

Right From the Start: 5 Hiring Tips

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Hiring an employee presents a number of challenges to any size business. And while larger companies sometimes have the advantage of employing whole departments dedicated to acquiring good talent, there's no reason small businesses can't move beyond [hiring basics](#) and borrow from corporate recruitment playbooks. Take advantage of these five hiring tips:

1. Develop relationships long before you begin to hire

Whether you need to hire a new employee now or in the future, it's easier when you already have a pool of candidates in mind.

Always be on the lookout for potential candidates, whether it's through industry contacts or trade groups and associations. Employee referrals can also be a good route to take when seeking candidates — and even going through your “followers” on social media channels. (More about social media, below.)

2. Use social media

Sometimes your best employee prospects are already fans of your business. Here's how some of your social media platforms can help:

- **Use LinkedIn.** This networking site allows you to post job openings for a fee and search for candidates. You can also sign up for LinkedIn Talent Solutions, which offers a slew of tools for recruiters.
- **Network via Facebook,** by posting job openings for your fans to see. Plus, you can post a want ad for free on the Facebook Marketplace site.
- **Turn to Twitter.** Get an edge over the competition by tweeting available jobs, upcoming events and more. If your company is lacking in the “follower” department, it's time to build and expand your network with clients and potential job candidates by searching for people you know by location, industry or interest, and so on. Be sure to “follow” work associates, organizations and recruiters that could help you find potential employees.

3. Prescreen, prescreen, prescreen

After you've narrowed down some candidates on paper, a quick prescreening interview via phone can let you know if the candidate is truly a good fit. Spending 15 minutes on a call may save both you and the candidate a lot of time.

You might even have one of your current, trusted employees prescreen candidates for you. Your staff knows you, and they know what it takes to make you happy. Sometimes their insight may help candidates decide if they even want to move forward.

The important caveat here, however, is to make sure your employees are aware of

questions that are allowed — and, more importantly, not allowed — which brings up another prescreening tactic: Consider hiring a professional. (More about federal laws, below.)

As [Anotei Baatz](#), president and CEO of Baatz Consulting, points out, "competition for jobs can be really tough. If you post an opening, you may get 400-plus applicants, but if you're lucky, there may be 20 that are actually qualified."

Baatz is the founder of [Baatz Consulting, a human resources firm that specializes in the tech sector](#). With 20 years of experience helping large firms hire the right talent, she sees how professional prescreening can help small businesses as well. "Hiring someone like us can save you a lot of time and money. In about two weeks, a good recruiter can find those two or three candidates that are actually a good fit."

The key is specialization and strategic networking, says Baatz. "Try to hire a firm or a consultant who really knows your business. I don't accept clients outside my areas of specialty. There are others in those sectors who are better equipped. But even if you don't hire an expert to prescreen applicants, consider being very strategic about how you 'network' a job opening."

"Don't just let everyone and their uncles know you're hiring," she says. "Instead, talk to your inner circle, the people who know your business. And when a friend refers a potential candidate to you, don't be afraid to ask how well they know this person. There's a big difference between an acquaintance and a friend."

4. Decide if the candidate fits your company's culture (or vice versa)

Knowing how to hire an employee who fits your company's culture is a subjective exercise. You may not always have a clear yes-or-no decision to make, either.

Moreover, you may even have to ask yourself whether it's worth tweaking your culture a bit to accommodate a talented candidate — as long as it doesn't mean abandoning what's made you successful so far or alienating your current employees.

So, paraphrasing [organizational psychologist Dr. David Javitch in his *Entrepreneur* magazine article](#), the decision comes down to ensuring that your culture remains positive, regardless of whom you hire. Perhaps a good way to test the fit of a given candidate is to review Javitch's three groups of corporate culture attributes as they apply to your business:

- Beliefs, stories and experiences
- Goals, norms and history
- Symbols, values and rituals

Then, discuss those attributes with the candidates during the interview process. If nothing else, from their responses you'll have a good "gut-level" feel about whether a prospective employee will work with your culture or not.

5. Know the laws of hiring

When hiring a new employee, there are very specific rules about what you can ask and what you can't. Don't land your company in hot water over a rookie mistake. Be sure you have a good understanding of [federal laws](#) that prohibit job discrimination.

After you've narrowed down your candidates, you're ready to bring them in for an interview. Good luck!

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