

Hiring the Best People in Six Steps

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Most Agents find hiring Real Estate assistants challenging. There is a process that provides the highest possibility that an Agent can hire the best.

Step 1: Job Profile – Skills & Style

An Agent is destined to hire badly unless he or she is clear on the job profile. That is, the skills that will be required and personal style that is best suited for the job.

Skills: Will the job require computer skills, (what programs or applications), organizational skills, graphic design skills, communication skills, and/or selling ability?

Personal Style: Will the job require someone that is great with people, well organized, results oriented, a team player or a team leader?

The way to determine the required skills and style is writing a list of the tasks that will be assigned to the Assistant. Then review the list and document the skills and style; needed and best suited to the tasks. Also, have a trusted spouse, broker, or coach review it. Discuss with these trusted advisors the appropriate skills and style for the specific responsibilities and tasks of the position. This creates the job profile.

Personal Style: DISC Assessments

To understand and determine the best personal style many organizations use a DISC assessment. There are four basic personal styles.

1. Results Orientation
2. People Orientation
3. Team and Trust Orientation
4. Process Orientation

Each of these has advantages and disadvantage which make them best suited for specific job responsibilities.

The Agent may want all four orientations. Unfortunately human beings are not made that way. A wrench may be used as a hammer. But using the wrench as a hammer does the job poorly and ruins the wrench. A human being's make-up is appropriate for certain jobs and not for others. Mismatching the wrong style to the job frustrates both the employer and employee.

The First Step

So, the first step is to create the job profile. List the roles, jobs, tasks, and responsibilities. Then deduce the skills needed and the style best suited for those jobs, tasks, and responsibilities.

Warning: The Most Common and Costly Mistakes

Do not hire out of convenience.

Follow this entire process.

Do not hire because someone is available; because they are recommended even highly recommended or because they are related to the Agent or a friend.

There is always a temptation to hire this way because it is easy. Most often it is a costly mistake.

The available or recommended person might be a good fit. The Agent may end up hiring them. They need to go through the entire process along with the other candidates.

This ensures the Agent that he or she has the right person and it causes the Assistant to have greater respect for the Agent and the job.

Step 2: Locating the Best People

It is best for the Agent to tell everyone they trust, that they are looking; their Clients, Broker, other Agents, and friends. Remember, the Agent will still have everyone go through this entire process. In addition, advertise for the position in local publications and online.

Use the job profile described earlier to write an effective ad for the position.

Here is an example.

Administrative Assistant: 15 – 20 hrs/wk \$10 - \$15hr + bonus, high level computer skills & highly organized with ability to multitask, coordinate projects and work independently. Email resume to:

Or a simpler version:

Administrative Assistant: 10 – 15 hrs/wk \$10 - \$15hr + bonus, very computer literate, highly organized, excellent people skills and able to work independently. Email resume to:

The simpler the ad the more responses you will get. There are a lot of people looking for this type of position so put enough detail in the ad to pre-qualify the candidates.

Notice that there is no phone number. The Agent wants a candidate for an admin position to be able to e-mail a high

quality résumé. Also, the Agent does not have to respond to résumés that do not interest them.

Step 3: Reviewing Résumés

What is a quality resume? It is neat and well written. It represents the work product of the candidate. So, it must be a document that the Agent would be pleased to represent them. The work experience that indicates the skills required. There is consistency of employment and longevity previous jobs that shows reliability.

Step 4: The Phone Interview

Many Agents ignore this step or simply haven't considered it. It is a huge time saver and it provides valuable information. It is brief. It is an effective and efficient method to determine whether to schedule an interview in person.

The phone interview is based on two questions. One question is a litmus test question that asks specifically about a key required skill or ability. For example, if working independently is necessary the question is, "Tell me about the previous job that required you to work most independently."

The second question is specific to the resume. Perhaps, "There is a six month gap between jobs. Please tell me why."

These two questions open the conversation in which the Agent listens for two things. Obviously he or she listens to the answers. As importantly the Agent is determining if this is the voice, if this is the demeanor that he or she wants representing them on the phone in their business.

For the purpose of fair employment the Agent must be sure to ask the same questions on each phone interview and to make his or her decision completely based on legal and ethical considerations.

The conversation closes with the comment that the Agent will be in touch if they are interested in a personal interview. If the candidate is obviously strong the Agent can schedule an interview on the phone.

When the interview is scheduled the Agent explains that a DISC assessment will be sent to them and needs to be completed before the interview. Agents can search online for companies that provide DISC assessments. Or contact our office for further information on DISC

assessments. There is a fee. A link is sent to them by e-mail. The Agent will have the result within minutes of their completing it.

The DISC is not a strict determinant of qualification for the job. It is a guide to give insight into the personal style and likely tendencies of the candidate.

Step 5: First Personal Interview

After the phone interviews there are normally less than five candidates chosen for live interviews; often only one, two or three.

An hour is scheduled for each live interview. It is wise and necessary. The Agent is going to work with this person for thousands of hours. In a very real way the extent of the Agent's success will rely on this person's work. It is important to take the time to ensure that the best candidate is chosen.

Create a complete list of interview questions. It is best to ask the same question in different ways. Include real life situational questions that pose actual situations the Assistant is likely to encounter. Include challenging and difficult situations; for example when faced with a difficult client or making a difficult choice.

The interview must be long enough, with redundant questions so that the Agent is likely to experience what the person is really going to be like to work with day after day and at the end of a challenging day.

Warning: Ask. Don't Tell.

Be sure most of the time is spent with the candidate answering your questions. Do not talk much nor spend much time answering their questions until and unless you plan to hire them.

Another common and costly error, particularly among salespeople hiring assistants is to "sell" the position to the candidate. The result is that the Agent discloses the characteristics and skills they are looking for which corrupts the interview.

Preparing the Candidate

In the first interview, once the Agent determines that they may want to hire the candidate, the Agent then describes the parts of the job that may be particularly challenging, the "bad parts." The Agent asks for their agreement that they can and will handle each "bad part" and handle them well.

One example that I use personally is to say, "I want you to know that I have

fired two previous assistants and it was my fault both times. I appear like a nice guy. And I am a nice guy as long as the work is done well. I am even nice the first time mistakes are made.

But I have very little patience for repeated mistakes. In the past, I have not expressed this clearly enough. So, I would tolerate mistakes even say it was OK when it wasn't. Then I'd get fed up, just blow up and fire the person. I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't make that mistake again. So, even the smallest mistakes that bother me even a little I will point out as soon as I see the error. That is the healthiest way to work and ensure a long successful relationship. Can you handle that?"

Also, in the first interview prepare the candidate. Let them know that their job will change. It will change as the Agent's business grows; as the market or the myriad of other things from forms to laws change.

Explain that their job will be exciting and dynamic, seldom boring and often challenging. Then, again, ask whether they can accept and embrace that.

Upon hearing or reading this some Agents think, 'who would ever want this job?' The answer is; the person who will be very good at it. An Agent's livelihood depends on this assistant. Even if this assistant only works ten hour a week, the Agent's income depends on quality work.

Step 6: Second Interview

It is best to schedule a second interview. If you feel very strongly about the candidate, let them know that you feel it is a good match. Get their agreement. Discuss wages and benefits. Then schedule to meet them the next day so that both the Agent and the candidate can consider other questions or concerns.

At the second interview finalize compensation, benefits, if any, holidays, and expectations create a list of "rules." This may include, "Create business at every opportunity on the job and off." "Control expenses." "Under promise and over perform." "Take responsibility for errors." "Never talk negatively about the Agent to anyone except the Agent on the job or off." "Always look for new opportunities."

This second interview is the time for the Agent to set the attitude, dress, behavior and other "soft" rules of the job.

The Final Steps

Training, supervision, and motivation are obviously critical. These final steps are the subject of a future article.

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