



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

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GOALS

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

KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION

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

WHO IS A LEADER?

A leader is a person who assesses, directs, participates, and is held accountable for meeting leadership goals. They have the power to stand alone and the courage to make difficult, tough decisions. It is a person who always strives to be first—and it is the person who seeks to be the best of all who strive. This person gives their “all” for the team’s success!

The Leader is the First to:

1. Recognize a need
2. Determine and set forth a plan
3. Encourage and empower the team toward action and stability
4. Allow the team to unleash its power toward solving problems
5. Listen with compassion to the needs of others

The Leader Consistently:

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

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

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

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

As performance demands change, it also encourages more education to doctoral levels. Therefore, more leaders are prepared with advanced education (Ph.D. and Ed.D.) and advanced training. The intellectual ability to acquire such advanced training and information denotes academic skills—but not leadership aptitude. Some researchers claim that leadership abilities are *genetically inherited* and in place as a part of a person's talent early in life.

LEADER DISCRIMINATION

Inappropriate preferential treatment of one leader or any potential leader in any manner or form during any facility/organizational process can be considered discrimination. It can easily occur during (but is not limited to) the hiring process concerning their race, religion, age, gender, physical appearance, etc. It is generally mistreating or making an exception for any person, class, or category without considering a person's merit.

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

Research came up with some interesting findings regarding gender. They proclaim that tall men project an essence of control and power but can intimidate meek employees with poor self-esteem. Females

are often seen as gentle persuaders to get specific jobs done. There are exceptions to every rule, of course! Considering each person's merit (besides researched findings) would be the most acceptable approach.

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

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

HIRING FROM WITHIN THE FACILITY/ORGANIZATION

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

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

HIRING FROM OUTSIDE THE FACILITY/ORGANIZATION

An excellent leader can be hired from sources other than the existing facility/organization. Sometimes, no leader in the facility/organization can meet the rigorous requirements related to being a leader or cannot successfully transition from a general staff member to a leader. The same concern for relationships, task abilities, and the ability to form trust should apply. When hiring from outside the facility/organization, there is less chance of a social entanglement with employees. Manipulative patterns that the employees can use toward a leader are usually not as established.

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

NECESSITY OF CONSISTENCY IN HIRING PRACTICES

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

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

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

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

From the writings of Paul Meehl, a past educator and practicing psychoanalyst who taught at the University of Minnesota, there are recommendations for hiring leaders within facilities/organizations. His simple and *pre-established statistical rules* for selecting new employees were found to be superior to *intuitive judgments*. The time spent in doing interviews is much more valuable if the hiring body consistently, for each applicant, predetermines *specific favorable job attributes and related personality traits regarding the applicant's life in their normal environment*. The statistical summaries of these separately evaluated attributes and characteristics of each applicant seem to most likely help determine which applicant will achieve high validity, resulting in job success. This shared, consistent approach to each applicant curtails any possibility of discrimination in selection.

LEADER VS. FOLLOWER

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

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

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

GUIDELINES FOR HIRING A LEADER

To perform leadership behaviors, the outcome must be someone with experience in the leadership role by showing leadership capabilities in previous professional work or life experience.

Once a facility/organization has decided whether to promote from within the facility/organization or hire from outside the facility/organization, it becomes necessary to understand each potential employee's differences. Consider the specific questions or expectations the reviewing committee considers important to be answered by each potential employee being interviewed. Use *open-ended*

questions—that is, the answer requires a statement showing an understanding of the situation and an adequate leadership response. Be concerned about any questions that could represent a gender bias!

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

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

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

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

Another dimension of the job interview should consider the potential employee stating a willingness to meet the job’s required expectations, especially if any question about their ability is noted. The attitude and self-esteem of the potential employee should also be determined. Objectivity regarding the personal power to meet the job description indicates objectivity when evaluating others.

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

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

The ongoing covert thought for the interviewing committee during the reviewing session is: How will the applicant respond to future leadership problems? There will be an obvious ability to compare applicants in their ability to solve and react to job-related leadership problems. The reviewing committee should look for quickness and accuracy in the potential employee’s ability to state the most appropriate *expert* leadership principles/theory. Experience and theory of professional knowledge are important. You are looking for an expert, and experience and expertise are prerequisites for being an expert.

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

LEGAL AWARENESS OF A LEADER

A leader needs to understand and appreciate many highly vulnerable legal issues. The following list is in no order of importance. Open questions (in no order of importance) of the potential employee regarding the knowledge/understanding of some or all of the following sensitive legal topics would tell the reviewing committee to what extent the potential employee understands legal concerns:

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

PRESENTATION OF SELF AS A LEADER

The behavior and dress of each potential employee applying for a leadership position should be observed. Reviewers should predetermine what is acceptable attire for the potential employee before the applicant arrives. The question is: “Does this applicant’s dress and attitude reflect the positive qualities of this facility/organization?” There seems to be an agreed-upon understanding that people act in accordance with their manner of dress. A professional person dresses as a professional on the job—and at a job interview.

DISCRIMINATION PREVENTION

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

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

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

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

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

LAST THOUGHTS

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDED READING

Setting the Compass by this author

Communication by this author

A REVIEW OF GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY survey, published in 2002, ranked Paul Everett Meehl as the 74th most cited psychologist of the 20th century, in a tie with Eleanor J. Gibson. In February 2003, he was a clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Minnesota. (Wikipedia)

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