

YOU HAVE MADE A BAD HIRE

Have you ever hired the wrong candidate? I believe we all have, at one time or another.

Executives and hiring managers carefully write precise and detailed job descriptions. They worked internally and externally to identify the top talent for their open position. They conduct functional interviews, behavior interviews, background verification and reference checks. They have the candidate come back several times. They even have other members of the team conduct peer interviews: and still, somehow **they can hire the wrong person.**

Several years ago, a client of mine, let's call him Patrick (not his real name), had to make the most important hire of his career. It was to be a senior position, and someone who could one day replace Patrick. He handled everything correctly, and when he made his final decision, he hired the person that would challenge him to be a better leader. He was ready to grow, and to help his company grow.

On the new hire's first day, they were late. Patrick looked past this because the new employee had always been early in the interview process, and Patrick didn't want to see a problem. Also, the new employee was dressed more casually than they had been at any of their interviews. "Oh well," Patrick thought, "maybe he was making too much of this." But then this happened: when Patrick took his new employee out to lunch to go over the calendar for the first two weeks, he casually asked how the final two weeks had been at the previous employer. The new hire's answer gave him pause. They said, "Well, I never really fit in with the rest of the team, and so I don't think anyone was sorry to see me go." Oh, my.

Patrick had hired the wrong person. He had worked for years to build a team that worked together, and was always willing to assist one another. He strove to be an example and to always pitch in when he could. He always said he would rather hire "happy" than "skilled" because skill can be taught, but happy cannot. Patrick's new team member had interviewed extremely well, but could not maintain a positive, team approach. As the new person started their new position, they made no attempt to build relationships at work, nor did they show any interest in helping co-workers. What is worse, Patrick now had to manage a complainer, and someone who always questioned any change in priority or direction.

If an employer finds themselves in this situation, they may benefit from following these important suggestions:

1. They should conduct regular one on one meetings where they and the new hire document expectations of what must occur in a set amount of time for success to be achieved.
2. They must avoid discussing “feelings” and “impressions.” They should stick to actual direction, such as, “We need you to spend at least one hour per day working with team members and mastering their responsibilities in case you are ever needed to fill in.”
3. They must be consistent in their acknowledgement of accomplishments as well as underperformance. The new employee will either come to realize how to succeed in their new position, or they may come to the realization that they made the wrong career move.
4. It is perfectly alright for the employer to refer back to the original job description and reiterate that all competencies and conducts were, and are, expected.

Hopefully, these four steps will lead to the new hire correcting course and ultimately succeeding. On the other hand, if the employee in question is released because they simply cannot, or will not, adopt new behavior, it will be unfortunate for all involved, but their release will not be a surprise to them.

In hiring, commit to the best possible vetting, and be willing to admit that a hire was a mistake before you lose other valuable resources.

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