general supervision. Employee is responsible for the method in which work is completed.

ρ   Broad objectives are given by supervision; however, employee develops methods to achieve desired results.

ρ   Acts independently with little or no supervision. Employee has unlimited freedom to act and achieve objectives. Develops procedures and determines methods for achieving objectives.

CULTURAL VALUES

List the cultural values that are most important for working in this organization.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

List the position titles and number of employees who are under this position's direct supervision..

DIRECT SUPERVISOR POSITION TITLE

List the position title of the person this position reports directly to.

Sample Job Description

Job Title: *HVAC Service Technician*
FLSA Status: *Non-Exempt*
Department: *Service*
Reports To: *Service Team Leader*

SUMMARY

Responsible for retrofit and repair of environmental-comfort systems, utilizing knowledge of air conditioning theory, pipe fitting, and mechanical layouts.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following and other functions as assigned.

- Responsible for servicing equipment on assigned projects and ensuring customer satisfaction.

- Identifies, analyzes, diagnoses, repairs, and maintains systems and products at customer locations using computers and a variety of hand and power tools.

- Performs preventative maintenance, site surveys, replacements and modifications as needed or requested by customers.

- Represents company in a positive manner by serving as a direct customer contact.

- Provides technical support to customers.

- Provides training and follow-up at customer site as required.

- Prepares for all on-site work by examining building layout, anticipating difficulties, gathering materials and coordinating on-site work, as necessary.

- Determines parts to order for repairs and timeliness of need.

- Documents work by completing paperwork on each job, including: time on job, materials and parts used, progress and other cost data per assignment.

- Turns in all required paperwork and reports in a timely manner.

- Maintains truck by being familiar with its service manual and advising service coordinator when scheduling of repairs and maintenance service is required.

- Maintains all work tools and equipment by inspecting for signs of wear.

- Keeps current on all equipment serviced by the company concerning installation, operation, maintenance, service and repair.

- Reads and interprets product specifications and is familiar with product applications.

- Provides sales leads to maintenance sales representatives and project sales representatives.

- Flexibility to work overtime/weekends as necessary.

- Regular travel requirements with some overnight travel.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES
May directly supervise the HVAC Apprentices. Carries out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization's policies and applicable laws.

QUALIFICATIONS
To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE
UA Journeyman or equivalent from a two year college or technical school with certificate Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning and five years apprenticeship, including one to two years related experience; or equivalent combination of education and experience.

LANGUAGE SKILLS
Ability to read and comprehend simple instructions, short correspondence, and memos. Ability to write simple correspondence. Ability to effectively present information in one-on-one and small group situations to customers, clients, and other employees of the organization.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS
Ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide in all units of measure, using whole number, common fractions, and decimals. Ability to compute ratio and percent and to draw and interpret graphs.

REASONING ABILITY
Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS
Valid Driver's License, EPA Certification, License Preferred (e.g. HVAC Journeyman)

PHYSICAL DEMANDS
The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an associate to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the associate is regularly required to stand, talk, hear and use hands to finger, handle or feel. The associate frequently is required to walk, stoop, kneel, crouch, crawl and reach with hands and arms. The associate is occasionally required to sit. The associate must regularly lift and/or move up to ten pounds, frequently lift and/or move up to 50 pounds, and occasionally lift and/or move up to 100 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus.

WORK ENVIRONMENT
The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an associate encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

This position requires working outdoors, in mechanical/equipment rooms and possible extreme weather conditions. While performing the duties of this job, the associate is regularly exposed to moving mechanical parts and heavy equipment. The associate is frequently exposed to wet and/or humid conditions; high, precarious places; fumes or airborne particles; outside weather conditions; risk of electrical shock (high voltage) and vibration. The associate is occasionally exposed to toxic or caustic chemicals, extreme cold and extreme heat. The noise level in the work environment is usually loud.

Benefits of Job Descriptions

As you can see, preparing job descriptions for each position within the company can be an extensive and time-consuming process. However, in the end, the effort is well worth it as you will refer to the job description throughout the strategic hiring process. In addition to helping candidates understand the position, it can also be used to address or provide guidance in the following key areas:

- Clearly communicating duties and responsibilities for the job to all interested parties.

- Establishing guidelines for interviewing potential employees.

- Determining competitive compensation based on actual requirements and market conditions.

- Defining technical knowledge, interpersonal skills, cultural fit, and character traits needed for job success.

- Establishing consistency in performance expectations for use in periodic reviews and employee counseling, if necessary.

- Providing basis for effective recruitment advertising in appropriate media.

- Supporting the company with written documentation in defense of unlawful termination or discrimination lawsuits.

Recruiting Strategies

T he primary goal of the recruitment phase is to attract a number of high quality prospects from which the best possible job candidate can be hired. In today's competitive labor market, this is rarely an easy task.

U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics indicate that only about 16 percent of the labor force is actively seeking new employment at any point in time. While your ideal employee may be in that small slice of the labor pool, the odds are much greater that you will find the best candidate if you can also appeal to the other 84 percent of the workforce as well in your recruiting efforts. Outstanding employees are often those already employed, and not necessarily looking to change jobs, although they may not be totally satisfied in their present positions. These "passive" job seekers may be very enthusiastic about joining your organization once they learn of the career opportunities and working environment your company offers. To find the best candidates you will need a recruitment strategy that is imaginative, aggressive and deliberately aimed at those resources in the labor market that can reach the best people.

Developing a Recruiting Plan

There are a large number of sources which you can use to find potential candidates, both union personnel and non-bargaining employees. While you could use all of these to cast the widest possible net, this is not usually a very effective strategy. A "shotgun" approach may generate a large number of responses, but the quality of these responses can vary widely. You will find the majority come from unqualified candidates that must be screened through to find the few acceptable ones, consuming valuable time and resources.

Your objective in the recruiting process should be to find the best quality candidates, and to do this as quickly and as efficiently as possible. This will require that you concentrate your efforts on those resources that are most likely to yield the best candidates. The job description created in the previous section is the basis for an effective, targeted recruiting effort.

Approval to Recruit

Before beginning the recruitment process, make certain that the new or replacement position has been properly approved and budgeted. Depending on the job and market, a recruiting effort may involve substantial expense, and many companies have policies which require requisitions or other forms to be signed by the appropriate management personnel to authorize these expenses. If you have any questions regarding the approval process, contact your supervisor or corporate Human Resources Department.

Sources for Recruiting Job Candidates

There are a variety of useful resources available that you may use to locate quality job candidates. Each will probably vary in its effectiveness at reaching people meeting the requirements for the job in question. In deciding which resources to use in recruiting you should choose those that would appear to be most effective in reaching the greatest number of high quality candidates with the qualifications needed as defined in the job description. Some of the most important sources you may want to consider for recruiting are described below.

UA Five Star Careers Program

One of the best sources for recruiting technical talent is only a keystroke away – the MSCA website (www.msca.org) which contains a special section dedicated to recruitment. The information link accessed by clicking "Recruitment" contains two sections. The first provides information for contractors and explains the recruitment efforts being undertaken by MSCA to assist you with your recruiting challenges. The second is a direct link to the 5 Star Careers program. (www.5starcareers.org)

The 5 Star Careers website is a comprehensive interactive career and employment resource designed to help recruit the next generation of HVACR service technicians, provide a mechanism for non-union technicians to showcase their skills to MSCA contractors, and to create a nationwide database of career profiles that only MSCA contractors and UA representatives can access. Visitors to the website will find the sections dedicated to the following audiences:

- **Entry Level Technicians** – Students who are interested in learning more about a career as a HVACR service technician can download a "Getting Started" guide they can share with parents, guidance counselors or educators. They can also use the site to find a local accredited technical school through MSCA's technical school partner, HVAC Excellence.

    HVAC Excellence is the largest provider of HVACR Technician Certification. Graduates of HVAC Excellence-accredited schools are prompted by their instructors to submit a career profile to the 5 Star Careers website upon graduation, giving MSCA members immediate access to these profiles of newly qualified technicians.

- **Parents/Educators/Guidance Counselors** – This section provides to key influencers information about the profession, and instructions on how to order the MSCA and UA brochures about a career as a HVACR technician.

- **Experienced HVACR Technicians** – This is the section of the website where experienced, non-union technicians can explore the advantages of working for a MSCA contractor and the training available through the UA. This is also where they can fill out and submit their career profile online.

The "Members" area of the website is password protected. To access the career profiles submitted by non-UA experienced technicians, members must sign up for a password by clicking on the word *MEMBERS* in the upper right-hand corner of the 5 Star Careers website.

Recruiting Sources: Internal

- **Internal Job Posting Program** – Your own employees may be good sources for candidates and should always be one of the first places you look when recruiting for any job openings. Recruiting from within your own company provides you with a known quality employee, with minimal recruiting and training costs. It has the added benefit of raising overall employee satisfaction by showing that the company values employee contributions and is willing to provide career advancement opportunities to them. The opposite effect occurs also. When qualified employees are bypassed for external candidates who are perceived as less qualified, this can have a negative impact on morale, increasing job dissatisfaction and employee turnover. Many companies have an internal job-posting program. If yours does not, you should consider implementing such a program.

- **Employee Referrals** – Even when you may be sure there are no existing employees qualified for the job opening, posting the job is still a good idea because your employees might be able to refer attractive candidates they know personally, once they are aware of the job posting. Friends or colleagues of your employees are probably the second best external source for candidates, because your employees already understand your company's culture and expectations, and probably know very well the capabilities of friends or industry contacts they would consider referring. Since the referral reflects somewhat on the judgment of the employee, you can expect most employees to be careful to refer only those candidates they consider to be highly qualified.

Recruiting Sources: External

When selecting other recruiting resources, you must consider how effective they are at reaching people with the requirements outlined in the job description. In virtually every instance, the "ideal" candidate for your open position will need relevant experience in the mechanical services industry. Therefore, it makes sense to consider how you can best use industry-specific resources in your recruiting, including those listed below.

- **Networking** – Broadly defined, "networking" is utilizing industry contacts to identify potential candidates. Group meetings or other situations which afford the opportunity to meet others in your industry are chances to network as are calling a number of your industry contacts and making the job opportunity known to them. A networking contact could be a potential job candidate, or could provide referrals to other qualified individuals they are aware of.

- **Competitors** – Employees of other non-union mechanical services firms can be a good source of employees who are already proven, experienced, and familiar with the industry. While proactively "raiding" your competitors' staffs is not recommended, it is always useful to maintain cordial relations with competitors you may have regular contact with, should they decide to make a career change in the future. It can be useful for reference purposes to hold the following conversation with talented technicians or other individuals you may encounter:

> "Hi, my name is _____ and I manage the local _____ operation. I have to admit, I've heard some pretty good things about you! Here's my card – I assume you're happy with your current situation, but if your circumstances or needs ever change, please feel free to give me a call."

- **Trade Events** – Trade shows and conferences attract the best and brightest professionals. Attendees, speakers and exhibitors tend to be there because they are motivated and good at what they do. Trade shows, when industry exclusive, have the distinct advantage of ensuring that virtually everyone you might encounter is already working in the industry. Attending or exhibiting at the right industry events can be a very effective way to meet potential job candidates with related industry experience for present or anticipated future openings.

- **Publications** – Industry-specific trade journals are often used as resources by job hunters since most will accept open position listings from employers.

The Internet

The evolution of the Internet as an everyday tool for communication, information, education and business is having a significant impact on companies' recruitment strategies. Listed below are some of the sources available to you.

- **General Job Posting Boards** – For a fee you can post job openings on a general board such as Monster.com or CareerBuilder.com. The advantage with these boards is that they are widely used, so many candidates will be looking at your posting. The popularity of these boards is also their disadvantage; your posting may get lost in a sea of similar postings.

- **Newspapers' Online Job Boards** – According to recent reports, newspapers' online job boards are second in sources used by candidates to access available jobs.

- **Targeted Job Boards** – There are specialty sites for virtually every occupation. Examples of such boards specializing in HVAC include HVACjobs.com (www.hvacjobs.com).

- **Your Company Website** –Many companies have found that people applying on the Web are often good quality recruits that have taken the time to learn about your organization before submitting their application.

- **Internet Discussion Groups** – Newsgroups, mailing lists and e-forums are places where professionals meet and help each other. Learn how to use them to find and identify potential candidates. Read through the posts and find out who the experts are – they may be your next hires.

Newspaper Ads

Running a "help wanted" announcement in the classified section of your local newspaper is a time-honored (and still effective) method of recruitment if you have a reasonable audience to draw from. Here are some keys to running a successful newspaper ad:

- Run daily newspaper ads in the Sunday newspaper only, as it has the highest readership

- Key the ad under the appropriate heading in the classified section. If running a display ad, you might want to consider placing the ad in a section of the newspaper other than the classified ads, such as the sports section.

- Make certain the written description is accurate, and will attract qualified candidates. The best way to do this is to use the job description as a starting point and write the ad from key duties and responsibilities of the position.

- Do not run an ad on a holiday weekend. The target audience will likely be reduced since many people go out of town or are busy with special activities during holidays, and are less likely to look through the classified section.

- Request a cover letter if you would like an example of the applicant's writing style, and his or her ability to format a business letter.

- Ask the applicant to respond to a voice mail if you would like to hear a person's telephone voice and test their ability to respond to and follow directions.

- Request a wage and/or salary history if you would like to know whether the salary expectations of the candidates approximate the pay for the open position.

- Always end the ad with EOE, the acronym for "Equal Opportunity Employer." This means that your company considers all applicants equally regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other legally protected status, and its employment practices are non-discriminatory.

- Do not include your name in the ad, unless you want to invite calls and inquiries about the position. If you are running more than one ad simultaneously, use a code word or your initials to differentiate the responses.

- Verify that the ad was placed and printed properly. If the ad had any mistakes, contact the newspaper immediately to rectify the situation, obtain a credit, and arrange to rerun the ad.

Agencies

Both temporary agencies and search firms may be sources to identify qualified candidates. An important aspect of working with an agency is to negotiate the fee *before* reviewing resumes or interviewing candidates. This way, you will know ahead of time what fee to expect if you identify a potential employee.

- **Search Firms** – Search firms typically charge anywhere from 15 percent to 35 percent of the first year's base salary for hiring a full-time, regular employee through their efforts. There are a number of search firms and consultants that specialize in the HVAC/Mechanical Contracting industry.

- **Temporary Agencies** – Many managers find that filling positions with a temporary employee prior to extending an offer of employment is an effective way to "test" a candidate in the position before making a hiring decision. Some of the benefits provided by temporary agencies include pre-screening of applicants, providing workers on short notice, payrolling services, providing insurance to temporary employees, including workers' compensation, pre-testing of candidates (on specific computer software programs, for example) and limiting your liability. There are **two important aspects** to negotiating a fee when bringing on a temporary employee in this manner:

  Duration is the length of time temporaries must work through the agency before you have the option to hire them with no additional conversion fee. Larger companies typically negotiate this at 6 to 8 weeks (or 240 to 320 total hours).

  "Mark-Up" is the difference between the "pay rate" (the amount the temporary is paid) and the "bill rate" (the amount that your company is charged.) It is the premium you pay for an agency's services.

Other Resources

- **Trade Schools, Colleges and Universities** – Most educational institutions have a career planning and placement center that can assist you in finding candidates. Find out which schools in your local region excel in your area of interest.

  As companies try to create more diverse work forces, additional candidates may be found in non-traditional places. For example, the website www.artemisguide.com, lists 418 universities with "Women's Studies" as a major. To better support those studies, these institutions often create separate placement centers where jobs can be posted.

  For companies looking for service coordinators, displaced dispatchers from the airline industry might be a good source. Competing for today's best workers takes a little creativity. Just remember that even though candidates are not trained in a specific career, they may still be a good match for the HVACR industry. Creative recruiters will find ways of getting their message to previously untapped resources.

- **Outplacement Agencies** – Both local and national outplacement firms have active lists of available candidates and are anxious to list open positions.

- **Military** -- During the year 2000, more than 4,000 people left the military every week. Many of these well-trained and highly disciplined individuals wish to transition into civilian employment. There are many methods, such as visiting military bases, advertising in military targeted magazines and journals, utilizing search firms, and using online job posting/resume database systems that allow you to focus on this market.

Selling the Candidate on You

Once you have selected the recruiting sources you feel will be most effective, you will need to create a description or ad copy promoting the opportunity to the audience reached by that that source. This promotional job description is not the same as the job description created earlier. While it may include descriptive elements from the original job description, it needs to be different in a very important way. Rather than just describing the responsibilities involved with the job, a promotional job description needs to be written in such a way that it will stand out from many other job ads and will convey an appealing picture of both the job and your company to potential job candidates.

While the conclusion of the hiring process will hopefully find you choosing from a number of highly qualified candidates who have been selling you on their talents, in the

initial recruiting phase the tables are turned. For effective recruiting, you must be the one selling potential candidates on the attractiveness of your company and the job opening so they will be willing to talk to you further. Remember, 84 percent of the potential candidates were not even looking to change jobs, so you need to quickly show them "what's in it for me," and make it easy to follow up, to give them a good reason to consider your job opening.

For this purpose, any job description or promotional copy that you develop should do much more than just describe the job duties. The promotional job description must stand out from other job ads and present your company and the job itself as a unique opportunity to have an exciting career working in an attractive environment with a company that is leading the industry. The job description created earlier may be incorporated as part of this, but a promotional job description should emphasize the aspects of the job that are particularly positive or unique for the job seeker. An example of a promotional job description is on the following page.

Sample Promotional Job Description/Ad Copy

Lead HVAC Service Technician

BKB Mechanical Services is a growth-oriented, service and maintenance company currently serving commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities in 5 Midwestern States. For 8 years, our success and growth has been the result of our commitment to deliver high-quality services that exceed our customers' expectations.

The success of BKB is realized through the talented and dedicated employees that comprise our work community. Therefore, we are committed to creating an environment which is accessible, informative, and supportive – the type of environment where employees can grow and thrive.

As an employee of BKB, you are an integral part of our mission and the culture that realizes that mission.

The primary way in which we organize our work together is the team. We trust that you will find our combination of self-motivated growth and contribution within the context of team support and responsibility to be a rewarding experience for you, both professionally and personally.

We are currently growing at a rate of 20 percent annually. We are often creating and recruiting for new (and existing) positions and we're always seeking career-minded and talented individuals. Join our growing team and grow with us!

YOU WILL NEED
- Technical ability to fix equipment as instructed
- Desire and focus to succeed
- Ability to interact professionally and effectively
- Ability to communicate professionally
- Effectively work individually or with groups
- Enjoy setting and achieving goals
- Clean background check
- Clean driving record

WE OFFER
Excellent Base Pay ♥ 100% Paid Health Insurance ♥ 50 percent Paid Dental Insurance ♥ Short & Long Term Liability Insurance ♥ Paid Life Insurance ♥ Vehicles ♥ Excellent Work Conditions ♥ Opportunity for Advancement ♥ Tool Reimbursement Plan ♥ Paid Time Off / Vacation Plan ♥ Holidays ♥ Limited On Call ♥ Paid Uniforms ♥

Using Employee Testimonials

Just as customer testimonials can be an important tool to validate the quality of your services with new customers, consider using employee testimonials to show potential candidates how current employees feel about the company. Use employee testimonials on your website or on any Internet ads you may run.

"This company has a great customer base with exposure to all different types of equipment and control systems. Working for BKB, I have continuously gained knowledge of various systems. For new or seasoned technicians, the experience you will gain with these systems will only be beneficial in your technical growth. I also enjoy working at different locations throughout the day. BKB has always had a good track record of promotion from within. Employees who work hard and are self-motivated to succeed will find a home at BKB."

–Trent Thomas, Field Supervisor, with BKB Mechanical for eight years

Handling Applicant Responses

Managers who are new to the recruiting game are often surprised at the large number of responses that even a limited recruiting effort seems to generate. Unfortunately the less pleasant part of this surprise is that a very high percentage of these responses may be from people that don't meet even minimum requirements and are not good candidates for the position. Reviewing hundreds of resumes and screening for those few that seem to match targeted job requirements can be a challenging activity, especially when it is on top of the day's regular work responsibilities.

You don't want to be overburdened by this process, but screening needs to be done well if it is to be prompt, objective, and consistent in differentiating between responses that match the established job description criteria and those that do not. Time is valuable and you probably will not be able to read every cover letter and resume that comes across your desk. To avoid being swamped by this tidal wave of applications, you should plan for it by mapping out a "system" for reviewing applicant information before the first letter, email, or resume reaches your desk.

Figure 1

Developing a System for Screening Job Responses

Any screening method must recognize that today's hiring environment has changed quite dramatically over that of previous years. With the widespread use of e-mail and Internet-based job services, candidates may now provide information to you in many different forms and from a variety of sources. Today, it is highly likely that any recruiting effort you undertake will include responses in any or all of the following forms.

WAYS OF RESPONDING TO JOB SOLICITATIONS

- Conventional hard copy letter and resumes received via USPS

- Resumes and correspondence faxed to your location

- Resumes formatted as part of an e-mail

- Reference to a candidate's personal Web pages which you can access via a supplied link

- E-mail attachments in various electronic file formats

- Electronic form responses "pulled" or "mined" from existing online job board postings

- Electronic form responses sent directly to you from the job postings you placed on selected online job services

- Job responses sent to you in the format created by your own corporate Web site or specialized software

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You must be equipped to handle all of these as part of any screening process you implement. While it may seem that these additional formats and sources can hopelessly complicate your screening efforts, the digital technology that makes these things possible also makes available certain automation approaches that can help dramatically improve your screening activities. Appropriate technology designed to automate the applicant screening process can make this much more efficient and accurate than with manual screening processes alone.

Automating the Screening Process

Following are some of the technologies that can be used to help automate the screening of job responses.

- **Scan and Optical Character Reading software** – Converts hard copy paper or fax job responses into standardized electronic files that allow for easy electronic storage where they can be readily accessed, shared, or automatically screened for job-relevant skills.

- **Online data entry forms or job applications** – Online templates that make it easy for job candidates to submit required information about themselves to you in a format that permits efficient automatic or manual screening.

- **Electronic filtering** – A pre-screening capability that allows you to automatically analyze candidate responses from a job board like Monster.com or other source, to rank each candidate by how well they meet the skill requirements you had previously defined.

- **Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) or Candidate Management Systems (CMS)** – An integrated software package or online service that is designed to automate and manage the acquisition, data collection, and status tracking for applicant and related job information, putting it into an easily searchable database. An ATS can vary greatly in complexity and cost from one vendor to another, but may include many of the following capabilities.

  - Job Description template generator
  - Form builder to create custom online job applications where candidates can submit information you require of them
  - Web site pages or links to allow for online data entry by candidates using generated forms
  - Resume scanning and optical character recognition to incorporate hard copy input from fax or mail
  - Integration with job boards for submitting postings and automatically retrieving responses
  - Built in filters for automatic pre-screening of responses
  - Applicant letter or email generation for automatic follow-up
  - Interview scheduler/tracker to coordinate meetings

- Applicant record and status summary database showing progress for each job and each candidate

- Performance analysis by activity, recruiting sources, or other pre-determined factor

- Cost analysis for recruiting by job and source

- EEO report generation

- Mailing label generation

- Online notes

Which Screening Approach to Use

Considering the factors above, there are a number of approaches for screening job responses that are available for you to choose from. The method(s) selected depend on the volume of responses expected, the recruiting strategies you are utilizing to develop potential candidates, and your long-term resource commitments. The table below outlines some basic decision guidelines you may want to follow.

GUIDELINE	SCREENING METHOD
▪ Less than 100 total responses expected ▪ Conventional print media ads ▪ Primarily hard copy responses ▪ One-time job recruiting effort	✓ Manual screening using in-house employees
▪ 100-200 total responses expected ▪ Both conventional print media and selected job board posting methods for recruiting ▪ One-time recruiting effort	✓ Manual screening combined with job board filtering like Monster.com for pre-screening of some responses, or ✓ Outsource to search service firm with appropriate automation capabilities for pre-screening
▪ 200+ responses ▪ Conventional print media, job board posting, and corporate web site candidate applications ▪ One time recruiting effort for multiple positions	✓ Outsource to search service firm with automation capabilities for pre-screening and overall candidate management using ATS capability
▪ 500+ responses ▪ All media used including print, targeted job board posting, general job board searches, and corporate web site candidate applications ▪ Continuous recruiting effort	✓ Implement ATS or contract with a suitable search service firm to implement and maintain a custom ATS meeting your on-going requirements. Use ATS features for automated screening of candidate responses.

Screening Strategies

Regardless of the screening method used, your objective in reviewing responses from potential job candidates should be to efficiently screen through the volume of responses to identify those candidates that appear best qualified and which merit further investigation. When reviewing resumes, you should be able to initially scan and pre-screen an applicant's resume in less than a minute, looking for desirable qualifications. There is no need to study each resume in detail at this point. If the background appears to be a close fit with the job requirements, then the resume merits acceptance for secondary screening, at which point as much time as needed can be taken to review the contents.

The initial pre-screening process should separate candidates that are obviously not qualified from those that do appear to meet the minimum job requirements. Second or third review passes of qualified responses can be used for more refined screening, to clarify concerns or to set priority based on the apparent quality of the response. The following procedure is a good way to accomplish this.

- **Initial Screening** – Incoming resumes, applications or responses should be logged in to a record using some unique identifier that indicates date, sequential order, and source from which the response originated. This is important for good record keeping and in some cases compliance audits or reporting, if required.

  Pre-screening next should look at each resume for the required skills as listed in the job description. If you had previously prioritized these skills by importance, it will now make screening for these easier based on importance. If after a quick screen, the resume is found to include the minimum skills needed, it has passed the pre-screening process and can go into the "follow-up review" category. If the resume does not meet the minimum skill requirements, then it goes in the "reject" category, unless there are other obvious overriding strengths or circumstances.

  You should write down brief comments about each resume reviewed, including any areas of particular strengths or weaknesses that justify your decision or merit later consideration. Comments should be kept on a separate record, not made on the resume, since others may also be reviewing this same resume later. Rejects would go on to be processed for a follow-up card, letter, or email contact which thanks the candidate for their submission and advises they are not under consideration at this time.

If automated screening or filtering was used for the pre-screening process, then the majority of rejects will probably have been identified already before the remaining responses are passed to you for review. Depending on complexity of the automatic filtering process, the automated screening process may also provide a ranking for the pre-qualified candidates, making your pre-screening task that much easier. You or an administrator may need to update the status for candidates you have reviewed in the tracking system when it is being used.

▪ **Secondary Screening** – This is an opportunity to review the now qualified responses again, taking more time for a closer reading of the contents or to examine the areas of particular strength or weakness. This should probably be done after some time has passed since the pre-screening was completed to make sure you are taking a fresh perspective with this secondary screening review.

In the secondary screening, you will want to take time to read each resume to gain a better understanding of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. In particular you should look for "Red Flag" areas of uncertainty or concern that may be cause for rejection or which will need further clarification. Reject any further candidates that are determined to be unqualified in this screening process.

If you have more than a few qualified candidates from the secondary screening, you may want to rank the quality of those remaining for priority in follow-up. If multiple people have been involved in doing the secondary screening, this is a good time to get together to share opinions and reach a consensus opinion and ranking on each candidate. You should again write down your brief comments and reasons for selection or rejection from this secondary screening for later use in internal discussion, or for teleconference or direct interviews with the candidate.

Resume Types

You should be aware that resumes will typically be written using either "chronological" or "functional" format. The **CHRONOLOGICAL** format indicates the dates an applicant spent with each prior employer, and the responsibilities and accomplishments of each former position. This format makes it easy to identify reported job history, frequency of job changes, and the names of prior employers with periods of unemployment. This type of data is relatively easy to verify through reference checks.

The **FUNCTIONAL** format usually lists professional accomplishments and experiences but doesn't associate those accomplishments and experiences with a particular employer. Often a list of former employers is provided in another section of the resume. Typically this format is selected when an applicant has spent much of his or her career with the same employer, has periods of unemployment he or she does not wish to highlight, or has a series of short employment periods and does not want the resume to suggest job hopping. While the choice of formats is purely at discretion of the candidate based on how they want to portray their background, a "functional" format makes it somewhat more difficult to validate an applicant's background with references, so careful interviewing questions may be needed in this case to get a complete and accurate picture of the candidate's experience.

Red Flags to Watch Out for in Screening

- **Gaps in Employment** – There may be good reasons for any employment gaps, or they may reflect some serious issues with the candidate's background, so it is appropriate to clarify reasons for these in later discussion or interviews with the candidate.

- **Education** – Don't assume that just because a school is listed under education, that the applicant has a degree or certificate from that school. Many job seekers hope that the reader will assume that they have a degree. Unless a reference such as "A.A.," "B.S.," or "M.B.A." actually appears, the applicant probably has not completed a degree. Regardless of educational degrees claimed, this is always something for verification with the school listed to ensure the degree was actually earned, since it is a very common area for misrepresentation by job seekers.

- **Career Progression** – Does the candidate's work history indicate a reasonable progression in responsibilities? Setbacks without logical explanation may be an indication of unusual problems or performance issues.

- **Job Hopping** – Usually, when an applicant has a history of job hopping, there is an underlying reason. Be certain to ask probing questions about repeated job changes if you decide to interview the candidate.

- **Poorly Written or Formatted Resume** – A well-written and formatted resume may be indicative of the applicant's high work standards and attention to detail, whereas a poor quality, incoherent resume may indicate a sloppy attitude that will carry over into work performance. This has become a somewhat less reliable indicator in this Internet era where expediency and direct communication often take priority over formal writing style.

Resume Checklist

Setting a consistent pattern for reading resumes will help you establish an objective method for determining which candidates you will ultimately interview. Following is a sample check list. You may want to start with this and expand it as needed for the specific job along with your own objectives in the screening process.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR . . .

❏ Previous Employers	❏ Technical Skills
❏ Education	❏ Employment History
❏ Thoroughness	❏ Neatness
❏ Organization	❏ Stability
❏ Income Pattern	

RED FLAGS . . .

☞ Employment Gaps

☞ Previous Income

☞ Incomplete Application

☞ Job Hopping

☞ Reason for Leaving Previous Job

☞ Employment Pattern

Interviewing Techniques

After screening the responses from your initial recruiting efforts you should have a number of attractive job candidates that you will want to evaluate further to determine the best candidate for the job. The next step in the strategic hiring process is to arrange interviews where you can meet directly with those candidates. The interview will give you a chance to get to know the candidate better, learn more about their capabilities than what a resume can convey, and assess how well they handle themselves in face to face situations.

Besides allowing you to meet and better assess the candidate, the interview serves another equally important purpose. It allows candidates to form opinions about your company and whether they would want to work for you. The interview is probably the candidate's first real exposure to your organization, so it is your chance to present to them a positive view of your company and the job opportunity. You should give careful consideration in planning for the interview process so that it can be conducted professionally and provide the results you are seeking, while leaving the candidate with the impression your organization is one they would be happy to be associated with.
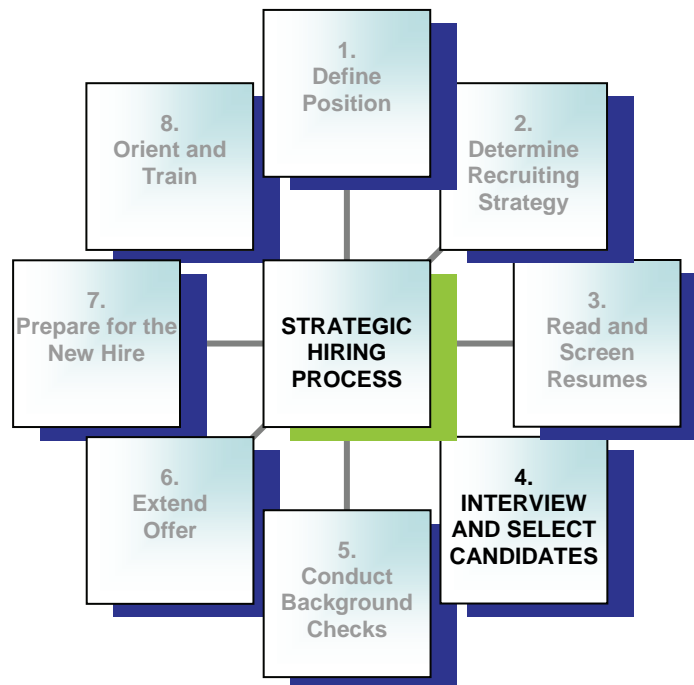
What Frustrates Job Applicants

Before planning for the interview, it is useful to take a look at the interview process from the viewpoint of the job candidate. When a recruiting effort doesn't seem to go well, it is often easy to blame the competitive labor market, fickle job seekers, or some other factor for an inability to attract top candidates. But the truth is, after putting substantial effort into finding the best candidates, companies often end up losing them because of poor execution during the recruiting and interviewing process.

A recent survey uncovered the top six frustrations good candidates experience with the interviewing process.

TOP 6 FRUSTRATIONS OF JOB CANDIDATES

1. Interviewers are not prepared and focused.

2. There is a lack of feedback on their candidacy.

3. They are kept waiting an unreasonable amount of time for a decision.

4. The interview process was too long and complicated.

5. There was no written job description.

6. Employers don't appreciate the time and energy candidates put into the interviewing process.

These are things you clearly want to avoid doing. How you treat candidates during the interviewing process is a reflection of the way the company operates and it forms their primary impression of the organization. Even though a candidate may not end up being the right person for this job, they might be perfect for a future position or end up bringing you new business because of the positive relationship created during the interviewing effort. You should show interviewed candidates at least the same consideration you would give to a valued customer.

Equal Employment Opportunity Legislation

Poor handling of the recruiting and interviewing process can do more harm than just losing a good candidate. In the most extreme situations, it can also cause legal problems for your company if you are not aware of laws that apply to the hiring process. The systems and procedures implemented by a company for hiring and firing personnel are regulated by a host of federal and state labor and employment laws. You must understand these regardless of the size of your company, but failure to abide by them can be especially damaging to the smaller company because extensive litigation costs could be incurred in any employment-related dispute.

The most important legislation relates to discriminatory employment practices and is the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991. A thorough familiarity with employment laws is critical to ensure that anyone involved in the interviewing process at your company conducts lawful interviews. A reference list of the applicable laws and regulations is included in the Appendix.

Legally Defensible Interviews: What You Cannot Ask

In general, the applicable federal and state legislation (and in some cases, local ordinances) prohibit hiring and employment practices that may discriminate against protected groups. Be sure to consult an attorney for the most recent legislation concerning local, state and federal hiring practices.

In order to avoid any question of discrimination, employment interviews must avoid inquiries that directly or indirectly solicit information that may suggest discrimination. The following chart provides examples of unacceptable inquiries that you must be careful to avoid.

SUBJECT AREA	WHAT NOT TO ASK OR REQUEST
Name	▪ Inquiries or comments that could be construed to elicit a response about a name that would indicate applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, or descent.
Marital/Familial Status	▪ Inquiries or comments regarding whether applicant is married, single, divorced, or engaged; number and age of children; child care arrangements; and pregnancy.

SUBJECT AREA	WHAT NOT TO ASK OR REQUEST
Disabilities	▪ Do not ask questions about whether they are disabled or about the nature and severity of the disability.
Sex	▪ Sex of any applicant may not be used as employment criterion; avoid questions about height and weight.
Race	▪ No questions may be asked or comments made regarding an applicant's race, color of skin, eyes, hair, or other questions relating directly or indirectly which would indicate race.
Current/Former Address	▪ No inquiries may be made about a foreign address which would indicate national origin; no inquiries regarding the names and relationships of persons with whom the applicant resides; no questions regarding whether the applicant owns or rents a home.
Birthplace	▪ No inquiry may be made into the birthplace of the applicant, applicant's parents, spouse, or other relatives; no inquiry into national origin.
Religion	▪ Religious denominations or affiliations, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed may not be asked; no inquiries may be made to identify religious denominations or customs; applicants may not be told that any particular religious groups are required to work on their religious holidays.
Military Record	▪ The type of discharge may not be asked.
Photographs	▪ Photographs of applicants may not be required prior to hiring an individual nor can a request be made to attach photographs to applications.
Citizenship	▪ Applicants may not be asked what country they are citizens of or whether the applicants are naturalized or native born; no inquiries regarding the date when the applicant, parents, or spouse acquired citizenship; no inquiry into whether the applicant's spouse or parents are U.S. citizens.

SUBJECT AREA	WHAT NOT TO ASK OR REQUEST
Ancestry	▪ No inquiries regarding lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace, native language, or the natural origin of the applicant's parents or spouse.
Education	▪ No inquiry asking specifically the nationality, racial, or religious affiliation of a school may be asked; no inquiry as to how a foreign language ability was acquired.
Conviction, Arrest, or Court Record	▪ No inquiry relating to an arrest; no inquiry into a person's arrest or conviction record, if not substantially related to functions and responsibilities of a job. Note: These questions may be asked if the applicant has been convicted of a crime.
Notice in Case of Emergency	▪ No inquiry into *relatives* to be notified may be asked. May ask about *persons* to be notified.
Credit Rating	▪ No questions regarding credit rating, charge accounts, or ownership of a car may be asked.

Other general types of inquiries, statements, or actions that may be interpreted as discriminatory and which you should avoid:

- Asking applicants if they have children and if they have baby-sitting problems.

- Asking applicants to specify the type of available transportation to work or asking if they own cars.

- Telling a female applicant that the job is a "man's job."

- Telling a male applicant that the job is a "woman's job."

- Using sexist terms when advertising for a position in a local newspaper or on a marquee. (This would be considered an unlawful practice.)

- Not interviewing or considering an older person for a position because the person doesn't fit an image.

- Asking applicants if they live with anyone or if they see a former spouse.

- Asking applicants if they own their homes or rent or if they live in an apartment or a house.

- Asking applicants their opinions or beliefs concerning unions.

Questions asked of an applicant during an interview can be a source of problems and potential claims of discrimination when misinterpreted, even when the intent was completely innocent. When conducting a candidate search, it is a good idea for you to let your applicants know that your company is an Equal Opportunity Employer to help prevent misunderstandings. A good rule of thumb for interviews is to keep questions objective and focused on the job requirements and qualifications.

There are many federal laws which limit the employer's right to terminate employees, even if they are considered *at will* employees. In addition to the Federal laws already mentioned and the additional ones listed below, also be aware of any state or local laws that can impact your hiring practices. When in doubt, consult your attorney.

Federal Statutes Limiting Employment "At Will" Doctrine

STATUTE	PROHIBITS DISCHARGE
- Labor-Management Relations Act	for union activity or for filing charges under the act.
- Occupational Safety and Health Act	for exercising rights under the act.
- Employee Retirement Income Security Act	to avoid paying employees who have vested pension rights.
- Clean Air Act	for cooperating in proceedings against an employer for violation of the act.
- Clean Water Act	for cooperating in proceedings against an employer for violation of the act.
- Consumer Credit Protection Act	because employee's wages have been garnished for indebtedness.
- Judiciary and Judicial Procedure Act	for serving jury duty.

The systems and procedures implemented by a company for hiring and firing personnel trigger a host of federal and state labor and employment laws. You must understand these regardless of the size of your company, but failure to understand them can be especially damaging to the smaller company because of extensive litigation costs incurred in employment-related disputes. The most important statute eliminating discriminatory employment practices is the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

1. Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Title VII

   With some very limited exceptions, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applies to all employers with 15 or more employees. The law *prohibits discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.* This is the broadest of the equal employment opportunity laws and covers such areas of employment as recruiting, hiring, compensation, terms, conditions, discharges, job assignments, training programs, promotions and others. Title VII is administered and enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court held that Title VII also protects against sexual harassment, another form of illegal workplace discrimination (*Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson).*

2. The Civil Rights Act of 1991

   This law is an amendment to Title VII, and it is important because it significantly *expands employee rights* that had been narrowed by U.S. Supreme Court decisions. It impacts all of the major legislation related to employment (Title VII, ADEA, ADA, and the Rehabilitation Act). The most significant result of this legislation is that it *allows jury trials and the award of compensatory and punitive damages to successful plaintiffs where they were previously unavailable.*

   Discrimination

   The main focus of the Civil Rights Act centers on discrimination. Anti-discrimination laws apply to all stages of the employment process: preparing job descriptions, writing ads, conducting interviews, setting salaries, promotions, demotions, disciplinary actions and terminations.

   There are two types of unlawful discrimination: disparate treatment and disparate impact.

   - Disparate (Unequal) *Treatment*

     This type of discrimination occurs when an individual who is in a protected class is treated differently, specifically because he or she is a member of this class.

To win a case in court a Plaintiff must convince the court that the employer *intentionally* discriminated against the plaintiff. If discrimination is a motivating factor, an employer's practice is illegal even though other factors (such as customer preference) also contributed.

To defend against this allegation of discrimination, the employer must show that either the employee was not treated differently, or that the reasons for different treatment were legal and non-discriminatory.

- Disparate (Unequal*) Impact*

  This type of discrimination occurs when a seemingly neutral practice has an "adverse impact" on any protected classes. In this type of discrimination, the employer's motivation is irrelevant.

  To win this type of case, the Plaintiff must prove that the employer's policies had a discriminatory effect on a group protected by Title VII.

  To defend against this allegation of discrimination, the company must demonstrate that the practice is job-related and has been required by business demands. This type of discrimination is very difficult to defend. If an individual can demonstrate that an alternate choice to the discriminatory practice would have had a less discriminatory effect, then the practice would most likely be determined to be unlawful.

  Summary of Protected Categories

  - Race, color, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity
  - Citizenship
  - Religion
  - Sex
  - Pregnancy
  - Age 40 and above
  - Disability (including AIDS/HIV condition)
  - Vietnam era veterans
  - Military reserve status
  - Disabled veteran
  - Sexual orientation
  - Medical condition
  - Marital status

- Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ)

  The only exception to this prohibition from discrimination lies in demonstrating that the exclusion of a candidate or employee based on his or her membership in one of these categories is based on a "Bona Fide Occupational Qualification" (BFOQ). "Bona Fide" means genuine, honestly or in good faith. The employer who regards sex, race, age, religion or other protected characteristics as a bona fide qualification for a job must be able to demonstrate business necessity. For example:

  – Religion is a BFOQ for becoming clergy for specified religious organizations.
  – Sex may be a BFOQ for employment in men's or women's locker rooms.
  – Sex is not a BFOQ for heavy physical work since some women can be physically strong.
  – An age BFOQ may be limited to jobs where safety is involved.
  – Customer or employer preference may not be considered in determining BFOQ.
  – There is no race BFOQ.

3. Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938
   The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 is the most important federal law covering wage and hour issues for workers, and covers all employers involved with interstate commerce. Although it is not a law specifically related to employment or discrimination, it *addresses fairness in the workplace*. The FLSA requires payment of a minimum wage, as well as an overtime premium for hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week, unless a special exemption applies. This law also restricts the use of child labor, and requires equal pay as described below in the Equal Pay Act. It is enforced by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor.

4. The Equal Pay Act of 1963
   The Equal Pay Act applies to all employers covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act, of which it is a part, plus executive, administrative and professional employees and outside sales people. This act *forbids pay differentials on the basis of sex* and is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

5. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967
   This law *prohibits discrimination against applicants and employees aged 40 and over* and forbids age discrimination in all major aspects of employment. The Age Discrimination in Employment act is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Employers with over 15 employees must comply. An important aspect of ADEA is that no worker can be forced to retire.

6. **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**

   The Americans with Disabilities Act *prohibits employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities*. Enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, this law defines an individual with a disability as one who has a physical or mental impairment, who has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having impairment.

7. **The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978**

   The Pregnancy Discrimination Act *requires that a pregnant employee be treated the same as any other employee*, and makes it illegal for an employer to refuse to hire a pregnant woman, to terminate her employment because of pregnancy, or to compel her to take a maternity leave. It is an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

8. **Executive Orders 11246 & 11375**

   Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 cover *all employers with government contracts or subcontracts of more than $10,000*, with some rare exceptions. It also applies to contractors and subcontractors with construction projects financed in whole or in part with federal funds. It *requires that every contract contain a clause against discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin*. In addition, Revised Order No. 4, based on E.O. 11246, requires contractors and subcontractors with 50 or more employees and a contract of $50,000 or more to develop and carry out a written Affirmative Action Program. This Executive Order is enforced by 18 federal contracting agencies that have been designated compliance agencies by the Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

9. **Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

   The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides for *equal employment opportunity for the physically and mentally disabled.* Under this law it is illegal to discriminate against a physically or mentally disabled person for reasons unrelated to the job. In addition, employers must take affirmative action to hire and promote the disabled. This law *applies to employers if they are government contractors or subcontractors* under the guidelines of Executive Order 11246 and 11375.

10. **Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Act of 1974**

    This law also *applies to employers holding government contracts or subcontracts* as defined by Executive Order 11246 and 11375. The Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Act of 1974 provides protection for disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam Era. Covered *employers must take affirmative action to hire and promote these veterans*. In addition, they must list all job openings with their local employment service.

Preparing Interview Questions

To ensure that candidates are selected objectively and based on the same job criteria, it is critical that interviewers be consistent in the types of questions they ask. Thus, preparing interview questions ahead of time becomes one of the keys to consistent, effective interviews. Follow these guidelines in preparing interview questions.

1. **Avoid asking** CLOSED-ENDED **questions – i.e., questions that can be answered by a single word, usually "Yes" or "No."**

   Single-word answers don't give you much information and don't give the candidate an opportunity to tell you all you need to know about that person. For example:

   - "Do you like working with people?"
   - "Did you like your last job?"
   - "Do you like working with computers?

   Your goal is to pose questions that invite the candidate to talk about what he or she has done in the past.

2. **Use** OPEN-ENDED **questions that ask for specific examples of past job behavior.**

   Past behavior is the best indicator of future performance. Instead of asking hypothetical questions about how the candidate *might* handle some future task, ask **specifically** how the candidate handled something similar in a past or present position.

3. **Keep your questions focused.**

   Questions such as "What can you tell me about your strengths?" may or may not produce the information you truly need. Instead, be focused and ask for specific information. Your open-ended questions should be **based on the technical and performance skills** you identified as being necessary for success on the job.

Avoid Leading Questions

Leading questions are questions that can steer the applicant and result in misleading answers. Below are examples of leading questions.

- "I need someone who can work well with others. Are you a people person"?
- "This is a stressful position with constant deadlines. How are you with those?
- We have some people here who are difficult to work with. Do you mind working with challenging personalities?

Preparing Behavior-Based Interview Questions

"Behavioral Interviewing" is an interviewing style that focuses on relevant, specific experience that candidates have obtained through their years of job or educational experience. It should be used as a complement to, not instead of, more traditional interview styles, which gather information about a candidate's years of experience, positions held, reasons for making job changes, and levels of responsibility. As a result, it is typically most effective for second or third interviews (or when multiple interviewers participate, and each interviewer focuses on one specific area), once it has been determined that the candidate meets the base requirements for the position.

This interviewing style requires the interviewer to pre-select probing questions that are relevant to success in the open position. In response to these specific questions, candidates share and discuss concrete, "real world" examples of how they accomplish goals, interact with others, and solve problems. Behavioral Interviewing assists in effectively evaluating each applicant by probing detailed examples of a candidate's success in past work environments, which is typically a good predictor of future success.

This type of interviewing is particularly effective because candidates are instructed to respond to questions by providing *specific examples* of how they have achieved a result when faced with a particular project, task or problem. Answers that are hypothetical are not acceptable, because we are trying to evaluate what candidates have accomplished, not what they would or could accomplish.

This type of interviewing is also valuable because it is **defensible**, for example, in justifying why one candidate was selected instead of another, or in the event an applicant alleges that your company has used discriminatory hiring practices. By asking each candidate the same pre-selected questions, managers focus on the topics that are most

relevant to success in a particular position. They ensure that all applicants are assessed fairly by asking the same questions of all candidates. This consistency in questioning the applicants reduces the tendency of a hiring manager to make a selection because the manager "likes" or "feels comfortable" with the applicant. The result is that managers evaluate relevant experience, based on objective, pre-determined criteria, and can easily substantiate their hiring decisions.

Behavioral-based questions require the interviewer to first determine the interpersonal qualities most important to the position and then structure questions by asking for examples of previous work experience to validate whether the interviewee has encountered those situations.

Further information on this type of interviewing may be obtained by watching the video *More Than a Gut Feeling* which is available by visiting the Coastal AMI website (www.coastalami.com) where you may obtain a free preview.

A simple technique is to simply begin the question with the phrases *"Tell me about a time when . . ."* or *"Give me an example of . . ."* or *"Describe . . . ."* The following sample questions may be used in your interviews or they may help you create your own.

Sample Behavior-based Questions

- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond your normal duties in order to get a job done.

- Give me a specific example of a situation when you had to work on a system where there was no documentation or history.

- Tell me about a situation when you had to fix a system you had never worked on before.

- Describe the worst job assignment you ever had and how you coped with it.

- Tell me about a time when you had to mentor and teach an apprentice something.

- What would you say is the most difficult work decision you had to make over the last year?

- Give me an example of when you had more things to do than you had time for and you were required to prioritize your tasks. How did you handle it?

- Describe the biggest project you had responsibility for.

- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.

- Give me an example of a situation where you had to make a snap decision on your own.

- Explain the toughest goal you have had to face and how you were able to meet or achieve it.

- Tell me about a situation where you had to use your presentation skills to sell an idea or convince someone of your position.

- Describe a situation where you tried your best to complete a significant task but were unsuccessful.

- Give me an example of a time when you had to take the lead and use your own initiative to get the job done.

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.

- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation at work that you had to cope with.

- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

Pre-Interview Planning

Preparation for the interview can be as important as the actual face-to-face meeting. Gathering your thoughts and information about the position prior to sitting down with the applicant will help you mentally prepare and feel more at ease. Use this checklist to ensure that you are well prepared and present a positive, organized picture to the candidate.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

❒ Call the candidate to arrange the initial interview. Confirm the date, start time, duration, and location with the candidate. Set aside a block of time on your calendar. Reserve a conference room if the interview is to take place in an area other than a private office.

❒ Assemble any materials and handouts to show the applicant, such as company brochure, samples of types of work to be performed, job description, and application, if pertinent.

❒ Prepare Applicant Cover Sheet and Interview Planning Form, similar to the one on the following page, for each candidate being interviewed. Be sure to include an Assessment Summary to be completed at the end of the interview.

APPLICANT COVER SHEET & INTERVIEW PLANNING FORM

Candidate Name _____

Position _____

Date Interviewed _____

Interviewer _____

Recommended by _____

Prior to beginning your interview, highlight the questions that are appropriate to this position and add questions specific to position requirements, projects, etc.

WORK EXPERIENCE & RESPONSIBILITIES	NOTES
1. What are your main tasks in your present job?	
2. What type of supervision do you have?	
3. Do you supervise other people in your present job? How many?	
4. With whom do you have working relations outside the company?	
5. What level and standards or degree of accuracy is required in your job? What success have you had?	
6. What are the specific types of systems you have worked on?	
7. Tell me about your most important achievements in your career? What successes have you had?	
8. Why do you think you were successful?	
9. What are some of the things you like to avoid in your work? Why?	
10. Why do you wish to leave your present job? Why did you leave prior jobs?	
11. How will you leave your current job better than you found it? What changes/ improvements did you make?	
12. Specific questions:	

EDUCATION/TRAINING/CREDENTIALS	NOTES
1. Tell me about your educational experience.	
2. What did you find to be the most difficult part of your apprenticeship program?	
3. Why did you select this industry?	
4. What did you like best about your apprenticeship program?	
5. What other training or education have you received since completing your apprenticeship program?	
6. If you had it to do over again, what course of study would you pursue?	
7. Specific questions:	

SKILLS	NOTES
1. What skills are required in your current position? (i.e. computer software, word processing, spread sheets, office equipment, analytical/math, budgeting, public speaking, presentations, selling, negotiating, event planning, writing, customer/client relations, project planning/management, etc.)	
2. What other skills do you possess? (i.e. other computer/software, foreign language, artistic/creative, etc.)	
3. What do you consider your strongest skills? Why?	
4. Which of your areas of skill do you enjoy most?	
5. How/where did you learn these skills?	
6. Specific questions:	

ADA-RELATED QUESTIONS	NOTES
1. Is there any reason why you would not be able to perform any of the tasks or complete the projects required in this job?	
2. (Describe the essential functions of the job first) How would you perform these?	
3. Specific questions:	

ENVIRONMENT	NOTES
1. What sort of office/working environments do you prefer?	
2. What sort of work hours have you been accustomed to? Is overtime a problem for you?	
3. How do you feel about travel? Would it be a problem for you?	
4. Specific questions:	

DECISION-MAKING	NOTES
1. What level of independent decisions/ judgments were you asked to make in your current/former job?	
2. How often did you meet with your boss to review projects/receive guidance?	
3. Who had to review your work prior to its completion/submission?	
4. What kinds of decisions are you most uncomfortable with?	
5. Specific questions:	

INTERPERSONAL	NOTES

1. Describe for me a difficult obstacle you have had to overcome? How did you handle it? How did this experience affect you?

2. What things frustrate you most?

3. How would your friends describe you?

4. How would your enemies describe you?

5. Describe the relationship you have with your current boss.

6. Describe the times you have felt the most satisfied in your work.

7. Describe the most stressful work experience you have ever had.

8. How would you describe your management style?

9. Specific questions:

COMPATIBILITY	NOTES
1. What appeals to you most about this job?	
2. What strengths do you feel you can bring to this company and to this job in particular?	
3. What aspects of this job do not appeal to you?	
4. In what areas do you feel you might have to improve?	
5. How does the job for which you are applying relate to what you have done in the past?	
6. How does it relate to what you have planned for the future?	
7. Why are you applying for this job?	
8. Why do you think you would be successful in it?	
9. What are your career objectives?	
10. Specific questions:	

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Attach to the Interview Planning Form and complete after the interview.

EXPERIENCE/JOB HISTORY

❐ Relevant work experience   ❐ Quality of experience

❐ Progressive growth   ❐ Insight

❐ Leadership   ❐ Apply knowledge; innovate as appropriate

❐ Job stability   ❐ Employment gaps

COMMENTS

_____

_____

_____

_____

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

❐ Appropriate licenses, degrees, etc.   ❐ General knowledge

❐ Education related to job content   ❐ Analytical ability

❐ Technical skills   ❐ Effective resource utilization

❐ Communication skills (speaking, writing, listening)   ❐ Thought patterns/organization (ability to express thoughts clearly)

COMMENTS

_____

_____

_____

_____

MOTIVATION

❑ Goals

❑ Interests/significant motivating factors

❑ Real vs. ideal expectations

❑ Ability to follow-through

❑ Professional commitment

❑ Self-motivated

COMMENTS

PERSONALITY

❑ Personal philosophies

❑ Fit with position requirements

❑ Body language

❑ Self-concept and direction

❑ Ability to get along with others

COMMENTS

JOB SUITABILITY

❑ Agreement with mission and goals

❑ Understanding of/agreement with job role and function

❑ Acceptance of policies and procedures

❑ Realistic career goals in terms of job opportunities

COMMENTS

DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

❑ Review the applicant's resume to refresh your memory and focus on specific areas of interest. Depending on circumstances, several days or weeks may have passed since you scheduled the interview and you will need to organize your thoughts so you can conduct the interview smoothly without having to stop to re-read the resume.

❑ Make sure the office is clean and clutter-free. Remove any proprietary or sensitive materials from view.

❑ Practice what you want to say on opening and closing the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

❑ Select a quiet location free from distractions.

❑ Turn off cell phones and have a desk person hold all other calls.

❑ Sit where you can maintain good eye contact and observe reactions. Don't sit where a desk is between you.

❑ Take careful and consistent notes on each candidate.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

❑ Prepare an Interview Evaluation Form to attach to the resume. This is a useful way to keep your resumes better organized and avoid confusing one candidate with another. An easy way for you to know that a candidate has been interviewed is to attach a Cover Sheet, and include your assessment notes. This is also a good way to remember that all candidates who have been interviewed should be contacted regarding the outcome of the interview, either by an invitation to a second interview, offer of employment, or by being informed that the position has been filled.

Structuring the Interview

Once the interview arrangements have been finalized and you have properly "set the stage," it is time to conduct your interviews. Remember, the interview is your opportunity to get to know the candidate and his or her qualifications. By following the seven steps listed below, you can make the candidates feel comfortable, obtain the information you need, and make an objective, informed hiring decision.

Although each interview conducted will be as unique in style as you are, most interviews will follow the same general format.

1. **Open with some "small talk" to make candidates feel at ease.** Since the objective of the interview is to encourage applicants to talk freely without feeling anxious or overly cautious, you will want to create a low threat climate. The more relaxed applicants feel, the more easily they will talk about themselves and the more you will learn. Be sure to set the stage that you are interviewing other candidates.

    > "Our purpose today is for you to learn more about our operation and me, and for me to learn more about you, so that we can both determine if this is a good fit for both of us. As you might be aware, I am interviewing a number of applicants. I'm looking for a person who meets my standards, as I'm sure you're looking for a company and position that meets your needs."

2. **Use open-ended questions when asking about the candidate's background.** Open-ended questions are designed to be value free and encourage the applicant to open up. This means there are no right or wrong answers. These questions usually begin with "why," "what," or "how." Some examples include:

    - "Why did you select a career in this industry?"
    - "What kinds of decisions make you feel uncomfortable?"
    - "How would you describe your work style?"

    When asked this type of question, the applicant is required to answer with a fairly broad explanation, giving you much more information than if you had asked a more restrictive question (one which can be answered in a few words).

    The questions you ask during this information-gathering time should include questions about work experience, skills, education, training, certificates, designations, licenses, and anything else that relates to the position.

3. **Practice the art of listening.** The skillful interviewer uses some questions to start the applicant talking and others to steer the interview along the right course. The main job of an interviewer is to listen. Don't make the mistake of "selling" the candidate on the benefits of working for you before you are sure you want this candidate working for you. This is the time that you should be doing far more listening than talking. Don't be afraid of silence.

4. **Discuss the available position.** This should include the job description of the position, special job requirements (such as lifting, driving, or travel), current objectives, projects or activities in the department, office location and facilities, and salary (if appropriate).

    Many managers are so anxious to fill an open position that they conveniently fail to mention the "realities," focusing only on the positive aspects. While you do want to create a positive impression with the candidate, most people will view it as a plus when you can provide them with a realistic job preview that covers both sides of the job.

    For example, some jobs may require frequent overtime due to the nature of the business. Giving applicants an estimate of the unplanned overtime they could expect to face from time to time might discourage some applicants, but it will probably not be a problem for the ones you want to end up hiring, especially when you have already been able to outline many of the advantages of the job and your company. If extensive overtime is a part of the job, it would be unwise to hire someone who can't deal with this aspect of the job, only to lose them later when it becomes a problem for them. Don't be afraid to mention what you think are "negative" aspects. In most cases it will only help your recruiting efforts, as your open approach will show the applicant that you are fair, honest, and conduct yourself with integrity.

5. **Describe the company.** This should include information on company history, a brief description of all company business segments (construction, service, plumbing, sheet metal, etc.), where the open position falls within the company, and company benefits (if appropriate). If you have a promotion/information folder and it hasn't already been provided, this is a good time to provide it to the candidate and perhaps go over some key elements of the package.

6. **Provide an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions.** This is a time for the candidate to probe on areas that he or she may have interest or topics that have not been discussed.

7. Close the interview. Let candidates know the time frame for the next step in the interview process, and thank them for coming in for the interview. Make sure that candidates leave with a positive feeling about the company, whether you have interest in pursuing the candidate or not.

> "We will be interviewing several other candidates over the next week, but plan to make a decision by (date) and will let you know the results of our decision at that time. If you have any questions during that time, please give me a call."

Follow-up Interviews

Rather than extending an offer to the first candidate who interviews well, it is a good idea to invite candidates back to meet with other key individuals in the organization. Like watching a movie for the second time, you will often see things in a candidate you missed during the first gathering. Just as you did the first time, each individual who interviews the candidate should complete an Interviewer Evaluation Sheet for use when it comes down to making the final selections. Two different forms are provided on the following pages. One form is for solo interviewers and the other can be used when the candidate is interviewed by multiple interviewers. No matter what your preference is, select some way of documenting the impressions of each candidate interviewed.

INTERVIEWER EVALUATION SHEET

Name: _____   Position Applied for: _____

Interviewer: _____   Date_____

Available: _____ Full-time _____ Part-time   Start Date   _____

Resume/Application   ( ) Yes   ( ) No   Current Pay $ _____
Attached

Interview Evaluation					
Criteria	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments
Previous Work Experience/Job Knowledge					
Training/Credentials					
Specific Job Skills					
Interpersonal Skills					
Fit for Position					

Consider for Position (   ) YES   (   ) NO

Additional Comments _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

INTERVIEWER EVALUATION SHEET – MULTIPLE INTERVIEWERS

Candidate Name _____: Prospective Position:_____

PHONE INTERVIEW

Date _____

Comments:
_____
_____
_____
_____

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Interviewer #1_____

Date: _____

Candidate Rating: _____ 5. Excellent   Comments
                       _____ 4. Good   _____
                       _____ 3. Average   _____
                       _____ 2. Fair   _____
                       _____ 1. Poor   _____

Interviewer #2

Date: _____

_____

Candidate Rating   _____ 5. Excellent   Comments
                      _____ 4. Good   _____
                      _____ 3. Average   _____
                      _____ 2. Fair   _____
                      _____ 1. Poor   _____

CLOSURE FOR THE CANDIDATE

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THIS CANDIDATE *(specify date, reason for contact, and comments)*:

Pre-Employment Testing Methods

Before you begin the process of evaluating and selecting candidates, there is one more step you can take to effectively evaluate a candidate, and that is pre-employment testing. Pre-employment testing refers to the use of standardized tests that are designed to evaluate various candidate traits or skills based on the test results. Pre-employment testing can fall into several categories.

CATEGORIES OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTS

- Basic Skills tests
- Job Match tests
- Aptitude tests
- Psychological tests
- Personality tests
- Honesty tests
- Medical tests
- Drug tests

While some pre-employment testing can be helpful, testing can be inconclusive so it should only be used as a supplement to other candidate qualification techniques, not as a primary decision factor. Test results may simply show that an otherwise highly qualified candidate just does not perform well on written tests, or at the other extreme, that a sharp but devious candidate is able to discern the purpose of a psychological test and answer accordingly, distorting the results.

This area also can be a legal mine field for your organization. While you are allowed to do some testing of applicants, both state and federal law impose numerous restrictions on what you can do, and these restrictions are often subject to interpretation. Aptitude, psychological, and personality tests especially can easily run afoul of EEO anti-discrimination laws, while honesty and medical tests may infringe on privacy laws.

As a result, pre-employment testing, if used, should be limited to only those tests that have a very specific purpose related to the job. Basic skills tests for entry jobs are generally safe and effective to use. Depending on the position, you may want to create a short Skills Evaluation Quiz to determine whether the candidate's skills are as up-to-date

as they indicated during the interview process. As an example, if your company requires service technicians to use hand-held devices for recording service work performed, you may want to have those technicians complete a basic computer literacy test to see if they will adapt to your method of tracking business. Potential accounting employees may be required to take a basic math test to evaluate their math skills, obviously necessary for the job.

With increasing drug use in society at large, drug testing as a standard condition of hiring may be a good idea, especially where public safety is a concern. Before initiating any type of pre-employment testing, you should consult with your legal department to make sure that your testing procedures and policies will pass legal muster with your state and federal laws.

As one famous politician once said, "Trust, but verify." Those words definitely apply when making hiring decisions. Appropriate pre-employment testing can mean the difference between a productive hire and one that causes you unnecessary grief. To help you better evaluate a technician's current level of expertise, the Appendix of this guide contains a basic mechanical test which can be given to all potential technicians. Also included is a self-evaluation summary which can be given directly to the technician. Although they are ranking themselves on their ability, you can verify their knowledge with appropriate interview follow-up questions.

Evaluating Candidates

The goal of any interview and selection process is to objectively select the right candidate for the job. Interview planning forces you to identify your selection criteria ahead of time and allows you to legally and objectively extract the necessary information during the interview.

Now that you have the information you need, how can you best compare one candidate to another? Once again, you can refer to the job description created at the start of the recruiting process which defined and attempted to prioritize the skills required to be successful in the job.

One of the simplest and most effective methods for objectively comparing candidates is a **Skills Evaluation Summary** which is a straightforward way to organize your findings about how well each candidate satisfies the requirements of the job description, based on your interview.

SAMPLE SKILLS EVALUATION SUMMARY

Begin your evaluation by reviewing the job description used to develop the interview questions. In Section 1 list the primary technical skills that are essential for the person to do the job. In Section 2 list the primary interpersonal and performance skills required to do the job. Once you have developed your chart, you are ready to review your notes from each candidate's interview, summarize your findings, and make a selection based on objective criteria.

SECTION I TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED	CANDIDATE #1	CANDIDATE #2	CANDIDATE #3	CANDIDATE #4
Computer literacy	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Mapping software	*No*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
SECTION II: PRIMARY INTERPERSONAL AND PERFORMANCE SKILLS REQUIRED				
Customer service orientation	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Initiative	*Yes*	*No*	*No*	*Yes*
Adaptability	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*

Interview Follow-Up

Follow-up with all candidates is critical. Even though you may not hire the individual at this time, there may be a time in the future when you have a position for which they are well suited. Also, they still may have a need for your company's services some day. Don't leave any candidate with a negative impression of you or your company. Once the candidate has taken the trouble to meet with you for an interview, it is appropriate to follow up with a quick note thanking the candidate, and reaffirming that you expect the decision between candidates to be made by some target date.

> Thank you for taking time to interview with (company name) for the _____ position. We were impressed with your background and capabilities, and will be considering you with several other candidates for this position. We expect to make a decision on this position by _____ and will advise you of status when the decision has been made.
>
> Again, thank you for your interest in (company name) and for taking the time to interview with us.

Once a decision has been made, you should inform all the interviewed candidates about the decision. A telephone call (*not* a voice mail) always leaves a positive impression, even when the news is something other than what the candidate wants to hear. When that is not possible, a follow-up thank you note should be sent as soon as possible after the decision is made.

> Thank you for your interest in applying for the _____ position. After much consideration we have offered the position to another candidate who best fits our needs and requirements.
>
> Again, thank you for your interest in (company name) and good luck in your employment endeavors.

Background Checks

The CEO of an international electronics retailer recently resigned after 11 years with the company when it was found that he never got the degree in psychology that he had indicated. In fact, the college he claimed to have attended had never even offered that subject. The head football coach of a major university was forced to resign five days after being hired after it was discovered that he hadn't actually received a master's degree, nor had he ever even played football, both prominent claims on his resume. A top Navy admiral's career was ended when he was found to have grossly misrepresented the military honors actually received. A well known U.S. senator was found to have plagiarized parts of speeches and interviews and inflated his academic record while he was making a run for the presidency, which he was forced to abruptly end.

What do these cases have to do with your recruiting effort? They are all highly visible and costly cases where people were found to have lied about their backgrounds as a way to advance their careers, causing serious damage to themselves and their organizations when their lies were eventually discovered.
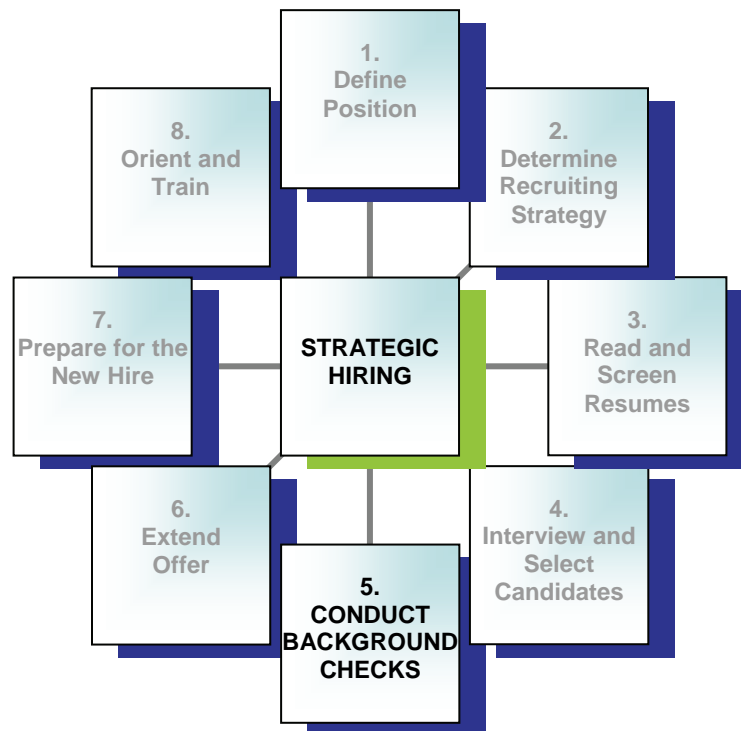
In a recent study by ADP consisting of 2.6 million background checks, it was found that 44 percent of applicants lied about their work histories; 41 percent lied about their education; and 23 percent falsified credentials or licenses, deceptions that could almost always have been easily discovered with a basic check of the applicant's claims in these areas. While background and reference checks add an additional phase to the hiring procedure, these alarming statistics, and the real-world cases cited above should make it clear how necessary it is for you to conduct appropriate background checks on any final candidates you have chosen **before** they are hired.

Types of Background Checks

The term background check often creates an image of the private investigator nosing around dark alleys to dig up the intimate details of one's past and discover hidden criminal charges or other sordid behaviors. While this can sometimes be the case, usually the type of background checks needed for screening of potential candidates fall into a more benign category designed to just verify accuracy of various information or claims made by the candidate. Following are some of the types of verification activities that might be undertaken as part of a recruitment background check.

- **Education and Employment Verification**. This usually consists of a basic fact check verifying that the dates of educational study, degrees awarded, licenses earned and dates of employment are as claimed on a resume or job application.

- **Direct Reference Check**. A telephone call to references provided, or former employers, asking for recommendations and verifying basic facts about the candidate. Though past employers are often reluctant to volunteer much information about former employees, at minimum, a response to the telling question "Would you hire this person again?" can be expected from this type of check. Note that current employers should never be contacted without first obtaining the explicit permission of the candidate.

- **Social Security Number Verification**. As the level of identity theft is rising, it is a good idea to take multiple steps to insure that your candidate is actually the person they claim to be. Social Security Number verifications can help to do this. SSN's can be verified prior to hiring by using public records and credit bureau data. The federal E-verify database system, while very useful for SSN verification of new employees, can only be used after hiring to confirm SSN authenticity, not for pre-hiring background checks.

- **Sexual Offenders Databases**. These are becoming readily available as online public records in many states, making a search relatively easy to do and recommended where available.

- **Department of Motor Vehicles**. A driving record may be checked whether the job requires driving or not. It's an easy way to verify date of birth and addresses, and is essential if the employee will be operating a company vehicle as part of the job.

- **Credit Report**. A credit history check is allowed under the applicable federal laws for employment purposes. This may be particularly important in cases where employees will be handling money, have access to corporate credit cards, or have other financial authority. A bad credit history is not necessarily a disqualifier, since this could result from a divorce, medical disaster, or other things that were beyond the control of the debtor at that time.

- **Criminal Record Checks**. This is not a police records check. Instead, a criminal record check is usually performed by an investigative service at county courthouses where the candidate has resided. State records may sometimes be checked also. This may be mandated by state or federal law for workers in some jobs and is a good idea anytime the employee has access to secure or sensitive customer locations.

- **Civil Court Records**. This can reveal lawsuits in which the potential employee was either a plaintiff or defendant in a case concerning a former employer and can also show if a restraining order has been filed, which may be a cause for concern.

Applicable Laws for Background Checks

The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) sets the national standard for employment background checks. It regulates employment background checks for the purposes of hiring, promotion, retention, or reassignment. Its provisions indicate what you can and cannot do when conducting employee or job candidate screening. When conducting background checks you should also consider all of the EEO anti-discrimination laws cited earlier for recruiting. They apply to the background check process as well which means that any background queries cannot ask or seek information that would be considered discriminatory under federal EEO regulations.

Some states, like California, may have additional laws governing background checks over and above FRCA so you should be aware of the applicable laws in your state before proceeding. An alternative may be to use a qualified background check service that is up to date on both state and federal laws.

The federal FCRA requirements apply *only* when an employment background check is prepared by an *outside* screening company. In this case, FCRA requires that you or the investigating company do the following:

**Federal Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)
Requirements for Background Checks**

- Give notice on a separate document that a report *may* be required as condition of employment.

- Obtain permission before conducting the investigation.

- Get separate and specific permission if medical information is requested.

- Give a specific notice if neighbors, friends, or associates will be interviewed about "character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living." This is called an "investigative consumer report" under the FCRA.

- Provide a "pre-adverse action notice" along with a copy of the background report before an adverse action is taken with the job applicants. An "adverse action" will probably mean the employer has decided not to hire a candidate based primarily on the information in the report.

If you are conducting one or more of the background checks described above by yourself, without use of an outside service, then these FRCA requirements normally will not apply. However, it is good practice to advise and get consent of the job candidate regardless, since this may be helpful with references and may also be one of several requirements mandated by state law, even if not required by FRCA.

California law for example, goes beyond FRCA and gives the candidate the right to obtain a copy of any public records the employer gathers in a self directed investigation, unless the candidate has previously been given notice and declined this right, normally by checking a "decline" box on the job application or other document.

Other Considerations for Background Checks

In checking references today, you may find that employers, associates, and educational institutions are very reserved in sharing useful information. In fact, they are sometimes totally unwilling to provide any but the most basic information about the candidate you may be evaluating. This is not surprising given the legal restrictions provided thru FRCA and state laws protecting privacy of candidates. It also reflects concern about liability in case of unfair hiring or discrimination lawsuits where inaccurate or harmful opinion about the job seeker might have been provided that caused them to be disqualified for the job.

Nevertheless, it is essential that you obtain the types of reliable background information that can often only be verified by these sources before hiring a candidate.

To avoid problems, you should make sure that sound techniques in checking references are utilized. This will help assure references that you are operating professionally, with full awareness of the laws, and with respect for the privacy of the candidate. A good reason for always getting a signed applicant information release is that you can provide this to references that may require it as part of their own policies for sharing information.

Beyond this you must simply be aware that many organizations will only verify limited historical information about past employees or students. They may have internal policies prohibiting employees from providing opinion or unsubstantiated information to you regardless of how politely you might ask. If you find you regularly need to go beyond this level of background check to assure the candidate is qualified for the job, then you should probably contract with a professional service to conduct more in depth checks for you using the resources that they have available.

Guidelines for Background Checking

1. **Decide what type of background checks are appropriate for the position recruited.** This may have been specified earlier in the job description, if not, keep in mind that any information you seek should always be related to the candidate's potential performance in the job being considered.

2. **Decide who will be conducting background checks and if an outside service is needed.** In general, background and reference checks can be conducted internally by Human Resources personnel. Obtain permission to conduct the background check and then forward your request to Human Resources. The results will be passed on to the hiring manager when they are complete. Detailed technical or skills discussions may require the involvement of the hiring manager or another technical expert. An outside agency can handle all background checking if you choose, but this is probably not

actually required until you start doing more detailed types of background checks such as credit, criminal or civil background checks.

3. **Only do background checks on candidates that you are otherwise ready to hire.** Background checks are not normally used for the initial screening process.

4. **Make sure you have a completed application with candidate consent form on file prior to checking any references.** Typically, as part of the application, or on a separate document, the candidate should consent to the following or similar statement:

> "I hereby consent that _____ may obtain job related information from references or former employers as needed to verify suitability for the job. I hereby release from liability _____ and its representatives for seeking such information and all other persons, corporations, and organizations for furnishing such information."

Use of a background check agency will require that a separate, more comprehensive FRCA approved release form be signed before proceeding.

5. **The same EEO anti-discrimination laws applicable to the overall recruiting process also apply to background checks.** You cannot probe into marital status, age, disability, race, religion, color, or national origin for the purpose of using that information in a hiring decision.

6. **Confidentiality is a must.** The information you gather when checking references must be kept confidential. It is not even a good practice to discuss this information with other employees in your organization, unless they have a need to know.

7. **Always verify dates of employment, titles, duties and responsibilities, and where possible, past performance of potential employees.** These facts are usually the most critical in reference checking.

8. **Verify all degrees and licenses by calling the college, university or issuing institution directly.** This information can usually be obtained over the telephone if you know the candidate's social security number, which should be provided on the job application and consent form.

The **Reference Check Form** on the next page covers basic information for reference checking, and provides some suggestions for specific questions or topics to cover.

SAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK FORM

COMPLETED BY: _____ DATE: _____

Candidate Name: _____ Prospective Position _____

Education: School _____ Degree/Credential _____ Yes Date Received: _____
Confirmed: _____ No

Education: School _____ Degree/Credential _____ Yes Date Received: _____
Confirmed: _____ No

If **NO**, explain: _____

_____

_____

PERSONAL REFERENCES	COMPANY #1	COMPANY #2	COMPANY #3
Company Name			
Contact/Relationship			
Time with Company			
Position(s)			
Time in Position(s)			
Reason for Leaving			
Would you rehire?			
Comments			

SAMPLE QUESTIONS/TOPICS TO COVER

QUESTIONS/TOPICS	COMPANY #1	COMPANY #2	COMPANY #3
1. Describe the responsibilities this person had in his/her position(s).			
2. What was his/her ability to perform/meet expectations in the position(s)?			
3. How well did this person work with others (superiors, peers, subordinates, customers)?			
4. Describe the reliability of this person.			
5. What is/are this person's greatest strength(s) or area(s) of expertise?			
6. What skills/abilities need to be developed or improved?			

Extending the Offer

After following a rigorous recruiting, screening, and selection strategy, you are now ready to make an offer to the top candidate selected from the group of highly qualified people identified through your efforts. While the job may be as good as filled from your perspective, the same may not true of your potential new employee. From the job seeker's viewpoint, you have only passed the preliminaries and now the sales burden is on you to convince the candidate to join your organization.

In growing markets like HVACR, it should come as no surprise that fewer than 40% of offers extended are actually accepted. If your top candidate is as good as you think, he/she probably has attractive offers to consider from other companies as well as yours. What do you need to do now to close the deal?

In today's competitive job market, there's a lot more involved in hiring top employees than just extending a financial offer to the candidate. In fact, if this is the way you are approaching the hiring process, you may only be raising the odds that you will be unsuccessful in your attempt to hire that candidate.

The job offer portion of the recruiting process can be the most critical step of all. Hiring managers need to realize that their focus at this point must change from that of finding the candidate that is best for you to one of convincing the candidate that the job and your organization is best for them.

Developing a Strategy for the Job Offer

If you haven't been doing so already as you have progressed through the recruiting process, the job offer may be your last and best opportunity to make a great impression with the job candidate. In the interviewing and screening process, you probably got to know the candidate and developed an idea of what is important to them. This is a time to use that knowledge to craft a job offer that is competitive, compelling, and more attractive than their present job or other offers they may be considering.

Basics the Offer Letter Should Include

A job offer letter should always be created for any offer. It can be thought of as a written contract that outlines what the company is agreeing to provide in exchange for the candidate's acceptance and implied performance in the job. To avoid misunderstanding, it needs to adequately describe the job duties, and include all the important elements of compensation being extended by the offer. Jobs such as sales – that may involve more complex compensation or incentive plans – may need to incorporate these additional details in the offer letter.

These are the minimum elements to include in the job offer letter. As discussed below, you will probably want to include more than just these basics in your cover letters.

- **Job Description** -- The offer letter should include the job title, and optionally a brief description of the job being offered to the candidate.

- **Salary** -- The amount of annual gross, monthly, or other periodic salary should be clearly stated along with frequency and method for payment.

- **Performance Bonuses** – If applicable, the amount of any performance bonuses should be stated along with performance goals needed to receive and frequency of payment.

- **Stock Options** – Amount and vesting conditions for any stock option awards.

- **Benefits** -- Definition of all benefits provided by the company, including health care, retirement plans, profit sharing, vacations and sick-leave policy.

- **Special Tools or Resources Included with the Job** – Any resources such as company car, portable computer, specialized tool or equipment sets, or cell phone that are provided as part of the job can be listed in this category.

- **An Acceptance Page for the Candidate to Sign** – This should define what the candidate needs to do to accept the offer and include any other confidentiality or other agreements that must be completed as a condition of the employment offer acceptance. It should also outline the approximate start date and any instructions for the candidate to follow at that time.

The Competitive Offer

Money is not necessarily the most important thing that candidates consider, but it is a primary factor. Therefore, it is necessary that your offer be fair and representative of the market for that position. If you have similar positions within your company, there are probably already compensation ranges established for those positions which help to define the salary for this position.

If this is a new position, you may need to research salary levels for comparable jobs in your local market to determine what is appropriate. When extending an offer to someone currently employed, there is often an expectation that a 10 percent to 15 percent premium over the candidate's current salary will be offered as a financial incentive for making the job change. However, other factors or job advantages may override this convention. If you find a candidate who appears extremely well qualified, but whose salary demands are well outside the range paid for similar positions within the company, you need to consider carefully the impact on other employees before making an offer that is out of line with the existing pay scale. This may end up jeopardizing morale of your existing employees and cause resentment against the new hire, making it difficult for him/her to be effective. In these cases, it may be possible to emphasize other financial incentives, such as profit-sharing, stock, or hiring bonuses that your company can offer which the candidate did not have at his/her previous job.

Promoting the Advantages of Your Company

There is no better time to promote the advantages of working for your organization. If you are the leader in the field, the largest, or the longest established company, this is a time to say so. Compared to other companies in your industry, you may use leading-edge technology or manufacturing techniques, be growing at a higher rate which offers continual chances for advancement, or have a unique company culture that enhances the company's standing in the community and makes it a more attractive place to work. Using what you know about the candidate, take time to emphasize the company's recognition programs, sports league sponsorships, or other things that make it a good fit with the candidate's goals and lifestyle. You might be surprised at how many times these kinds of things become the deciding element when candidates make their final decision to choose one company over another.

Benefits are Expected, but They Can Still Benefit Your Offer

Most candidates expect that all companies will provide a standard package of benefits, and they often view these as little different from one company to the next. Today, especially with rapidly rising health care costs, one company's benefit package can vary quite dramatically from another in ways that have financial impact for the candidate. The benefits offered may be an important differentiator that helps make working for your company more attractive than the next. For this reason, your offer should highlight exceptional features of your benefit program, especially above and beyond features like profit sharing, educational reimbursement, company match investment plans or sponsored family activities.

Act Quickly to Extend the Offer

While you may not exactly be in a race, you will most certainly be in a competition with other companies to hire the best. Once you have done a thorough job with the screening and interview process to reach a decision, it is important to move forward quickly to get the offer to the candidate. Unnecessary delays may just provide an opportunity to lose the candidate to less attractive, but faster moving competitors. If there was a strong mutual interest already shown and positive interview experiences, the candidate will appreciate your fast action in making a decision. It will be seen as a sign of high interest in the candidate when you were able to decide and move so quickly following the interview.

Present the Offer in Person

While a written offer letter is essential, rather than mailing the offer to the candidate, it is almost always preferable to go over the contents of the offer letter verbally in a face-to-face setting. This allows you to present the offer in the best possible light, taking time to highlight again the positive benefits of the job and the company. An interactive meeting with the candidate will allow you to explain aspects of the offer in much more detail than possible with the offer letter alone, and it also provides the candidate with the opportunity to ask questions and immediately clarify any misunderstandings that might have gone unresolved from a simple reading of the offer letter. It is often the case that relatively small issues which would have been obstacles for the candidate will come into the open during the offer meeting, giving you the chance to remove these quickly so the candidate can make a final decision based on the true merits of the job offer.

SAMPLE JOB OFFER LETTER

[Company name] is pleased to offer you the job of Project Manager. We were impressed with your background, skills and experience, and think you will be a valuable contributor to our high quality team.

On acceptance of this job offer, you will be eligible to receive the following commencing from your hire date.

- **Salary:** Annual gross starting salary of $_____, paid in bi-weekly installments by check or direct deposit.

- **Performance Bonuses:** Up to _____ percent of your annual gross salary, paid quarterly by check or direct deposit.

- **Stock Options:** *[amount] [company name]* stock options in your first year, fully vested in *[years]* years at the rate of *[number]* shares per year.

- **Benefits:** Standard company benefits for salaried-exempt employees, including the following.

  - 401(k) retirement account
  - Annual stock options
  - Child daycare assistance
  - Education assistance
  - Health, dental, life and disability insurance
  - Profit sharing
  - Sick leave
  - Vacation and personal days

To accept this job offer:

1. Sign and date this job offer letter where indicated below.
2. Mail **all pages** of the signed and dated documents listed above back to us in the enclosed business-reply envelope, to arrive within two weeks from this letter date.
3. Attend new-hire orientation on date to be determined.

If you accept this job offer, your hire date will be as mutually agreed, but no more than 30 days from date of this offer letter. On that day, you can plan to attend new-hire orientation and work for the remainder of the business day after new-hire orientation ends. Please read the enclosed materials for complete, new-hire instructions and more information about the benefits that *[company]* offers.

[Page 2]
[Individual's Name]
[Date]

We hope you will accept this job offer and look forward to your joining the team at *[company name]*. Your immediate supervisor will be *[supervisor's name]*. Feel free to call me if you have questions about this offer letter or concerns about the job offered.

Sincerely,

Signature

[Typed Name]

Accept Job Offer
By signing and dating this letter below, I, *[candidate],* accept the job offer of Project Manager offered by *[company].*

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Offer Letters for "At Will" Employers

An offer letter states the terms of the employment agreement between the company and the new employee. Because it uses specific legal language, it is highly recommended the "Sample Offer Letter" format be used for offers of employment. Among other items, the language in the offer letter includes:

1. **The "At Will" Employer Clause for States Where this is Applicable**. This language means that either the employee or the company may terminate the employment agreement at any time with or without notice or cause.

2. **Salary**. It is important to express a salary offer in the amount per month, not the amount per year, so as not to imply a contractual relationship between the company and the employee.

3. **The Right to Work clause**. This language states that the employment offer is contingent upon the new employee providing identification to prove eligibility to work in the United States.

4. **Bonus** (if applicable). This language states eligibility to participate in the company bonus program, and stipulates criteria and time frame for bonus pay-out.

5. **Benefits**. This segment describes corporate fringe benefit package, and states that eligibility commences after a specific number of days of employment.

SAMPLE OFFER LETTER CONTAINING "AT WILL" LANGUAGE

DATE

NAME
ADDRESSEE

Dear _____ :

Congratulations on your new opportunity with (company or division name). We hope you will find challenge and satisfaction as an employee of our company. This letter serves to confirm the terms of our employment offer.

Position:	
Duties:	*(Optional, if you wish to specify projects, geographic areas, etc.)*
Start Date:	
Salary:	$____ per month. ($_____annual equivalency).
Auto Allowance: *(If Applicable)*	$____per month.
Bonus:	You are eligible to participate in the company bonus program. *(If Applicable)* Bonuses are paid on company profitability and individual performance, and are paid at the sole discretion of the company. Should you leave our employment for any reason prior to a bonus payment date, no prorated bonus is payable.
Benefits:	Participation in the corporate fringe benefits package including medical, dental, disability, dependent care, 401(k), life insurance (eligibility commences after 60 days of employment); vacation and holiday benefits are available as established by company policy. (Other optional provisions may include as appropriate; relocation allowance and availability of an expense account.)

[Addressee's Name]
[Page 2]

Right to Work:	You will be required to provide us with two forms of identification (i.e., a driver's license and social security card or a passport.) The following 2 items are required at specified projects/sites/locations only: This offer is also contingent upon your successful completion of 1) A pre-employment drug and alcohol test and/or 2) A background security check.
Termination:	The company is an "at will" employer which means that either you or the company may terminate the employment agreement at any time with or without notice or cause.
Orientation: *(Optional but strongly suggested)*	Your benefits orientation is scheduled on (<u>DATE/TIME)</u> at (<u>ADDRESS)</u>.

We have enclosed our employee handbook and summary of benefits for you to read prior to attending orientation. Please take time to read the information thoroughly and bring it with you as you will be asked to complete paperwork regarding this information.

On behalf of (company name), we look forward to having you join us. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Otherwise, we will see you on (DATE).

Please sign the original of this letter indicating your acknowledgment and acceptance of these as the complete terms of our employment agreement. Bring the signed original to orientation.

Sincerely,

Signature
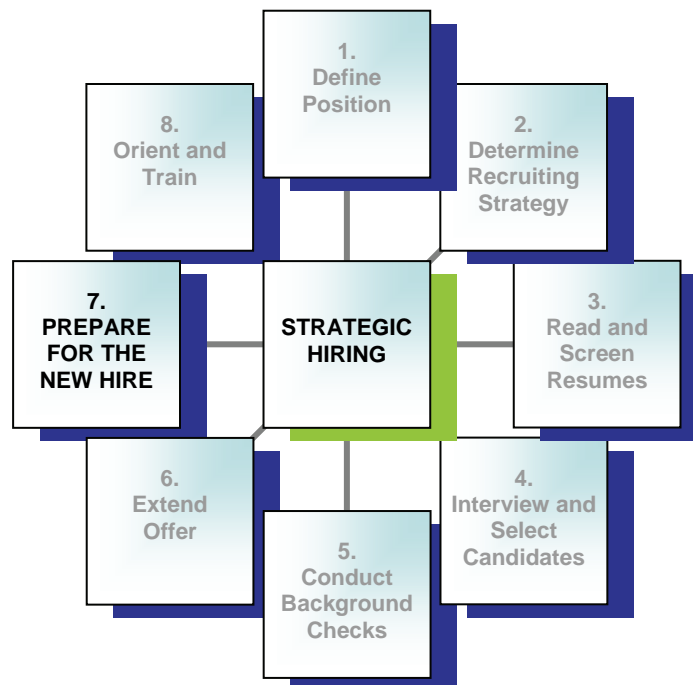
[Typed Name]

I understand that this letter represents the full terms of this employment offer and I accept this offer of employment.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Pre-Start Preparation

A t this point in the recruiting process, everyone is starting to see the end in sight. The selected candidate successfully passed the background checks and the offer letter has been signed, sealed, and delivered. Everyone is excited about the prospect of gaining a new team member to bring new skills and share in the workload which has become extremely burdensome for those who were making up for a team with one missing player. The only thing left to do is wait for the new hire's start date to arrive, right? Wrong. Although all too often, that is exactly what happens. To insure a successful transition, hiring managers need to do some important preliminary work to prepare for the new hire before they even set foot in the building on that all-important first day.

```
                    1.
                  Define
                  Position
    8.                              2.
  Orient and                     Determine
   Train                         Recruiting
                                  Strategy

    7.                              3.
  PREPARE      STRATEGIC         Read and
  FOR THE       HIRING            Screen
  NEW HIRE                       Resumes

    6.                              4.
  Extend                       Interview and
   Offer           5.             Select
                 Conduct        Candidates
               Background
                 Checks
```

A transition into a new job can be a stressful experience for any new employee. Besides the need to get comfortable with a completely new environment, this is a time when first impressions are formed about the new job, the company culture, and the other people the new hire will be working with. As the hiring manager, the last thing you want is for the new hire to walk onto the job that first day only to find that their arrival was a big surprise to everyone because no one anticipated or prepared for their arrival.

Instead, your objective should be to make the new employee feel like they are already a part of your smoothly functioning team almost from the moment they walk in the door. You do this with a little up-front planning and preparation of the workplace so it is ready for the new employee. The following checklist provides a helpful guide to prepare for a successful new hire arrival and introduction to the job.

Prior to Arrival

- Call employee to welcome them to the team, review plans for their first day or week on the job, and ensure they are clear on the start schedule and logistics.

- Ensure that your schedule is cleared to allow you to spend time with the new employee on their first day of work. Always have the new hire's start date coincide with a time when you will be in the office and available.

- Arrange for necessary work tools, allowing sufficient lead time where necessary to order needed equipment or materials such as a new computer, telephone, or business cards.

- Request appropriate employee and telephone directory updates, network log-on identifications, and email address. Nothing makes a new employee feel more at home than to see their name and extension already listed on the company telephone directory on their first day at work.

- Ensure work station/locker/desk is ready for use (clean, organized, stocked with necessary supplies).

- Request necessary keys for facility or work areas.

- Provide appropriate company handbooks, product catalogs, or brochures.

- Document new employee's responsibilities, job description and achievable performance goals.

- Ensure employee is scheduled for appropriate training or orientation classes.

- Send out personnel announcement to other team members informing them of employee's position and scheduled first day of work.

- Identify an experienced co-worker who can be a mentor or assistant for the new hire's first few weeks.

- Plan a group lunch, or other event to welcome the new hire

The First Day at Work

- Ensure that employee is greeted upon their arrival and is escorted through the check-in process by you or appropriate Human Resources personnel.

- Make sure that required employment forms are completed, ID card issued, and parking/transportation arrangements/passes provided.

- Meet with the new employee as soon as checked in to welcome and discuss the day's orientation activities

- Orient new employee to immediate work area and ensure all necessary supplies and materials are available

- Inform new employee about office/facility norms including hours, breaks, dress mode, timekeeping, absence reporting and other details.

- Introduce new employee to co-workers and company executives.

- Conduct tour of department and building, taking time to introduce key people during the tour.

- Make sure that new employee is familiar with work tools (e.g., computer, network, software applications, fax, copier, telephone, including electronic phone book and Directory Profile Page) and voice mail system

- Conduct question-and-answer session for new employee

- Provide a scheduled time for new hire to meet with mentor/helper.

- Review organization charts

During the First Week

- Discuss departmental goals and current performance, explaining how new employee's job purpose and major responsibilities relate to your business objectives.

- Explain job performance expectations and evaluation process. Set tentative informal and formal performance review dates (1, 3, 6, 12 months).

- Review/complete new employee's training and development plan.

- Continue introductions throughout the organization.

- Review reward/recognition process.

- Familiarize employee with key accounts and major business activities the company is engaged in.

- Help employee to prioritize his/her key areas and responsibilities.

- Insure that employee and mentor are working well together and resolve any issues identified.

Through the First Month

- Ensure employee is performing meaningful work/tasks and is completing the training plan requirements in a timely manner.

- Provide employee with regular performance feedback on an informal basis. It is helpful to set a regular time to meet weekly for brief, informal progress reviews and discussion of the week's events.

- Conduct a 30-day performance review

At the end of the 30-day introductory period, you should have a good idea of how well the employee is transitioning into the job and working with other employees. At this point if the employee is performing as expected, they can continue following the development plan you created for them previously and can start to become a high performance contributor to the team.

The Right Start

"Here's your van, here are your tools, now get started." Is that reminiscent of any orientation you ever received? Unfortunately, too many people reading this will reflect on a time when that very thing happened. In spite of vows not to let that practice take place in your organization, it does occur. Anxious to get a new hire on the job, the start date is determined by how quickly the new hire can report to the company. Little regard is given to the manager's schedule and whether enough time can be dedicated to provide an effective orientation.
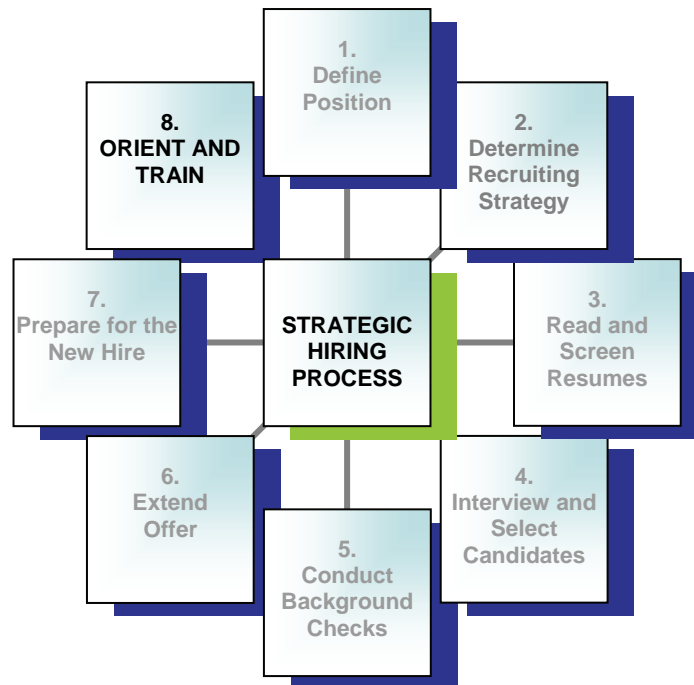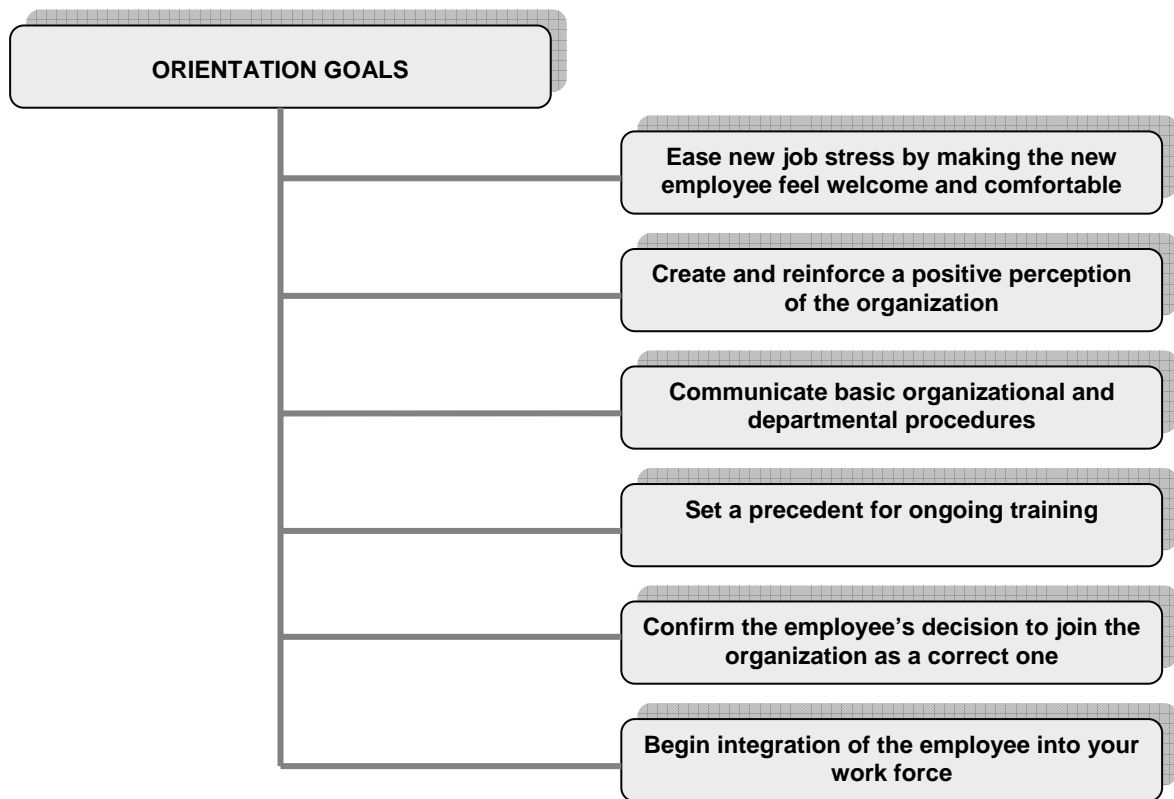

Up to this point a great deal of time and energy has been expended on the recruitment and selection process. Don't create a negative impression by haphazardly throwing together a new employee's orientation. A well-planned orientation is a small investment with high returns and lasting results.

Orientation Goals

One of the most overlooked times for training is when someone first joins a company. For many employees, starting a new job is like visiting a foreign country. Either someone tells them about the local customs or they are learned on the job through trial and error. Without a proper and careful orientation, employees will be left on their own to determine how to best fit into the organization. When individuals are allowed to adopt their own mindset, it leads to erosion of the company's already established culture, and to sub-standard performance.

On-the-job orientation and training is designed to provide new employees with valuable information about your company and the new job. The aim of orientation is to help a new employee make a smooth, positive adjustment to the workplace. A well planned and executed orientation program should have the following as its goals.

```
ORIENTATION GOALS
    ├── Ease new job stress by making the new
    │   employee feel welcome and comfortable
    ├── Create and reinforce a positive perception
    │   of the organization
    ├── Communicate basic organizational and
    │   departmental procedures
    ├── Set a precedent for ongoing training
    ├── Confirm the employee's decision to join the
    │   organization as a correct one
    └── Begin integration of the employee into your
        work force
```

Benefits of an Orientation Program

New employees want to be assimilated as quickly as possible. Being an "outsider" is stressful. To reduce that stress they try to "fit in." Without human interaction, cues about proper behavior – and impressions about how the company *really* operates – are taken from a variety of sources: company literature, observations of senior managers, peer behavior, and the type of assignments given to the new employee. The first year with a company is a critical time because that's when the employee learns how to be a high performer. Matching company and employee expectations during this time frame results in the formation of positive job attitudes and high performance standards which transfer to promotability for the employee and retention of a valuable resource for the company.

Orientation enables your new employee to gain familiarity with the work environment and to acquire a sense of belonging and understanding that will build commitment to you and your company.

Types of Orientation Programs

An effective orientation usually takes place at two levels: (1) a company-wide overview through a Human Resources program or representative, and (2) a departmental orientation given by the new employee's supervisor. Those individuals hired through the local union will also have an additional orientation.

The orientation given by Human Resources usually consists of introducing new employees to personnel and workplace practices, and to overall company policies included in the Employee Handbook. The other type of orientation is one given at the departmental level and is key to getting the new employee acclimated to your company's culture and way of doing business. Even though the new hire may have worked in this industry before, it does not guarantee that the day-to-day practices are the same.

The checklist on the following page is designed to make sure nothing is overlooked during a new employee orientation. Customize the form to include other policies or procedures that are unique to your company and its culture. Don't forget to share the trials and tribulations of how your company got to where it is today. Most new employees enjoy hearing about the company's history, evolution, successes, and projects that include well-known facilities and difficult problems the company solved. This background gives them a sense of pride in joining a company with a rich and solid foundation.

ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Company Name

NEW EMPLOYEE

Employee Name: _____   Position: _____

Orientation Date: _____   Department: _____

KEY INDIVIDUALS TO MEET *(Check if Complete)*

ρ _____   Department: _____

ρ _____   Department: _____

ρ _____   Department: _____

ρ _____   Department: _____

ρ   Introductions to immediate members of department *(Include brief background on each.)*

ESSENTIAL ORGANIZATIONAL REFERENCES AND RESOURCES *(Check if Complete)*

Notes

☐   Marketing literature   _____

☐   Organizational charts   _____

☐   Mission, values, philosophy   _____

☐   Standard policy and procedures manual   _____

☐   Employee handbook   _____

☐   Key forms, checklists   _____

☐   Technical manuals   _____

☐   _____   _____

Orientation Provided by: _____   Date Provided: _____

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES *(Check if Complete)*

Notes

☐ Payroll, time cards, policies and procedures _____

☐ Office, desk keys, van keys _____

☐ Parking _____

☐ Expense reports _____

☐ ID/security access _____

☐ Tools/supplies _____

☐ Cell phone _____

☐ Hand-held device, laptop, or personal computer _____

☐ _____ _____

KEY WORK POLICIES *(Check if Complete)*

☐ Attendance
☐ Personal conduct standards

☐ Sick days/leave of absence
☐ Disciplinary actions

☐ Holidays
☐ Safety/accident

☐ Vacations
☐ Health/first aid

☐ Standard work shift, including lunch and breaks
☐ Emergency procedures

☐ Overtime
☐ Performance appraisals

☐ Conflicts of interest
☐ Smoking areas

☐ Dress standards
☐ Office/truck appearance

☐ Service reports
☐ _____

☐ Sexual harassment
☐ _____

☐ E-mail and internet usage
☐ _____

[continued on next page]

FACILITY TOUR *(Check if Complete)*

Give a brief tour of the surrounding area and facilities, including:

☐ Rest rooms   ☐ Telephones/message system

☐ Books/reference manuals   ☐ Mail room

☐ Breakroom/kitchen   ☐ Copy machines/fax

☐ Coffee/vending   ☐ Bulletin boards

☐ Equipment/supplies   **Notes:**

☐ _____   _____

☐ _____   _____

☐ _____   _____

☐ _____   _____

☐

JOB-SPECIFIC INFORMATION *(Check if Complete)*

☐ Review job description and performance expectations/standards

☐ Review standard meetings to attend

☐ Present initial job assignments and training plans, if applicable

☐ Create a schedule for time spent with co-workers who will assist in training or mentoring

☐ Plan for initial lunch *(Designate someone to spend time with the new employee.)*

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

Ongoing Training and Development

From a broad perspective, training may occur whenever employees are taught a skill or are provided with information to help them do their jobs better. That skill or information may be learned through formal or informal training methods.

> **Formal Training** – Training that is planned in advance and has a structured format and defined curriculum. This includes attending a class conducted by an employee of the company, attending a seminar given by a professional trainer, or watching a planned audio-visual presentation or webinar.

> **Informal Training** – Training that is unstructured and easily adapted to situations or individuals. Examples include having a co-worker show an employee how to use a piece of equipment or having a supervisor teach a skill related to the job.

Most employees want to exceed the expectations of their new employers and their customers. However, this will not happen unless a training plan is created which includes a blend of both formal and informal training. Too often the intent is for the employee to receive some type of training, but the outcome is never attained due to the daily rigors of handling business.

Use the following checklist to create a Training Plan for any new employees that join your organization. Your reward for such an investment is a well-trained employee who has learned a valuable skill for improving their job performance.

Training Opportunities

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
❏ Job-skills training	Training that upgrades employee skills, extends employee skills, or qualifies workers for a job.
❏ Management training	Training in supervising employees and in implementing employment practices. Examples include training in conducting employee appraisals, managing employees, resolving conflicts, following selection/hiring practices, and implementing regulations and policies.
❏ Computer procedures	Software training including training in computer literacy, use of standard commercial and company-specific software, and proper use of hand-held devices.
❏ General-skills training	Training that is not closely tied to specific job-related skills and/or training that is usually provided to a wide range of workers. It includes basic skills, occupational safety, employee health and wellness, awareness, communications, employee development, or quality service training.
❏ Basic skills training	Training in elementary reading, writing, arithmetic, and English language skills, including English as a second language.
❏ Occupational safety training	Provides information on safety hazards, procedures and regulations.
❏ Employee health and wellness	Provides information and guidance on personal health issues such as stress management, substance abuse, nutrition and smoking cessation.
❏ Awareness training	Provides information on policies and practices that affect employee relations or the work environment, including Equal Employment Opportunity practices (EEO), affirmative action, workplace diversity, sexual harassment and AIDS awareness.
❏ Communications, employee development, and quality training	Training in public speaking, conducting meetings, writing, time management, leadership, working in groups or teams, employee involvement, total quality management and job re-engineering.
❏ Clerical and administrative support	Training in areas such as data entry, business correspondence and administrative recordkeeping.
❏ Sales and customer relations	Training in areas ranging from how to maintain or improve customer relations to specific selling techniques. Examples include training in how to deal with angry customers and information about specific services offered by your company.
❏ Professional and technical skills training	Training in professional areas such as dispatching, accounts receivable, accounts payable, budgeting and payroll

TRAINING PLAN

Employee _____   Date _____

TRAINING TO BE RECEIVED	DELIVERY METHOD	DATE TO BE COMPLETED BY
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Supervisor _____   Date _____

Why Training Fails

Whether training is conducted formally or informally, it is the hiring manager's responsibility to ensure that the training is effective and results in the new employee using and applying the information learned to the job. Avoid some of these common training mistakes.

EIGHT COMMON TRAINING MISTAKES

1. Training objectives are not clearly defined. *(For example, the new hire is asked to "tag along" with an experienced employee as the work is performed, with no specific learning objectives.)*

2. The employee sees no perceived need or benefit.

3. Supervisors/trainers are not prepared; they don't want to train and/or have adequate knowledge of the task they are supposed to be teaching.

4. The training materials are not relevant to the training goals or the employees.

5. There is no means of receiving feedback or evaluating the results.

6. There is no means for reinforcing behavior, such as recognition, reward, or constructive feedback.

7. Training efforts are not directed at a specific goal; there is no particular need for development.

8. One of the following is apparent in the working environment:
   – Non-performance is ignored.
   – Non-performance is rewarding.
   – Performance is punishing.
   – Performance does not matter.
   – Performance cannot be achieved due to obstacles.

Retention as a Strategy

Nothing is more important to an organization's success – or even its survival – than a talented, skilled, motivated workforce able to respond to the fast-paced demands of the HVACR environment. The recruiting process requires that organizations invest heavily in attracting and recruiting the best talent. Unfortunately, all too often the effort stops there. Retaining talented people is equally as important as acquiring the people in the first place. As human capital replaces physical capital as the source of competitive advantage, talented resources are the key enabler of success. From the very first day a new employee starts, the hiring manager should be fully engaged with a strategy for retention.
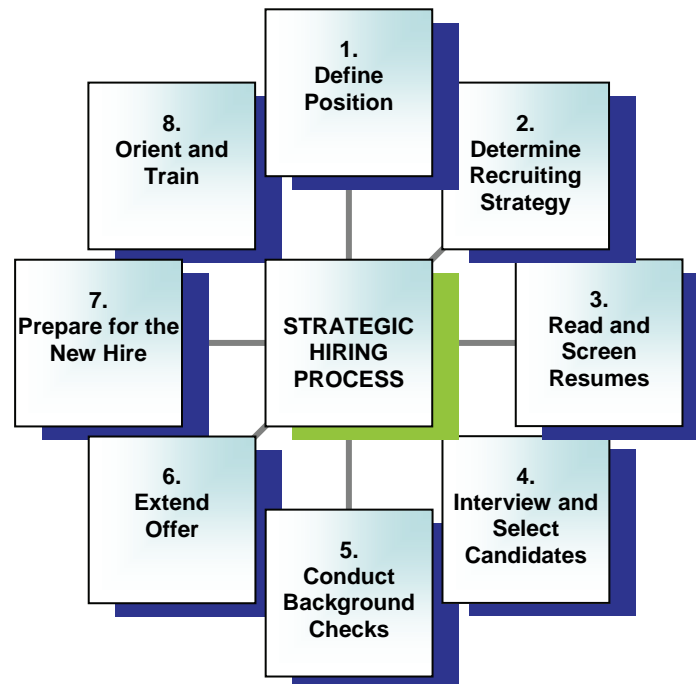
When the New Hire is Most Vulnerable

Starting a new job is change. When an individual makes the conscious decision to go through some kind of change, it is usually understood that it may involve some discomfort. But in making the decision, the new hire also decided to make the best of any temporary stress or unpleasantness the change may bring.

The first 90 days of employment are the most crucial for the new employee. Whenever a change takes place, individuals go through six distinct phases on their way to becoming a productive employee in your organization. As a hiring manager your actions will either accelerate them through the process or you will quickly find yourself looking for your new hire's replacement.

The diagram below shows the emotional cycle of change employees go through when they join your service team. Initially, there is great excitement about their future prospects. They are filled with anticipation of working for a new company offering them new experiences and career opportunities.

THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF CHANGE
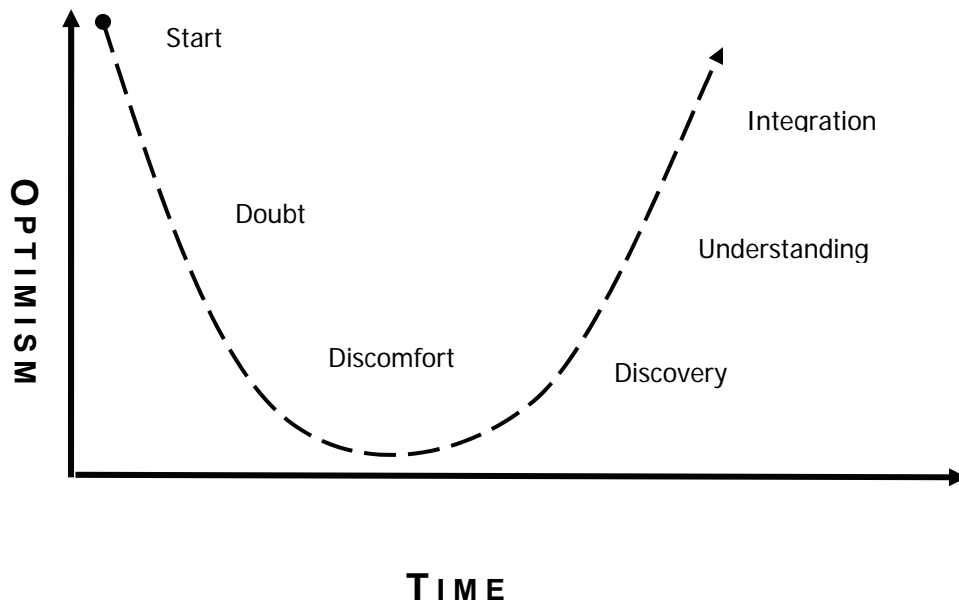
Too often, the new hire is left alone with little guidance, direction, or feedback on performance. No significant departmental orientation is provided; the supervisor is busy with day-to-day operations, and the new hire tries to fit in as best as possible. Minimal interaction, especially with those who are in the field, leads to doubt over whether the decision was a correct one. Doubt quickly turns to discomfort, leaving the new hire vulnerable to other outside influences, both internally and externally.

The proactive hiring manager is well aware of these feelings of discomfort and works hard to accelerate the new hire through the change curve. Constant communication and feedback will assimilate the new employee quickly and with positive long-term results.

The 90-Day Performance Appraisal

As a matter of policy, performance appraisals should be conducted on all new hires within 90 days of their start date. The purpose of the performance appraisal process is to improve the performance of the organization, your new employee and yourself. This process encourages communication between you and your employee and focuses on specific goals for the next review period. Because companies conduct them so infrequently, the term "performance appraisal" has almost become negative and something to be feared. When administered with careful thought and planning, performance appraisals can be a positive and motivating experience.

KEY BENEFITS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

1. Employees understand their roles and responsibilities.

2. Your evaluations of employee performance are documented and communicated.

3. Development plans, performance objectives, expectations and standards are determined to enhance employee's performance in current assignments. They are thereby prepared for additional responsibilities.

4. Through the process, you learn more about your employee's professional goals and attitudes toward their job and career.

5. Employee recognition, reward, and compensation can be more closely related to performance.

SAMPLE 90-DAY PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Employee's Name _____   Job Title _____

Department _____   Hire Date _____   Review Date _____

- Consider the new employee's performance during the past 90-days
- Review each characteristic below and rate on a 0 – 5 scale
- On the reverse side, identify specific areas of strength (especially ratings of 4 – 5), areas for improvement (especially ratings of 0 – 1), and planned objectives

	PERFORMANCE RATING		
Given the following job requirements, rate the employee's performance that you have observed during the past 90 days.	Below Expectations 0 – 1	Meets Expectations 2 – 3	Exceeds Expectations 4 - 5
1. QUALITY Consider accuracy, thoroughness, neatness and effectiveness, and the application of sound judgment for those jobs in which decisions and actions must be made on reasoning and weighing all alternatives.			
2. QUANTITY Consider the consistency of output on an average sustained volume basis, and fulfillment of accepted production standards. Work is performed efficiently.			
3. JOB KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS Consider understanding and proficiency in job methods and procedures; training requirements to get the employee "up to speed." Also adaptability and versatility on new or different requirements.			
4. COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK Consider willingness, friendliness, and relations with fellow employees and supervisor. Also, perception of "customer service," orientation to customers, vendors, and associates.			
5. INITIATIVE Consider the willingness to work independently, seek increased responsibility, and persist at tasks despite unexpected difficulties. Also, willingness to work long hours when required.			
6. RELIABILITY Consider absenteeism, punctuality, and adherence to specified lunch periods and break times; dependability.			
7. OVERALL JOB PERFORMANCE			

8. STRENGTHS *(Identify specific skills or behaviors that exceed expectations):*

9. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(Identify specific skills or behaviors that are below expectations):*

10. JOB PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR NEXT REVIEW *(What should the employee do to enhance or improve skills?):*

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY:	Date:
EMPLOYEE'S COMMENTS AT PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW:	Date:

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE (Indicating only that employee has read the Review)

Preparing to Write the 90-Day Appraisal

One of the primary reasons why performance appraisals are not completed in a timely manner is because managers fail to think through what they have observed throughout the 90-day period. When preparing to write a performance appraisal, it's a good idea to brainstorm as many thoughts about the employee's performance as you can think of. Below is a simple format to help trigger some ideas.

The employee should:
Do more
Do less
Stop:
Continue:
Begin to:
Learn about:
Assume responsibility for:

Conducting the Appraisal Discussion

The best way to control the time and quality of the discussion is to plan it. Set aside one hour for conducting the appraisal discussion. If the discussion is shorter, you may not have adequate time to review the appraisal and provide for any meaningful dialogue between you and the employee. On the other hand, if it's much longer it may be because you haven't stayed on track and allowed the discussion to wander. Use the following eight-step process for the most effective way to appraise your employee's performance.

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8 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

1. Control the environment. Turn off cell phones and prevent others from interrupting the discussion.

2. State the purpose of the discussion. This should not be a surprise as the employee should have been notified during the interview phase that this discussion would be taking place.

3. Ask for the employee's opinion and reaction to the first 90 days on the job.

4. Present your assessment.

5. Build on the employee's areas of strengths and discuss areas of improvement.

6. Ask for the employee's reaction to your assessment.

7. Set specific goals, including those the employee has for his or her own development.

8. Close the discussion.

Employee Retention: Differences between Field and Office

According to a recent report, *"Where Are Our Talented People?"* released by the Regus Group, there are significant differences between those who work in the field and those who work in the corporate offices. These differences in perception can significantly impact retention efforts.

1. **Job Site Visits**. Those who work in the corporate offices are seen by their managers almost every day. However, field technicians rarely come into the office. When people are not highly visible, the "out of sight, out of mind" mentality takes over and those in the field are sometimes neglected unless something goes wrong. Hiring managers can show they are interested in the welfare of their employees by visiting them at their job sites on a regular basis. Not only will you have the opportunity to observe the employee in action, but it can foster a stronger relationship between the manager and the employee.

2. **Company Events**. Many companies dedicate resources to all different types of company events, including luncheons, picnics, parties, and other social activities. When events are held during the work day at the corporate offices, be sure to extend invitations to the field and make sure they are recognized as part of the company's team.

3. **Training Opportunities**. Although training was covered in the previous section, it is one area that is important for enhancing retention efforts. When asked if employees were receiving sufficient opportunities for training and development, only 50 percent of the survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed they were receiving them. However, when the question was posed of those who worked in the field, only one-third of the respondents felt they were receiving sufficient training. The implication is that remote workers are perceived to be treated differently than those present in the office.

4. **Promotion Prospects**. When asked about promotion prospects, only about 40 percent of the respondents felt promotions procedures were fair or very fair. However, once again there were differences between those working in the office and those working in the field. More than 60 percent of this overall percentage was based in the office five days a week while less than 40 percent of those perceiving promotion procedures as being fair were working away from the office one or more days a week. Without continual contact and discussions regarding their career goals, hiring managers may be unintentionally hindering their retention efforts with field technicians.

5. **Career Development**. Feeling like a valued member of the organization is paramount in an employee's motivation, willingness to contribute, and drive to "go the extra mile." From the employer perspective, it provides an enduring competitive advantage to be tapped at every opportunity. Put simply, career development – be it perception or hard reality – is pivotal to an employee's reason for remaining loyal.

    The Regus report found that overall, there was a two to one difference of confidence in career management based on whether the respondent was permanently in the office or not. Thirty-five percent of those spending five days a week in the office agreed or strongly agreed that career management was given a high priority by their firms compared to just 20 percent of those spending one or more days a week away from the office.

6. **Intention to Quit.** The final area of the report explored employee loyalty, expressed in terms of "intention to quit." Overall, a quarter of the study reported the view that they "often thought of quitting their job", with about 48 percent expecting to change jobs within two years – a striking indication of the numbers of disenfranchised employees and truly indicative of the chronic state of disrepair in the employee-employer relationship. Given the amount of time dedicated to recruiting, interviewing, and selection, an employee that stays only two years may not garner the highest return on that time investment.

To maintain a competitive and productive position, employers must be cognizant of these differences in perception and embrace them as a core strategic business practice. The time, effort, and energy spent in recruiting, interviewing, and selecting the most talented workers is too great to have it lost because the new hire start date was viewed as the "end" of the recruiting process.

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