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you've got ATTITUDE!

JOHN HACKETT REMINDS employers that attitude counts in the search for would-be employees.

Many companies base their recruitment decisions on a candidate's skill and experience but often pay little attention to a candidate's attitude. Obviously, assessing a candidate's suitability based on their experience and qualifications is an important part of any candidate selection process but I'm sure most would agree that what we also seek in a new employee is someone who will fit in well with the team, our company goals and culture - someone with the 'right attitude'.

Attitude is not just personality, and particularly the personality a candidate might convey in an interview situation. A warm and friendly candidate in interview is certainly on the right track but we need to be sure this is not simply someone who has an effective interview technique. What we need to be looking for is evidence that there is depth to the optimistic personality they are displaying, and seek to learn their genuine outlook towards both work and life in general.

So how do we assess if someone has the right attitude for your organisation?

Targeting the right attitude requires an employer to identify candidates whose behaviour will fit with their company culture, reflect the work ethic of the team, and whose personality will project a positive company image to those they come into contact with day to day.

Therefore, the first step requires you to have a clear understanding of what defines your company culture but, equally importantly, you must also ensure that your company culture reinforces a positive management experience because you not only want to attract but also retain the right employees for your organisation.

A lot of the time we are relying on our gut instinct to determine if a candidate has the right attitude for our business but there are more comprehensive strategies that we can employ.

Formulate a series of specific and standardised questions that focus on the key attitudinal traits that you desire in your employees. Ensure that these questions focus on the candidate's past behaviour which, in turn, will highlight their previous (and more than likely current) attitude to their work and life. Also, always ask all candidates the

same questions and get them to provide practical examples from their experience to back up their answers.

Key factors you could consider addressing include communication ability, teamwork skills, flexibility, preparedness to use their initiative and take responsibility, their key motivators, leadership potential, level of ambition, etc.

Here are just a few examples of questions that could be asked to ascertain a candidate's attitudinal fit within your organisation:

"Tell me about a time when you took a different approach to solve an ongoing client or supplier problem."

"Tell me about a time you had to address conflict with a difficult co-worker, client or supplier."

"Tell me about a time when you had to resolve an issue on the spot with a client or supplier."

"Tell me about a time that you worked with your colleagues to successfully solve a problem."

"Tell me about a time when you worked 'beyond the call of duty' to achieve a great job and result for the company."

This additional candidate selection strategy should be seen as just that; an adjunct to the other areas of enquiry you will employ in an interview setting. And remember, the same questions that you direct to a prospective employee in interview can also be raised with a candidate's previous employers when undertaking a reference check process.

Despite that fact that it is very important to select new employees who have the right skills for the job, it is also true that it is usually a relatively easy task to teach new employees additional work skills they might require on the job. However, the same cannot be said when attempting to change an employee's attitude that doesn't fit in. Therefore, employing a strategy that can pinpoint the attitude you desire in your employees can not only make your life as an employer a little less stressful but, more importantly, can potentially mean the difference between a 'star performer' and a mediocre employee.

For further information contact Event Recruitment on (02) 9279 2019 or email info@eventrecruitment.com.au.