

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

# THE RIGHT

SOURCING · MARKETING · ASSESSING · RECRUITING

# HIRE

Patrick Ropella

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** **24**

Chapter 7 | **Conducting Successful  
Interviews**

## Conducting Successful Interviews

Being a part of the interviewing process can be intimidating for some people. After all, there is a lot that will ride on the success or failure of the interviewers to determine the right candidate. The chosen goals and outcomes, fitting into the team culture, working well with their peers, supervisors and others, are just a few.

The stakes involved in candidate selection are high, which makes it all the greater reason why your company needs to use the SMART Search System as the key part of your hiring process. This chapter will deal with how you should actually conduct your candidate interviews in a way that will give you the best results – enabling you to select the best candidate for the open position.

In previous chapters of the book, *The Right Hire*, you have seen how every step of the hiring process is designed to help you further select the best candidate. By having the right techniques for interviewing and follow up, you can also use interviews to develop relationships to “court” and to motivate the best candidates to join your organization. If your interview processes are one-sided, tiresome, unorganized, and ineffective, then you could easily lose your best candidates. It is very important to keep a balance between asking questions (information gathering) and providing answers (information sharing).

Having a well-developed interview process in place is like a finely tuned and well-practiced symphony orchestra. Each one knows their part well, and they have learned how to work in unison with the other musicians. This is the type of impression you want to make when your candidates first meet your interview team. Each team member must be well-prepared and ready to play their specific part in the overall program.

One CEO that even compared his responsibilities to an orchestra is David Fox, who is the CEO of Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital, and who was named as the Hospital CEO of the Year by *The Hospital Review*. In that magazine, he said: “When I started

here as CEO, someone gave me a conductor’s baton. I see it as symbolic to what I do here every day. A bad conductor can ruin even the most talented orchestra, but a good conductor can get everyone playing from the same sheet of music.”



*When Every Team Member Works Together –  
You Get Great Results*

It is also just as important that you ensure that you have a system in place that is capable of assessing the talent that you’re courting. Both systems should work together to give you the end results you need – and help you make some great music.

## Coordinating the Interview Decision Makers and Point People

By now, most of us have heard of Abbott & Costello’s comedy called “Who’s on First?” In it, Costello is thinking about becoming a baseball player, and Abbott then proceeds to inform Costello who the players are on his favorite team.

Abbott: *Strange as it may seem, they give ballplayers nowadays very peculiar names.*

Costello: *Funny names?*

Abbott: *Nicknames, nicknames. Now, on the St. Louis team we have Who’s on first, What’s on second, I Don’t Know’s on third.*

Costello: *That's what I want to find out. I want you to tell me the names of the fellows on the St. Louis team.*

Abbott: *I'm telling you. Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third.*

Costello: *You know the fellow's names?*

Abbott: *Yes.*

Costello: *Well, then who's playing first?*

Abbott: *Yes.*

Costello: *I mean the fellow's name on first base.*

Abbott: *Who.*

Costello: *The fellow playing first base.*

Abbott: *Who.*

Costello: *The guy on first base.*

Abbott: *Who is on first.*

Costello: *Well, what are you asking me for?*

The comedy goes on back and forth – either driving you crazy or making you laugh yourself senseless. The reason this is mentioned here is because it serves to remind us just how important it is to map out the entire hiring process before starting a search. You want to know in advance who's in charge of what base, who's coaching or leading, and who will make the final decisions. This is especially important in the case of the Hiring Manager, the HR representative, and the Executive Recruiter (if you are using one), because they will be interacting the most with the prospective candidates.



*People to Abilities and Performance  
Makes for Better Results*

Before you start the process of interviewing or selecting the candidates, you need to review the SMART Aligning Expectations document one more time with all members of the selection team. Be sure to make all the decisions on this document.

Work through the questions in the SMART Aligning Expectations document as soon as you can in the early stages of the search process. This should primarily include the HR representative and the hiring manager, and possibly his boss. It is easy to do and only requires that you put the initials next to the various items for which each team member is responsible. If some members are only responsible for a percentage of a specific item, then provide their initials and the percentage of that responsibility – such as 80%. Any disagreements or confusion needs to be worked out prior to any interviews.

You can ensure a better balance and a strong partnership when you share the responsibilities between the HR representative and the Hiring Manager. Considerably better results will also be seen when there is a solid partnership between the two, and it will lead to a win-win situation for all involved – including the candidates.

Below is an example of the SMART Aligning Expectations document

**What to expect from the hiring manager and selection team (or, what we need from you to do a great job)**



A clear, carefully thought-out position description that has been finalized and agreed on by the entire selection team prior to launching the search.

Complete access to the hiring manager and all information needed to complete our information gathering process in a timely fashion.

Detailed feedback within 48 hours on all candidates submitted and interviewed.

All leads and prospective candidates (from any source) are to be referred to and managed by human resources so that all candidates are put on the same playing field at the same time and processed equally.

If there are changes of any sort made at any time during the search, they need to be shared with the selection team immediately.

A commitment to read all candidate materials provided before providing feedback and before any interviews.

A commitment to keep all interview appointments. "Scheduling interviews is like herding mice; it's no fun to do it twice."

A willingness to listen to our competitive intelligence about compensation levels with regard to current market value. Don't let salary be a reason not to interview a qualified candidate.

A commitment to let us use our process for presenting offers and handling all negotiations with the finalist in order to ensure a successful hire.

A willingness to move quickly on candidates you consider finalists. Remember: "Time kills all deals."

Reviewed by Hiring Manager & Members of Selection Team

www.prestigemedicalcenter.com | 800-777-1000

## Preparing for the Interviews – the Essential Elements

*\* For a comprehensive list of Interview Preparation Responsibilities to Schedule, and/or to Delegate, please go to The Right Hire Resource Page at: [www.ropella.com/therighthire](http://www.ropella.com/therighthire)*

### **BEFORE INTERVIEWS:** (sample list)

- Who's in charge of leading the Alignment of Expectations exercise?
- Who's in charge of conducting the information gathering process and getting the search prep questionnaire completed?
- Who's in charge of creating the Opportunity Marketing Piece?
- Who's in charge of creating the Skills Survey?
- Who's in charge of creating the Candidate Scorecard?

### **DURING INTERVIEWS:** (sample list)

- Who's responsible for making sure Employee Behavior/ Performance Standards information has been provided to candidates and the Acknowledgement Card has been signed?
- Who's responsible for making sure interview follow up forms are distributed to the search selection team before interviews start?
- Who's in charge of deciding who's going to lunch with candidates (if time permits)?
- Who's providing the relocation and benefits summary information to candidates?
- Who's explaining any bonus or incentive compensation, vacation, 401K, and/or other benefits details to candidates and answering questions?

### **AFTER INTERVIEWS:** (sample list)

- Who's responsible for making sure interview follow up forms are collected from the search selection team?
- Who's going to follow up with the candidates who were interviewed and ensure that all of their follow up questions are answered?
- Who's going to conduct reference checks?
- Who's following up with the candidate finalist's significant other to see if any relocation, schooling, or job assistance could be provided?

- Who's going to be reaching out to the candidate and his significant other and family after the offer has been extended in order to welcome them to the area and ease their transition into the new community?

Addressing these issues before you even begin your search will help you to be more organized from the outset and will ensure that there will be fewer surprises throughout the selection process. Add to that the fact that you, your selection team, and you organization as a whole will appear to be more organized and professional in the eyes of the candidates.

## Batting Order: The Who, What, When, Where, and How of Interviewing

The first chapter of the book showed who should be included in most interview selection teams. Here is a review with some additional details that will help you start correctly into the interview process.

## Phone Screen Interviews

During the hiring process, it may be necessary to make some phone calls for a phone interview. This would depend on the comfort level of the HR or Hiring Manager concerning certain candidates. Sometimes one will call first, followed up by the other. When a candidate looks strong on paper, it is probably not necessary to make a phone call. Certain positions, however, such as customer service or sales, should be used to determine the candidate's communication skills.



*Phone Calls Can Save You Money*

In situations where candidates live at long distances from the company, phone screens in the early stages will help save on costs. It only makes sense to use the phone to make sure the candidate looks good before you invest in their travel costs and possible relocation expenses.

## A Typical Hiring Process

Here is a look at what may be involved in the typical hiring process.

### ■ Interview - Round One

The first interviews – whether by phone or face-to-face – should be conducted by the Hiring Manager and the HR representative. It may include one or more interviews, and their purpose is to screen candidates for minimum requirements. This step is just a “get to know you” stage and it should be used to also clear up any questions and look further into any red flags.

This interview should be balanced between selling and courting the candidate and gathering surface-level information. A hard pressed interrogation approach should not be used at this level. At this point, you should only be interviewing the A-level candidates and a couple of strong B’s. The others should be left on the backburners.

### ■ Interview - Round Two

At this level, you should only be face-to-face interviewing those candidates that you are willing to hire. It may involve one or more interviews, and the Hiring Manager should be getting deeper into behavioral interviewing techniques. You are looking at the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses, and deciding which one will be a good cultural fit. The Hiring Manager’s boss should screen for red flags and ask him or her to investigate further.

This is also a good time to bring into the interviews some high performers that occupy the same position you are looking to fill. This will begin the Peer Interview process, in which you will help candidates and peers to understand more about the micro-cultural fit of the candidate. This stage will enable the candidates to ask questions that they might not want to ask of higher management during an interview with them.

Another benefit of the Peer Interview is that the peers who do the interviewing will usually help to make the onboarding process easier. They do this by taking a personal interest in the new hire and helping them to be integrated more easily. It will also improve their success during the first 90 days of employment.



*Bringing in A Peer Can Provide Even More Insight Into the Candidate*

At this stage, you should only be allowing those candidates to be peer interviewed that you feel you would like to hire but want to learn more about. If the peers are not in favor of hiring a particular candidate, you should probably follow their advice – or have a very solid reason to overrule it.

You may also want to bring in a peer of the hiring manager – depending on the position. They are usually better trained in interviewing and could provide a wider view of the candidates in terms of cross training and long-term growth prospects. They will also be able to give the candidate:

- An overall view of the organization’s leadership team.
- Opportunities for growth within the organization.
- How they will fit culturally into the organization.

### ■ Interview – Final Stage

When you get to this stage, it may involve one or more interviews, which are usually used to answer any final questions and clarify expectations. As you approach the end of this stage, you want to bring in the President/CEO – or a top leader – and let them check for any red flags and give answers to any questions that remain.



If it is a management position that you are seeking to fill, you also want to bring in a couple of future subordinates. This will let them determine the comfort level (at least superficially) that they have with the new manager candidate. It also allows them to meet the finalist before the start date and will give them a sense of familiarity.

The last interview will ensure that all questions are answered, all objectives and expectations are covered for the first 90 days, and that there is complete agreement. The hiring manager needs to be in on this session.

Prior to the last interview, if a final selection has not been made yet, you want to have this type of complete and candid “alignment of expectations” conversation between the hiring manager and the candidate – even if it has to be made through a phone call. It is best to have this conversation prior to extending the offer, and before the candidate must make a final decision to accept it or not.

## The Interview Team

When the interview process is carried out according to the above description, it should involve between six to a dozen different people. I can hear many of you saying: “That is just not possible. We are way too busy to involve that many people.” That may be the case, but you are missing the larger picture. Here is what you need to know about this process.

**1.** The selection team is not all involved at the same time. In fact, the higher level personnel are only involved after the finalists have been selected. Since candidates have already been carefully screened with the various tools (the skills survey, the candidate scorecard, phone interviews, and the first face-to-face interviews), only the A-level candidates will need to be seen by top management.



*Only a Couple of Staff Are Involved at a Single Time*

**2.** By having the new hire be seen by more company personnel (before being hired), it will help to make the transition into the company more comfortable. The important thing is to find the right balance between involving as many people as possible, and including the right people.

Here is some more food for thought about why you want to involve so many. The people on the hiring team will be working closely with the new hire. In order for her to want to work at your company, it will help the right decision to be made if she feels comfortable with the many people she met during the interview process. When she realizes that they are friendly and that she enjoyed meeting them, she is more likely to think, “I feel good about the people I met, and it seems like they would be good group to work with. I really think I would like to work at that company.”

# 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

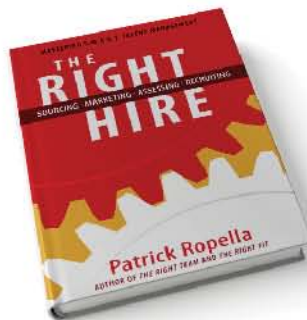
- How to successfully execute the all-important preparation stage of talent sourcing
- What to do to bring into alignment the whole interview-selection team
- Where to scout, network, and narrowcast in order to recruit the best candidates
- What techniques to use to screen and assess talent using proven 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



**Full edition available  
in paperback and  
hardcover!**

**Order Now!**

[www.ropella.com/therighthouse](http://www.ropella.com/therighthouse)



**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](http://www.ropella.com), or call Patrick Ropella at (850) 983 - 4777.