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From Jim Sirbasku's Desk

## Identifying and Placing Superstars

### How do you select superstar performers?

Companies seeking superstar employees need to perform their due diligence before initiating the hiring process. Most business leaders assume that the superstar they need must come from outside the company rather than from within. This is not always the case. Following these five steps will ensure that you identify and place superstars appropriately in order to maximize their potential and productivity.

**1. Star performers shine brightly.** The first step in hiring a superstar is to identify those already in your company who have potential. Seeking external superstars before identifying potential stars internally can cheat the organization of the talent already available. Many employees are not placed into jobs that fit their strengths, preferences, skills and abilities. If an employee is inappropriately placed, she will never exceed expectations. Many superstars exist within companies but are never recognized because they were placed poorly in the beginning. Meanwhile, external stars shine brightly, causing managers to overlook the cost of hiring as it compares with the cost of training and promoting internally.

**2. Impulsive desire should not detract from real need.** An appropriate question to keep in mind when searching for superstars is, "Does the organization need this person?" This is the question most commonly asked

#### DID YOU KNOW?

There were nearly **6.4 available workers** for each available job at the end of November 2009; up from 4.8 in May 2009. -*Department of Labor*

**Fifty-seven percent** of employers expect to see higher salaries for existing employees in 2010, down from 65 percent in 2009. Also, 29 percent plan to increase salaries in offers to new employees, down from 33 percent in 2009. -*Harris Interactive for Careerbulider.com*

**Thirty seven percent** of employers said they plan to take advantage of the large labor pool and replace low-performing employees in 2010. -*Harris Interactive for Careerbuilder.com*

when purchasing high-cost items with a budget in mind.  
What will your needs be in a year? What will they be in five years?

3. **Think practically.** Try to imagine the superstar working in your organization. Do you see someone coming in and developing solid relationships, meeting with team leaders, hearing concerns and asking a lot of questions? Or do you see your superstar trying to wave a magic wand to make all problems disappear? Know that it will take months, if not years, to get your superstar up and running to his full potential. Understand that no man or woman works alone, and if high performance depends on understanding the organization, your superstar needs time to develop that insight.

4. **Assessments are investments.** This correlates with number one on our list. Now is the time to focus on understanding and improving the hiring process. If you are so eager to get this new star on board that you circumvent your own selection process, you are taking the same risk as a tightrope walker who does not use a net—and you are making a risky investment, too. Be thorough and well-educated about each possibility before making the offer. Be fair, be consistent and be legal.

5. **Consider the potential outcomes.** If you do decide an external superstar is a perfect fit for your organization, be conscious of the message you give your internal stars. It's best not to imply that this new employee has been hired to correct or improve all of the problems currently inhibiting the business. Rumors are unavoidable when new employees arrive, even in the healthiest of work cultures. Keep in mind that experienced employees may feel threatened by the new person. Business leaders should make the new person's arrival a normal event, keep details of the compensation package private and tell the "star" that he is working among many other stars.

Identifying and placing superstars requires due diligence and thorough consideration of all of the available options. Be practical and thoughtful with your hiring or promotional practices to ensure that everyone is impacted positively, and that employees have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.



Jim Sirbasku, CEO  
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HR MARKETER NEWS

## Trends for Hiring and Upgrading in 2010

HRmarketer's latest edition to their "Trends in HR Marketing" report reveals an optimistic outlook for 2010 from HR departments nationwide. The report reveals information about trends and best practices for human resources, and has a focus on the typical human resource buyer and their financial outlook in 2010. Directly from the report, some of the key trends include:

- Thirty-one percent of HR professionals note that their organization will hire 10-20 percent more employees in 2010
- Forty-five percent of HR buyers are "somewhat optimistic" about the progression of the economy and believe that it will improve this year
- Assessments and selection, talent management systems, coaching and mentoring are some of the key pain points for human resources in 2010

The general outlook for 2010 is optimistic and hiring and upgrading are tangible concepts in the

improving status of the economy. As a key pain point, it is important to remember that assessments compliment the hiring and upgrading processes by revealing detailed information about each participant.

More information is available in the [HR Buyers' Behavior: What to Expect in 2010](#) portion of the HR marketer "Trends in HR Marketing" report.

## PRODUCT FOCUS

### Project Upgrade 2010: PXT Is a Good First Step

Financially healthy organizations interested in upgrading their talent are finding themselves in "prime time" during the first quarter of 2010. Across the globe, employers are cautiously optimistic about hiring. This optimism coincides with the entrance of top performers into job market, many of whom are victims of the economic downturn that began in 2008. Some are unemployed but very employable. Others are working while seeking new positions that will allow them to learn and grow.

So what will your organization's hiring strategy look like?

While every situation is different, a good general plan for hiring top performers should include some or all of these considerations:

- Hire workers who will become key to your success in the near-term, and who can grow to contribute to that success in the future.
- Hire workers with skills that are hard to find.
- Hire workers who fit your culture.

A good first step in finding skilled jobseekers who match your needs is to use the Total Person Assessment, also known as the ProfileXT™. This assessment helps you hire in the short term while focusing on long-term needs.

The PXT is called the Total Person Assessment because it evaluates thinking and reasoning skills, occupational interests and behavioral traits, and JobFit™ technology gives clarity to its measurements. This helps in selecting employees as well as managing them. When team leaders are assured of job fit, they can train, coach, manage and promote the right people from within when positions open up.

Just as importantly, PXT helps predict job suitability, and it accurately matches people with the work they do. This helps leaders understand future talent demands and assess current talent inventory.

Organizational leaders often tell Profiles about their successes in using PXT for initial job placement, evaluating the best person to promote, succession planning, coaching and self-improvement. Its variety of reports helps employers solve the challenges of high turnover, poor training, organizational identity confusion, conflict and profitability issues.

If you are a leader ready to capitalize on the talent available, you should first envision success, then devise a plan that will help you achieve it.

## MANAGING MANKIND

### Relating Management to Football- "Pulling a Favre"

Adaptation is crucial in business. People must adapt their skill sets and personality traits in order to blend with their work cultures. Unfortunately, adaptation can only get you so far, and when the going gets tough, people's natural instincts and behaviors get going. Brett Favre is the perfect example: The man has one of the longest-running careers in the National Football League, or at least he did until the National Football Conference championship game.

Quarterbacks are like star employees, and coaches are like managers. Coaches make decisions that affect the entire team, and even the outcome of the game. One bad decision (or "pulling a Favre") can result in a dropped ball that can cost the championship. Although losing the chance to go to the Super Bowl seems tragic, imagine losing your company because a manager dropped the ball.

The fact of the matter is that despite people's best attempts to adapt, they will always revert back to their natural behaviors when under pressure. Poor Favre unfortunately reverted back to throwing short passes in the final minutes of one of the biggest games of his career. Just like Favre's coach, some managers might not understand their employees, and this means that managers might have unrealistic expectations of their star performers. If the star performer feels stressed or is under too much pressure, he could revert back to making poor decisions that cost the company countless dollars.

Assessments offer some objectivity for managers who are trying to predict how an employee will behave in a crucial situation. Assessments for both managers and employees provide detailed information about each individual's learned and natural behaviors. Managers can use the results from the assessments to better understand the natural makeup of their employees, and to better predict how people will react in certain situations. The coach should have known that the play he called was not Favre's strongest, and that it would not be a realistic way to win the game. Managers should understand their employees well enough to know where and how each employee can succeed.

Leaders must be able to understand their employees, as well as themselves. If a leader is unaware of his own inability to make clear decisions during high-stress situations, the entire group could fail. Favre's coach led him to believe that making that pass was a good idea, but it turned into a failure for the entire team. True leadership emerges when a person is aware of his own shortcomings and is willing to improve for the benefit of others. Knowing how a person operates makes it easier to understand and counteract his reactions.

Assessments won't change the fact that Favre throws short passes when he gets nervous, but they will enable leaders and managers to better understand themselves and their employees. Don't let your managers pull a Favre. Equip them with the tools necessary to understand and communicate effectively with their teams so that they can win in the Super Bowl of the business world.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Hiring Without Regrets

Your candidate may indeed be a superstar, but the money and time your organization is about to invest in him require that you find out more about the person than what his resume tells you—and what he tells you during an interview. You can approach hiring acquisitions in two ways.

#### Method One

- You examine the candidate's resume and find many points that suggest he or she is right for your company.
- You call the candidate in for an interview and spend a long time

#### Method Two

- You post an opening internally and externally. An external candidate looks promising, so you also examine his/her credentials.
- You ask all candidates to take an

reviewing the resume and interspersing the interview with questions about his/her likes and dislikes. You also tell the candidate what your organization is all about.

- You call the candidate's references and hear rave reviews.
- You offer the candidate the position at top salary. You negotiate other benefits.
- You advise everyone in the office that you have found the perfect person for the open position.

assessment that provides you with more information to consider and questions to ask each one during an interview. The external candidate, reportedly a superstar, is still in the running.

- You interview all the candidates and examine assessment results, paying particular attention to job interests and skills of candidates, and whether those interests and skills match those of people who have done this job well before.
- You conduct background checks and call people at previous jobs (not only those on the reference list) to find out if your finalists' resumes are accurate and truthful.
- You hire the best person for the job. It may or may not be the purported superstar.

The second method may take a bit longer

than the first, and it may even cost more at the outset. But its advantages over the first method include the fact that it allows you to gather information about all candidates aside from the information that they provided you with, it allows you to make a decision based on objective facts (not your gut), it saves you money the long run because you are certain you hired the person with the best job fit, and it protects both the organization AND the candidate. The organization is protected because you have made a fact-based and fair decision, while the candidate is protected because he accepted a job he is interested in and able to do—not a job he took because he thought he should for the prestige, money, pressure from someone else...or just because he was tired of the job search.