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

THE
RIGHT

SOURCING · MARKETING · ASSESSING · RECRUITING

HIRE

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Chapter 6 | **Getting a Look Behind the Mask: Evaluating Talent**

Getting a Look Behind the Mask: Evaluating Talent

All of us have had the experience at some point in our lives thinking that we finally understand a person – only to discover later that we did not know them at all. For some time, they had cleverly worn a mask that hid who they really were. What a disappointment it was to learn that they were not what we had thought them to be.

This same thing can happen when you take a new job, too. The people you were so impressed with during the interview process turned out to be totally different than you imagined. After working there about 90 days, you now see that working there is not as glamorous as you were first led to believe. On the other hand, it works the other way, too. You may have hired someone that seemed like the ideal candidate, and then after they start working there, it becomes obvious that they had deceived you.

Masks Can Conceal a Lot of Undesirable Features

Getting Behind the Mask

When people go on an interview and are looking for employment or a better job, it is only natural that they are trying to impress you. Masks can be expected in the process, but there are ways you can get a glimpse of what is behind them, and see what they may be trying to hide. Typically, it takes between 30 to 90 days for an individual to drop their mask and reveal who they really are when the original motive is gone.

Some of you reading this may be old enough to remember the TV show called Leave It to Beaver. In the show, Wally had a friend whose name was Eddie Haskell, and he was a real smooth-talker. It seemed like he could do no wrong. When he did get into trouble, which was rather often, he could easily charm his way out of it with Mrs. Cleaver.

Some of the people you have worked with are just like Eddie Haskell. You may have hired some people like him – and more are on the way. Can you spot them?

The truth is that they are hard to identify. They blend in real well with what they think you want them to be – the perfect candidate. They will have the right experience, words, and responses to your questions. Even their references can be impeccable! The problem with Eddie Haskells, however, is that no matter how good they look, they are still troublemakers. Some of them will misrepresent their skills and experience.

Consider Your Top Performers First

In order to identify the Eddie Haskells, you need to take a quick look at your best employees. You know they are hardworkers, and most of them have probably been with your company for some time now. They are problem-solvers and you know they can be good with customers. Were they good interviewers when they came? It's often doubtful that they were.

The simple reason they were not polished interviewees is because they have not had to develop that ability. Top employees generally do not change jobs very often – in fact, not often enough to become professional at interviewing. They may even be awkward during the process, and maybe apprehensive about it, too. This is especially true of those in highly technical roles like manufacturing, engineering, and R&D.

People like Eddie Haskell, however, love to job hop —so they have highly developed their interviewing and resume-writing abilities. They know exactly how to make themselves look good, and they will gladly tell you what you want to hear. They also know the latest interview questions and just how to answer them — they are practiced and polished at it. Exactly what Eddie is – in terms of personality traits – will only come out sometime after they've been hired.

Eventually The Mask Comes Off –
and Hopefully You Won't Have a Nightmare on Your Hands

Consider Your Current Candidate Evaluation Process

Take a minute or two and think about your current procedure for evaluating candidates. Do you think it might permit an Eddie Haskell to get through? If you think that he could slip through, then it is important that you pay special attention to chapter six of the book, The Right Hire. It contains information about incorporating such tools as personality profiling, assessment testing, reference checking, and even work simulations to enable you to detect and prevent the Eddie Haskells from getting hired.

The goal here is to be able to identify the "Eddie's" prior to hiring. You do this by spending enough time with them to get to know them well enough to let their true colors come out – before hiring them.

Get the Tools That Let You See Through the Masks

Identifying Red Flags and Real Accomplishments - Reading Resumes for What They Are Worth

Getting plenty of resumes is not difficult with some recruiting methods. Separating the real gems from the rocks in the pile is the next step, and this step typically involves making sure that the candidate's skills at least meet – if not exceed – the job ad's requirements.

The Eddie Haskells, however, already know this. They also know that, by "beefing-up" their resumes by adding key words, they can beat your screening process. In most cases, all they need to do is to enlarge their responsibilities and add in the right keywords to match your specifications.

You can solve this problem without abandoning your resume screening process. I encourage you to take the process to the

next level and sort the resumes based on a grading system, then use the SMART Skills Survey and the Candidate Scorecard system to provide a better focus for evaluating candidates. When taking these combined steps, this process (part of what we call the SMART Search System) will enable you to identify the candidate's skills and experiences, their trends of success and accomplishments, their job longevity, career progression, and worthwhile membership in associations or relevant activities.

After you have gone through and applied the above tools, you will still need to study the resumes of the best candidates. It will take some more time than may be your normal practice, but it will enable you to identify the best – and leave the rest.

What to Look for When You Read Resumes

When a resume does not identify the candidate as having the basic skills necessary for the position, you do not want to spend time continuing to read it. Focus on spending the most time on the candidates' resumes that look like they should be seriously considered for the position. Separate the resumes into piles that identify them as being A, B, or C candidates. Then, focus on the A pile, and use highlighters (or make notes on your computer) to identify the best qualifications of each candidate.

As you grade the resumes, be sure to take a quick look at their job history. If they have been at a company for a long time, note that it is quite possible that they are a high performer, but are just not used to writing resumes or ready to perform as well in the interview process. You certainly want to spend more time looking over their resumes in order to possibly identify A performers.

Evaluate and Categorize the Resumes to Discover the Best Talent

After classifying the candidates' resumes, set the B and C piles aside and focus only on the A pile for now. If you did not end up with enough, then you want to continue sourcing for more candidates. It would be a serious mistake to simply decide to go to the B pile when your goal is to obtain the top talent. If you have enough resumes in the A pile to start with, then remember that it is possible that you may want to review some of the B pile for a possible upgrade to A after a more careful evaluation. Do not waste your time going through the resumes in the C pile.

By eliminating the low B's and all the C candidates, you will become known in your office as being the one to find the best hires. Your peers, supervisors, and even subordinates will know that you are only presenting the best for the company and are not going to waste their valuable time with unnecessary interviews. Hiring talented people will make it easier to hire other talented people, because they will appreciate working with each other.

Avoid comparing candidates against each other as you look over the resumes. Instead, you want to compare the resumes against the job description, or against the specific questions that you want to ask them that are going to be on your Skills Survey. At this time, you are only reviewing the resumes to determine if you are going to ask them for a cover letter or invite them to complete a Skills Survey. You are not even making a choice yet about who you will be interviewing, either. That will only occur after you have all of your A candidates – and possibly a few B candidates – have finished reviewing a Skills Survey, and have graded each candidate with a Candidate Scorecard.

Tips for Reading Resumes

▪ **Look for measureable quantities.** As you read over the resumes, be sure that you look for solid content and not fluff. Accomplishments should provide verifiable substance in terms of $'s, #'s, %'s, and you want to mark them with a highlighter or red pen. By using numbers and letters on the resume as a point of reference, you can also use the same system on the scorecard to help you find matching information easier. These notes can also be used when you face the candidate in the interview.

Measureable quantities should be given when you are looking at the candidate's roles and accomplishments. When you find this, you most likely are looking at someone who is a real achiever. This type of information provides you with details about how much, how well, and the level of depth that he had been involved in the accomplishment. The more details that you have, the faster and deeper you can get into the candidate's skills and experience during the interview.

- **Keep an eye out for mistakes in the resume, too.** According to ResumeDoctor.com, a resume counseling service based in Vermont, about 40 percent of resumes contain at least one significant mistake. Since most software writing programs have grammar and spell-check features, there really is not any valid reason for this type of error. When you find one, you should be willing to knock the candidate down a letter grade – especially when there are multiple errors.

- **The format of a resume is not a great concern.** However, when you find some features that make the document stand out, such as a photograph, an introductory quote, a bold splash of color, unique font styles, or flowery or unique words, then you can be sure that they are there to impress you. While art is intended to impress, and it may be truly creative, be sure to look over the resume a little more carefully because the fancier document may be an attempt to hide a lack of real achievement. It may also be a sign of someone who is highly creative, or of someone who has a large ego. Just be sure to remember that you will have to work with this person after you hire them.

- **Look for gaps of employment in dates.** Start with their time in college, and then check for gaps up to the present. Gaps are red flags that you want to find out more about, but realize that there may be perfectly reasonable explanations for the gap. Watch out, too, if years are listed, but the months are left out. Usually, this is an attempt to hide a short employment period.

The average period of employment today is considerably shorter than it was a few years ago. Ten years at a job used to be considered normal. Now, however, it is normal for an employee to stay at the same place between three to five years. Some career counselors even recommend the shorter time periods as a method for career advancement.

One thing that you want to watch out for is the fact that companies frequently become acquired by other companies. This will show on a resume as two different companies, but realize that the employee may actually still be working at the exact same job in the same place.

Evaluate and Categorize the Resumes to Discover the Best Talent

Tips About Red Flags

Whenever you have dates and questions about employment that raise red flags, you want to be sure to ask for an explanation. In some cases, the economy or other problems caused a company to lay off employees. Consider red flags as an indicator that more questions need to be asked. Do not overreact by using a red flag as a cause to put a resume in the B pile. Get an explanation first. If you do have to move them from the B pile to the C pile, then do not proceed any further with that individual.

Check for Personal Pronouns

If a candidate uses the words "I" and "me" a lot, this should be considered a warning – especially if this job demands a lot of teamwork. In the case where employees do a lot of independent work, this is ideal. People applying for a team-based job, however, should use more of the "we" and "us" pronouns. Check for the use of these words throughout the whole candidate process.

Job Locations

When you are looking at the company and place of employment of a candidate, realize that it is not too unusual to put the city of the company's headquarters rather than the actual location of their work. If working at Sony, for instance, the employee may list the city as being Tokyo, Japan, but that probably is not where they actually worked. Some people do this to make themselves appear more traveled or "international." Be sure to ask about this if it is unclear where they actually worked.

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 and 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 to 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
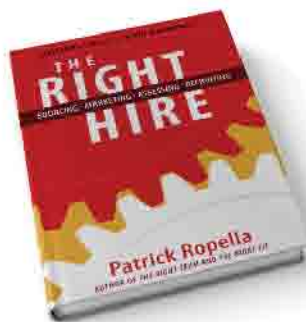
Patrick B. Ropella is Chairman & CEO of the Ropella Group, a 25-year-old international Executive Search, Leadership Transformation, and Corporate Consulting firm in Florida with clients among the world's most prestigious corporations. The Ropella Group focuses on working with mid-level management and 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 and leadership has been promoted, featured, and published in a wide variety of trade magazines, business publication, 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.