

MASTERING S.M.A.R.T. TALENT MANAGEMENT

THE RIGHT

SOURCING · MARKETING · ASSESSING · RECRUITING

HIRE

Patrick Ropella

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **17**

Chapter 5 | Tips for Using the Skills
Survey to Discover Top Talent

Tips for Using the Skills Survey to Discover Top Talent

When potential employers want to have a lot more information about a candidate so they can make more intelligent hiring decisions, a Skills Survey can easily provide it. The Skills Survey is given prior to the first interview as a further assessment tool of candidates deemed worthy of further consideration for the open position.

The Skills Survey is based on the information that you have already provided in your company's Opportunity Marketing Piece (OMP). Once you have provided a professional OMP that is current and reflects your company and community the way you think it should, along with an updated job description, then it is an easy matter to go from there to collecting additional information using your Skills Survey.

As you and the hiring team develop the Skills Survey, it is a good idea to keep your eyes open for ways to improve the job description even more. Any improvement in your position description should be seen as desirable and will enable you to make even better hiring decisions – and possibly have fewer people to interview in the future – because it focuses your ability to screen better.

Getting the Candidate to Take the Skills Survey



The Skills Survey Enables You to Find Top Talent Faster

Once the Skills Survey is ready, it will be necessary to explain to the candidates the benefits of completing it. Without this step, you may lose potential top talent. Getting the candidate to complete it can easily be done by simply explaining the complete value proposition.

Before asking anyone to fill out the Skills Survey, you want to make sure that they really are a viable, qualified candidate. There is no reason to waste your time – or theirs – if they are not well qualified, and if not, then there is no reason to get them to fill out the Skills Survey. On the other hand, if you are not completely sure whether they are qualified or not, but think that they might be, then you can discern this matter by making a quick phone call to the candidate. As you talk to them, you can ask specific questions that are not on the Skills Survey to dispel any uncertainties and clarify issues that remain. You may also want to ask them to send you a cover letter and address a specific issue of concern in one or two paragraphs. You really want to give the Skills Survey only to those you are pretty certain that you want to proceed with into the interview and hiring process.

When you are ready to give the Skills Survey, here is a look at the value proposition that you want to convey to the candidate. At Ropella Group, we tell the candidates to complete the Skills Survey for these three reasons:

- To help them think through the key roles they will be responsible for on a daily basis – to be sure they understand, can handle, and can explain their fit into the scope of the position.
- To help them determine whether or not they really are interested in doing the job and are qualified for it – in other words are they under or over qualified.
- To help them be better prepared for the interview process, since the Skills Survey focuses on areas that will be highlighted during the interview. This will enable them to perform better in the interview and enable the interview team to get to the point much faster.

Here's a sample of how an email requesting a completed Skills Survey from a candidate might be worded:

Dear Cindy,

Thank you for your interest in our Emergency Room registration clerk opportunity. It was a pleasure speaking to you about it on the phone. (Note: if you haven't spoken to the candidate on the phone, you could also write, "I reviewed the resume you sent and it looks like an interesting match.")

Attached you will find a more detailed position description contained within our Opportunity Marketing Piece (OMP). Also attached is a Skills Survey. If after reviewing the OMP you still feel you and the open position in our organization would be a good fit, please fill out the Skills Survey and return it ASAP along with a fresh resume and a cover letter (addressed to me) stating your interest.

Completing the Skills Survey has real benefits for you. As you work through the process of completing the Skills Survey, you will be able to think through the key roles that you'd be responsible for on a daily basis if hired for this position. This process will allow you to further assess whether this is really the right position for you. Completing the Skills Survey also helps you dramatically improve your preparation for the interview process. And in fact, much of what you answer in the Skills Survey will be further discussed throughout your face-to-face interviews.

Please visit our website at www.prestigemedicalcenter.com to learn more about our organization.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Providing the Skills Survey to candidates you believe to be qualified and ready for the next step is not to be looked at as giving them special aid. In reality, it is simply enabling them to be better prepared for the process, just as you would want employees to be prepared when they have a customer meeting, a staff meeting, a board meeting, or an employee review.

You also want to keep in mind that the best interviewees are not always the best candidates, and vice versa. The Skills Survey enables you to level the playing field for all candidates. The information gathered will help your interviewers find out the depth of a candidate's skills faster, and without the polish that some candidates have acquired. The Skills Survey forces the candidates to focus on the exact issues that relate to the job position and their qualifications in those areas – and forces them to put it in writing.

By having much of this basic information collected in writing during the interview, the interviewers can now focus on any

remaining issues or dig much deeper for a better understanding of the candidate's background, skills, and experience. The bottom line is that more time can be spent during the interview on details that really matter, rather than on a continued gathering of generalized information.

The Benefits of Using the Skills Survey

The Skills Survey can provide definite benefits to your hiring team that can help you see more clearly the positive and negative aspects of a candidate. Here are the ways a Skills Survey will benefit your hiring team:

- It helps assess the candidate's written communication skills.
- It helps determine the candidate's follow-up skills because you will get to see how long it takes them to respond to your important request.
- The level of focus in their answers will help determine their level of attention to detail.
- Judging by how fast they respond, as well as how detailed their answers are, it helps determine their real interest level.
- How the candidate handles the process is a great indicator of their overall work ethic and behavior.
- It allows interviewers to drill deeper faster, because most



*The Skills Survey Enables You to Scrutinize Potential Employees
Even More Carefully*

information is gathered pre-interview.

- You can use the Skills Survey to dig deeper into answers and gather much more evidence of capabilities or lack of capabilities during the interview process. It also allows you to negate unfounded assumptions - for example, assuming someone has a lack of experience when that isn't the case.
- It allows you to prepare behavior-based interview questions from the answers provided in the Skills Survey.
- It allows you to compare and contrast candidates, because answers are all laid out in the same format.

- It allows those on the selection team, who come in at the last interview, to be more fully prepared, had their only information source been scanning a resume.

Creating the Skills Survey - A Checklist

Here are some issues that you want to include in your Skills Survey for better results:

- The first question should address their relevant experience within the industry/markets - products/services related to the specific position. (e.g., "Please describe your experience as an Emergency Room registration clerk.")
- For the next series of questions, review the position description, responsibilities, and ideal candidate traits, focusing first on the "outcomes."
- After reading the outcomes-based questions, ask the following: "If we were to speak with your current boss when doing references, how do you believe he/she would describe your performance and your strengths and weaknesses?"
- Education: Outline University Degree(s) with date(s): Please provide the Name, the Location and the Phone # of each Institution.
- References: Please provide three to six references. The first priority is past bosses, then customers, then employees, then peers.

Examples of question lead-ins you might choose to use in your Skills Survey are as follows:

- "Please describe your ability. . ."
- "Outline your experience. . ."
- "Please list your. . ."
- "Give us an example of. . ."
- "Tell us about. . ."

A Formula That Works

Here is a formula to help you understand what the Ropella Group has learned after using the Skills Survey over many years. I strongly believe that this Talent Assessment Formula works:

- Reviewing a Resume = Limited Assessment Power
- Using a Skills Survey (SS) = Advanced Assessment Power
- Resume & SS + Prepared Interviews + Testing + References + Background Checks + Candidate Scorecard = ABSOLUTE Talent Assessment Power (more on the Scorecard coming in the next summary)

How to Request a Cover Letter

Cover letters can be used at any time during the candidate process and before or after taking the Skills Survey. It was already mentioned that you can ask a candidate to write a cover letter to determine if they really are a candidate that needs further consideration. You can also ask them to send you a cover letter where you find that more questions have been raised after they have taken the Skills Survey or at any time during the interview process.

An example of a reason to request a cover letter could be that the Skills Survey reveals that the candidate is either more underqualified or overqualified than you had realized. Another reason could be a question about relocating – especially if this is to be a long distance move and you learn that a family situation might interfere or even prevent the move. Or, there may be some problems with the explanation of qualifications or experience – and you need a further clarification.



Here Is the Secret Formula for Hiring the Best Talent

You can obtain cover letters at any point in the hiring process. While you need to give the Skills Survey prior to the first interview, the timing of requesting cover letters does not matter. Get them when they are needed. In fact, you could even ask for one after the final interview and right before the decision to hire is made. These cover letters give you the candidate's answer to crucial questions in print – enabling you to show them to the whole hiring team.

Here is how you might word the request for an initial cover letter (or for another one later): "Before we proceed further into the process, we want to give you an opportunity to address, in the form of a cover letter, an issue we are concerned about. Please give me a paragraph answering the following question."

During the hiring process (especially if it gets drawn out), it is a good idea to keep in touch with your list of "B" candidates – before losing them altogether. Keep them warm by keeping them informed. It is quite possible that, by obtaining more information in a cover letter from them, you will find that what appears to be a "B" candidate could easily become a potential "A" candidate.

THE RIGHT HIRE

“The most important decisions that business people make are not *what* decisions, but *who* decisions.”

- Jim Collins, Author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... And Others Don't*



In most organizations, making the right hire means the difference between success and failure. This book helps you recruit great people and keep them loyal to the organization by helping you understand, assimilate and execute today's best processes, programs and practices for Sourcing and Marketing to potential candidates, Assessing and Recruiting top talent, Retaining & Training employees and Transforming your organization for the better.

What you will learn from this book

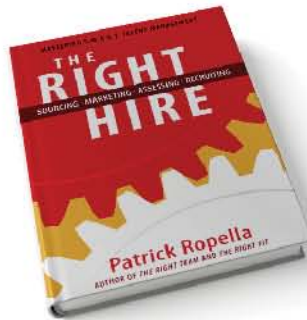
- How to successfully execute the all-important preparation stage of talent sourcing
- What to do to bring into alignment the whole interview-selection team
- Where to scout, network, and narrowcast in order to recruit the best candidates
- What techniques to use to screen and assess talent using proven tools
- How to use behavioral-based questions and interviewing techniques to uncover quality information that leads to great hiring decisions
- What can be done to dramatically improve the negotiations, offer, acceptance, start date and on-boarding processes
- And much, much more...

“People interviewing have choices, and *The Right Hire* presents the right things to do not only attract the top talent, but also to assess for culture fit, personal characteristics, experiences and credentials that will fit with your opportunity. With the growing need for companies to hire the very best talent available, *The Right Hire* is a must read.”

- Steve Watson,
International Chairman, Stanton Chase

“Too often making the right hire is seen as a matter of luck. It should not be. Follow the steps in this book and it will improve your success rate dramatically.”

- Yves Lermusi, CEO, Checkster



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Patrick B. Ropella is Chairman & CEO of the Ropella Group, a 25-year-old international Executive Search, Leadership Transformation, and Corporate Consulting firm in Florida with clients among the world's most prestigious corporations. The Ropella Group focuses on working with mid-level management and executive-level leaders regarding their search, leadership, and/or consulting needs across most roles and functions. Patrick authored the book and web based training program, *The Right Hire – Mastering the Art of SMART Talent Management*. The SMART Talent Management System covers Sourcing, Marketing, Assessing, Recruiting, Retention, Training and Transforming top talent. Patrick's status as a thought expert, and writer on talent management & leadership has been promoted, featured and published in a wide variety of trade magazines and business publications, and leadership and executive search industry blogs and journals. Patrick regularly speaks at webinars, career fairs, conferences, trades shows and more. For more information about Growing Your Great Company through Ropella services, visit www.ropella.com, or call Patrick Ropella at (850) 983 - 4777.