

Hiring in a Seller's Market:

by Gary Hubbell

It is a seller's market for major gift officers. Take heart; there are steps to minimize your vulnerability to bad hires.

There are workplace performance indicator survey tools that can be administered that adhere to HR protocols and best practices. Gallup, Caliper, and Personalysis offer these tools. While not foolproof tools, they foster more informed interviews.

Change the way new employee orientation is provided for major gift officers and field people. Put them in the field first. Provide the required new employee orientation, but don't have them languish in a bunch of internal meetings or review departmental files to get acclimated. Select 20 donors likely to be in their relationship management portfolio. Ask the new hire to review those donor files. Arrange individual get-acquainted visits for them with each donor.

Ask the new field person to tell you what they intend to accomplish from each interview. This will tell you how their mind works. Have they thought about discovery questions? Are they approaching the portfolio with a clear process and logistics in mind? How aggressive is their scheduling? Complete all visits within two to four weeks. Then debrief the new field officer to discern what they learned. Augment this step with some contacts of your own with selected donors recently seen by this new officer. Ask for feedback and impressions. Savvy donors will be straight with you.

Many benefits accrue:

1. Early and clearer evidence of how this employee is wired.
2. Demonstrate what you value in a field position—getting to relationships with vigor, enthusiasm, and a plan.
3. Spot bad hires much sooner, saving you, your donors, and this new employee many months (if not years!) of frustration and poor skill alignment.

Relationship management continuity is essential, which is achieved, in part, with good hiring decisions and prompt removal of those whose skills don't align with your program and position needs.

e-musing...is an episodic thought burst intended to seed ideas and to stimulate discussion among organizational leaders.