

Hiring the Best People Part One

By Rich Levin
President of Rich Levin's Success Corps

Stewart Arulson sold over thirty homes last year. He sold over forty the year before that. In fact he has sold between thirty and fifty homes for the past five years. He is eager to get to another level, the next level.

When an Agent like Stewart calls me about coaching I know that his next level will occur from hiring the best people rather than from refining his skills, increasing his prospecting, or acquiring the hottest new lead generating tool or system.

Most Agents find hiring Real Estate assistants and buyer specialists challenging. There are specific skills and a process that we use with our clients that has proven to be extremely effective in hiring the best people.

Job Profile – Skills & Style

You are destined to hire badly unless you are clear on the skills and best personal style that will be required for the job.

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

Do you need someone that is great with people, well organized, results oriented, a team player or a team leader? This is personal style.

You clarify the skills and style required by writing down what you want that person to do. Then review it yourself and possibly with a trusted spouse, broker, or coach discussing the appropriate skills and style for the specific tasks and responsibilities of the position you wish to fill. I call this creating your job profile.

DISC Assessments

To understand and determine personal style we 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 disadvantages for specific job responsibilities. You may look and say that you 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 beings make-up is appropriate for certain jobs and not for others. Mismatching the style to the wrong job gets the job done poorly and “ruins” the person and possibly their relationship with you.

The First Step

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

Locating the Best People

There is always a temptation to hire people that are recommended to you. More often than not it doesn't work out.

So, I believe in addition to telling everyone you know that you are looking; I strongly suggest that you advertise for the position.

Once you have the job profile described earlier, it becomes very easy 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 I favor spending a little more on the ad and letting it pre-qualify the candidates.

Notice that there is no phone number. If the candidate for an admin position can't e-mail a resume' you don't want them. Also, I am not sure what the formal etiquette is but I suggest that you do not have to respond to resume's that do not interest you.

Reviewing Résumé's

What do you look for in a resume'? You want to see the level of neatness and

language that you would be pleased to represent you, the work experience that indicates the skills that you desire, plus consistency of employment and longevity on the job that shows reliability.

The Phone Interview

Many people ignore this step or simply haven't considered it. It is a hug time saver in addition to providing information you might not otherwise obtain. I suggest a brief phone conversation to determine whether you have a candidate you wish to take the time to interview in person.

Prepare two starter questions. One question is a litmus test question that gives you a clear indication of their suitability for the position. For example, if working independently is necessary you might ask, “Tell me about the 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 a conversation in which you listen for two things. Obviously you are listening to the answers to the questions. As importantly you are determining if this is the voice, if this is the demeanor that you want representing you on the phone in your business.

You can leave the conversation with the comment that you will be in touch if you are interested in a personal interview. Or you can schedule an interview.

As we schedule the personal interview we explain that a DISC assessment will be sent to them and we will need it complete before the interview. It takes ten to fifteen minutes.

We use a DISC assessment from Target Training International Ltd. This is sent to them by e-mail and you can have the result within minutes of their completing it. You can contact us for more information on this.

I do not use the DISC as a strict determinant of qualification for the job. I do use it as a guide to give me insight into the personal style and potential tendencies the candidate may have.

The First Personal Interview

After the phone interviews you will probably reduce the resumes and

candidates to less than five, often just two or three.

We schedule an hour for each interview. That may seem like a long time. It is wise and necessary. Consider that you are going to work with this person for thousands of hours. In a very real way you are placing the pace and extent of your success in their hands. Consider this and you will choose to take the time to ensure you choose the best candidate.

Have a complete list of interview questions prepared. Our list has 24 basic questions then we add real life situational questions that pose actual situations of what to do when faced with a difficult client or making a difficult choice.

One corporate executive told me that he interviews for at least a half hour if he is interested in hiring the person. He said, "Rich, they may be able to fool you for a while but after a half hour of answering your questions they wear down and you start to see what the person is really going to be like to work with day after day. I don't use a time measure. I do know that my list of question takes over a half hour to ask. It is built to ask the same thing a couple different ways.

By the way, please be sure most of the time is spent with the candidate answering your questions, not your answering theirs or your elaborating on the position.

Preparing the Best Candidate

This first personal interview is the best time to prepare them for any parts of the job that you feel may be particularly challenging for them. This is the time when you can tell them the "bad parts" and get their agreement that they can and will handle them.

At our first interview I said to my assistant, "*Rebecca, 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 to my new assistant as soon as I see the error. And that would be the healthiest way to work and ensure a long successful relationship. Can you live with that?"

I actually went on to say, "*And in the past when my assistants work was not at the level I wanted but I knew they had worked hard on it, I would say it was good and make the corrections myself. Again, I resented this more each time I did it until it became intolerable. So, if your work isn't everything I want it to be I am going to pass it back until you are operating up to the standards I want. Can you live with that as well?"*

When an Agent is looking for an administrative assistant I suggest at this first interview you prepare them for their job changing as you grow, as the market or the myriad of other things from forms to laws change. I suggest you explain that theirs will be an exciting and dynamic position, seldom boring and often challenging. As above I ask their agreement that they embrace that.

Some of you may be thinking, 'who would ever want to work with a boss like that. Everything I said was true and the person who would work with me was one that made it through my rigorous interview process. She knew she was selected for her work ethic and that she would be appreciated for that.

If you haven't met Rebecca she is at Rebecca@RichLevin.com. She will be happy to set up a time with one of our coaches or with me to discuss your hiring needs and your hiring process. She has been with me for over two years now. We have found greater success together and she knows she is going to grow with us.

The Final Steps

Other important elements to hiring the best people include structuring compensation at the outset with the job profile then at the second interview negotiating the compensation.

Training, supervision, and motivation are obviously very important. These last steps are subjects on their own and this article is already long enough. So watch for part two and we'll cover the balance.

Until then, live, love, and be happy.

To discuss hiring your best people or information about our coaching programs call 585-244-2700 or visit us on the web at RichLevin.com

Rich Levin is a coach, educator and speaker. He and his coaches specialty is

working with productive Real Estate Agents and Brokers taking them to their highest levels of production and performance in their business and in their lives.

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