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## Recruitment & Workforce

# The right people on the bus stays the company's course

By Lori Dernavich

What makes a company great? Jim Collins, author of the book "Good to Great," says that great companies "first get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats. People are not your most important asset. The right people are."

The right people are those who fit into your organization and help you to accomplish your future goals.

You might think this is a topic you don't have to worry about at the moment, especially if you are a startup. But many companies fall into this classic case. One person has a great idea and draws in a friend with whom he has worked in the past. They then hire a friend of a friend who is an expert in a desired technology. Six months down the road, things haven't progressed as planned, everyone has a different idea about the direction of the company, the original passion is missing and the dream dies a slow death.

So who are the "right" people, and how do you get them on your bus? There are three things you must consider: job descriptions, the interview process and team design.

### Job descriptions

Where do you get your job descriptions? Competitors' websites? Monster.com? Do you even have them?

Most companies put little thought into them. Traditionally, jobs are defined as a certain set of skills and experiences, and prospective candidates are screened for those skills and experiences. But even if a candidate meets these requirements, you might still encounter turnover and poor performance.

The reality is that although a job requires a person to have a certain background and set of skills, it also requires the person to have predictable behaviors, talents, motivators and communication style. These are all unteachable qualities.

The job, in other words, has a personality. To get the right people on the bus, companies must first correctly define the personality of the job and then assess people with respect to the total job personality. Only then can a good fit be achieved.

When developing job descriptions, first think about what skills and experience a candidate will need today and in the future. Then identify those critical components that are unteachable. Keep in mind that you should have diversity on your team(s). Have a balance of detail-oriented people and "big picture" people, Ph.D.s and MBAs, fact-checkers and cheerleaders.

### The interview

The second thing you need is a solid interview process. Companies are often formed because founders have a passion for a technology or idea, but those people are not necessarily expert interviewers. It would be comparable to expecting your salespeople to code your software. Invest in some training for your staff or hire someone to help with the hiring.

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A good interview process employs behavioral interviewing. This is a method of asking probing questions about competencies based on a candidate's past and present performance in order to predict future ones. In today's market, most candidates have become expert interviewers and will tell you exactly what you want to hear. Going with your gut won't work.

### Designing the team

The last element to consider when getting the right people on your bus is team design - picking the right people and placing them in the right seats on the bus.

All of us can adapt to situations that aren't a perfect fit, but 99 percent of the time we will resort back to our normal way of doing something (i.e., once a disorganized person, always a disorganized person).

Don't set your people up to fail by putting them in roles that don't match their personalities. Examine the total employee and determine which role would best fit each person. Don't simply promote employees into manager roles because they have tenure and you want to prevent them from leaving. Place them in manager roles only if they possess the great manager qualities.

This will absolutely help you to retain employees, keep them motivated and increase their performance.

*Lori Dernavich is president of Step Ahead Consulting. She specializes in assessing executive teams and leadership to maximize performance. She can be reached at [www.stepaheadconsulting.com](http://www.stepaheadconsulting.com).*

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