

Whether a Talent Shortage or Surplus, You Still Need an Effective Hiring Process

By [Jay Forte](#)

At the start of 2020, many areas of the country had unemployment levels close to 4%, creating what many called a “war for talent.” But in just a few short weeks, everything changed. The financial impact of COVID-19 now has estimates showing that by year end, we will be near or above a 12% unemployment rate.

We effectively went from shortage to surplus, something that is reminiscent of the 2008 crash.

But one thing has not changed: you still need to have an effective hiring process to consistently and successfully hire the right employees. And this may be more important for the success and health of your organization than ever before.

You might be wondering how you could be thinking of hiring right now. Maybe you recently laid off or furloughed some high-performing employees. Maybe you had to close the doors for the time being. Maybe the pay cuts you asked everyone to take just aren't enough. It's hard to think of what comes next when the short-term experience is so heavy.



But here's something to consider: nothing has changed in the workplace regarding the need for employees who both fit the requirements of the role and the culture of your organization. Not only does the current talent surplus provide you with a greater selection when you're ready to hire again, but this moment may also provide you with the time to more significantly assess the effectiveness of your process to clearly define, source, interview and hire those who fit.

In coaching organizations how to hire for more than a decade, here are the four steps I recommend organizations focus on when creating an effective hiring process.

Step 1: Define accurately. You can't hire the right person for the job unless you know what the job requires. Consider developing a Performance Profile for each role. The Performance Profile summarizes the key responsibilities of the job as well as the specific tasks of those responsibilities. Having a better understanding of the job itself can help you identify the success attributes as well as the behaviors, skills, education and experience required to do the job well. This facilitates success in each of the remaining three parts of this hiring process because having greater clarity of the details of the role directly impacts the effectiveness of the rest of your efforts to attract and hire the right person for the job.

Step 2: Source Intentionally. With greater clarity of the required success attributes (behaviors, skills, experience, education), build a conventional and non-conventional sourcing strategy. Conventional sourcing is the approach many organizations use today, leveraging social media, job boards, job ads or recruiters. Non-conventional sourcing challenges the traditional approach to finding the right fit, like targeting people in similar roles in similar industries on LinkedIn, working with returning veterans or advertising at an event that draws people in with the behaviors or skills you need (such as posting an ad at a local 5k or half-marathon if the Performance Profile you created for your role identifies a requirement for a competitive, driven and disciplined person).

Additionally, create a career center on your website that attracts candidates to your site and shares information about your opportunities, what it is like to work for you and how you do work that matters.

Keep in mind that much of the workforce now looks for purposeful work, so sharing how your product or service benefits others, the role your organization has in the community and the value you build in the lives of your employees all help pull in great talent who are interested in your job opportunities.

Step 3: Interview Effectively. First, the interview team. Identify a small team of existing talent who are familiar with the role and the requirements to find the right fit. Leverage the strengths of those interested in participating in the interview process and define the segments they'll each be responsible for.

Second, interview segment creation. Today's most effective interviews assess the specific success attributes (i.e. behaviors, skills and experience) identified in the Performance Profile. Create behavior and talent-based interview questions, as well as tasks for the candidate to complete during the interview. This approach, called the Prove-it-to-Me Interview, is gaining popularity with progressive organizations since it requires the candidate perform some of the critical tasks of the role (in a mock or interview environment) to assess proficiency.

Though questions are important, having a candidate perform a task such as answering phones, creating a quality customer email, creating an Excel spreadsheet, providing feedback to an employee or reviewing a job site for things to applaud or correct, will reveal far more information about their abilities and skills than a summary they provide as they answer a question.

Step 4: Onboard Personally. With all the work it took to hire the right person, ensure new employees commit to staying with your organization with a personal approach to onboarding. We believe this is best done with a two-pronged approach: preboarding and onboarding. Preboarding (the period from the job offer to the new employee's start date) creates the opportunity to help the employee learn more about the organization, their team, the work they will do and, ultimately, to feel included. This also creates the time to learn more about the new employee to make their onboarding experience more personalized. The benefit of preboarding is that it improves the likelihood that new employees actually show up for their first day of work.

Then, focus on onboarding to ensure you include new employees quickly and personally into the organization by getting them connected to their team, work and community. Ensure the C-suite or some of senior management connect with new employees in their onboarding time to help them understand the business and their role and value in it.

Talent is the driver of your organization's success. Your approach to how you define, attract, interview and hire requires intention – a process and a plan – to ensure it is done well. The cost of a mis-hire can be several times the salary of the employee. It is expensive to get this wrong.

Take Action

COVID-19 did a lot to increase awareness about the workforce. You may have gained insight on your current team, seeing clearly who rallied and brought their A-game and who barely showed up. You may also see the talent surplus as an opportunity for the future of your organization.

When the world creates opportunity, how will you take advantage of it to prepare yourself for a stronger future?