



FRANCHISE HIRING MATTERS

By Lauren d'Entremont

As a new franchisee, surrounding yourself with the right people can make all the difference to your success. Your greatest resource, as they say, is the people who will be serving customers and clients at your location. Bringing the appropriate people on board through a comprehensive hiring process is the best way to ensure you're setting your business up for success. Hiring can be a tricky thing, though – one false move could be costly. As one of the experts, Ben Baldwin, puts it: "Hiring is hard. If it's easy, something's wrong. The good news is that there are tools and people out there to help."

Read on for expert tips and advice to make your hiring process as smooth as possible.

What am I looking for?

Before you place a 'help wanted' ad, you need to know the kind of employee you seek. When you are thinking about what you are looking for in a potential hire, you'll need to go beyond the job title. Be clear about who you are looking for, personality-wise, and the qualities or skills that person will need to possess. Does the position require someone who can be a team player or will the new hire need to be able to work well independently? Do you want a leader who can motivate and influence other employees? Knowing what personality type is needed can help narrow the field as you go through resumes and applications.

"First, be clear about who you're looking for and why,"

says Baldwin, Co-Founder of ClearFit, an online app that assists in finding and assessing job candidates. "Lots of people start off looking to hire a 'unicorn.' They think they want someone with an MBA and a background in sales, when what they really need is someone who can provide great customer service and operate a cash register."

What should I put in the job description?

Kingsley Chima, an Express Employment Professionals franchisee, says that franchisees, in particular, have a distinct advantage when it comes to crafting effective job descriptions for available positions.

"Having a good franchisor to help with this is so important. They've done this before and can take you step by step and walk you through exactly what the person will be doing. That way, you'll know exactly what the job entails and can use that full picture to create a good job description," says Chima.

Baldwin agrees. "Franchisees can look at other locations' employees and see who is excelling in the position at another location and look for those things in your new hires."

Job descriptions should outline, in detail, all the technical and skill- and experience-based aspects of the position – the proficiencies that a candidate would include on their resume. "When the person



comes in for an interview, that's when you can start evaluating the personality and culture fit," Chima says.

Where can I find candidates?

While the Internet plays a large role in today's hiring process, the experts agree that there is more to it.

"Think about your ideal candidate: where do they go? What do they pay attention to?" says Baldwin.

"It's a combination of ways and online is part of that," Chima says. "That's part of the reason staffing companies like ours exist – to help people diversify their approach to hiring."

Posting on the Internet will reach a wide range of candidates, but can also create an avalanche of applications for you to weed through. Introducing an online tool can assist you in weeding through applications as they come in, allowing you to quickly narrow your search.

Building up a following of fans and customers in your local community can also be a great help when it comes time to seek out new employees. "Many applications will come from customers, so you really need to understand your audience. Anything that starts the conversation raises your profile to potential hires," says Baldwin. Job fairs, he adds, can be a good source of candidates as long as you lay some groundwork beforehand and do some promotion to make sure the people you want to target come.

If you already have some star employees working with you, ask them for referrals. This is helpful because the person is being recommended by a reliable source that already has a good idea of the type of person that would thrive in the position and in the business.

An important thing, according to Baldwin, is to measure the success of each method you use to find candidates. That way, when you need to start the hiring process again, you won't waste time and effort on channels that didn't work well for you the first time around.

How should I structure the interview process?

Once you have received resumes from potential hires and narrowed it down to a shortlist of candidates, it's time to interview. Before you sit



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down with anyone, ensure you have a clear procedure in place for the most important part of the hiring process.

“Remember that we all have a bias inherent in all of us. We all want to work with people who are a reflection of ourselves, someone we feel comfortable with,” Chima points out. “One way to avoid falling into that trap is to do more than one interview with each person and don’t carry out those interviews alone.” You can then discuss the pros and cons of each candidate together and find a consensus. This will aid in finding new hires that complement, rather than copy, the qualities and skill sets that you already have.

In addition to reducing the opportunity for personal biases to creep in, having other people helping you to interview candidates can reveal even more about the person on the ‘hot seat.’ When one of the other interviewers is asking a question, you’re free to focus on the person’s body language. Are they comfortable? Do they seem less than confident?

Use the interview process to dig deeper into the candidate’s mindset. Steer clear of close-ended questions. “It’s easy enough to ask someone in an interview, ‘Are you a hard worker?’ because, well, the answer you’ll always get is ‘Yes.’ Tailor your questions to let you figure out what their personality is,” explains Chima.

Get interviewees to give you examples and ask follow-up questions, Baldwin says. “As polite people, we can feel like we need to put people at ease. In interviews, you really need to stick with it, drill down, and ask the tough questions, because that’s how you’ll get the answers you need.”

How do I choose which candidate to bring onboard?

The two things to keep in mind when evaluating candidates are cultural fit and technical fit. The experts argue that it’s the former that is most important.

“It’s not just a person’s experience; it’s their personality and motivations,” says Baldwin. “Those are much harder



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to train and if they don't have them, you're in trouble.”

References, the experts say, are still one of the most important pieces of the hiring puzzle and can give you even more insight into the intangibles, such as work ethic.

With references, it's important that you go right to the top. “Make sure that the references you get aren't all former colleagues and peers,” Chima says. “You can talk to maybe one of those, but they won't give you the full picture. What you want are former supervisors, managers, owners.”

While it is illegal to ask a reference about certain subjects, such as the candidate's religion or marital status, there is one question that should always be on your list. “Ask them, ‘If you had the opportunity to hire this person again, would you?’ If the answer isn't ‘I would in a jiffy,’ that's a red flag,” says Chima.

Once the new hire is on the job, is the process over?

You've searched, assessed, and interviewed. You extended a job offer and the candidate accepted. Now that they're officially your employee, your work is done. Not so fast, Chima warns: you need to be paying attention to how they are fitting into the role and the business as a whole.

“The tendency when you bring in someone new and you know right away that they're not a good fit is to start making excuses for them. It would be better for both of you to realize the mistake and let that person go,” he says. “Always hire slowly and fire quickly.”

A well thought-out hiring process is essential to the success of any business. “Those who obsess about people, and hiring the right people, win,” says Baldwin. “The right or wrong hire can make or break a business. The best franchisees are also the best at hiring. If you have the right people in place, everything else should work out.”

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– Ben Baldwin, Co-Founder, ClearFit

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