

Hire Wisely: Labor First Responds to Exponential Growth with a New Approach to Hiring

[Labor First](#) is an award-winning organization that works to make healthcare better for retirees by helping them navigate and utilize their health insurance plans effectively. With a team that is dedicated to client service, the organization prides itself in service, empathy, patience, teamwork, resilience, care and creativity.

For this reason, Labor First seeks only those job candidates who are willing and able to put the care of clients and retirees first.

But taking the time to find the right candidate proved to be a challenge. Labor First grew steadily in the early years of its life, but over the past five years, growth exploded. The company had a significant increase in the number of clients looking for guidance and, with a 100% client retention rate, the organization needed to ensure they were bringing on people who could do the job, and do it well.



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Jacqueline Pontarelli, VP Human Resources, Labor First

The Challenge

Labor First’s approach to hiring was not working as well as it could. Promoting people to positions they weren’t ready for, coupled with the extensive time it took to screen candidates and complete interviews, hindered the team’s ability to think creatively in each of the day-to-day situations they encountered.

“Everyone dreaded being part of the interview team,” said Jacqueline Pontarelli, VP Human Resources at Labor First. “When I’d approach someone about an upcoming interview, I’d hear ‘Ugh, another one at 3?’ No one wanted to spend their day listening to people answer the same questions over and over.”

The frustration of the interview team was magnified when an interview needed to be done

for a candidate who was not a good fit. The screening process could only go so far to determine if a candidate would be a good fit for the role or the company; the existing process did not allow for a clear understanding of a person’s natural strengths and talents, nor did it allow for understanding if a candidate’s own values aligned to those of the company.

The Solution

Pontarelli recognized the inefficiencies with the existing hiring process and knew a change needed to be made. She had worked with The Forte Factor to complete the High-Impact Manager Training program in early 2020 and saw an immediate difference in the way middle management ran their teams, so she looked into

other options The Forte Factor could provide and found a solution: the [Hire Wisely Process](#).

The Hire Wisely Process is a defined 4-step program that presents an effective and efficient hiring process through guided education and practice with proven results. The Process

uses tools, worksheets and discussions to help hiring teams learn how to:

1. Define the tasks of the role and the performance attributes required for someone to be successful in the role.
2. Source talent through conventional and unconventional means, including how to build a sourcing strategy and using an online career center.
3. Interview candidates using both behavioral-based questions and the Prove-it-to-Me (activity and situations-based) Interview approach.
4. Pre- and On-board new talent quickly, personally and efficiently, with an emphasis on employee inclusion. This, in turn, leads to greater energy, performance and loyalty.

The Results

“The Hire Wisely Process has completely changed the way we hire and we noticed results immediately,” said Pontarelli. “We’ve already implemented the Performance Profile approach instead of job descriptions for the roles we most commonly hire for and we’re working on the others so every role at Labor First will have a clear summary of not only what the role requires, but what it takes for someone to be successful in that role.”

Job candidates also complete the Forte Factor’s Talent and Performance Style Assessment at

the defined step in the hiring process, which provides the hiring team with the information they need to know about a candidate’s strengths and liabilities, information rarely readily available on an application or a resume and critical to know to accurately assess candidate fit and success. This additional insight into a candidate helps screen out the candidates who aren’t a fit, and for the ones who are, determine which role they’d will be most successful in.

“The process has already paid for itself,” said Pontarelli, “and everyone on the team agrees.”