

Developing Key Accountabilities

One of the hardest things to do when hiring is to identify exactly what the position requires to be successful. When you evaluate the person you have hired in three or six months time, what will be the criteria you use to decide whether they have been successful or not? If you can identify that up front then you have a much better chance of matching the person you hire to the job you want them to do.

Job Descriptions have been an important tool for over fifty years, but other than being a starting point, they do not help much in this process. They are limiting in that they are driven by compliance rather than success because they look at the tasks to be performed rather than defining what success in a particular position will look like.

In successful hiring, defining success criteria is much more important than simply describing the duties. To identify this, I use a process that develops, weighs and ranks the Key Accountabilities for a position. The process works as follows:

1. Assemble the "Stakeholders" in the Position

These are all the people who have an opinion about the job – what it involves and what the responsibilities should be. They will include the supervisor and, as appropriate, the incumbent, peer and subordinate. It is important to get everybody together who has a valid opinion so that the bias can be removed from the discussion

2. Go Through a Brainstorming Exercise About the Position

This discussion starts from the question: "Why does this job exist?" Write down everything that comes up and then go through a group exercise to categorize the answers in no more than four alphabetical categories...and make sure that everybody agrees

3. Create Key Accountability Statements for Each Category

Now you have four categories, each with a number of constituent parts. The next step is to create a definition for each category that incorporates all the parts. Once created, these four categories become the Key Accountabilities for the position.

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4. Rank and Weight the Key Accountabilities

Now that the multiple reasons that the job exists have been reduced to a manageable number of Key Accountabilities, those Key accountabilities must be ranked and weighted. The ranking reflects the relative importance of each task. The weighting reflects what percentage of the total time is actually spent on each task.

Having gone through this exercise, you should be much clearer and much more aligned in your view about the kind of person you really want to hire.

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