

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The answers will reveal a candidate's suitability for the job

FEW things can waste more valuable time and resources or cause more morale problems than mismatching the person with the job.

As a busy executive, you want to get the most out of your people while protecting your investment in their training.

Good employees are discovered, not by magic, but through good hiring practices, and smart hiring starts with smart interviewing. After you have asked the usual "résumé" questions — job history, education, salary expectations — probe your prospect with questions that will illuminate their hopes, goals, inclinations and reservations.

Here are some suggestions:

■ **"Tell me about yourself. All the exciting and interesting things."**

People offer revealing replies to this question. Many people, even some top executives, say, "Oh, there's nothing exciting about me." You learn a lot about people's self-esteem when they answer that question.

■ **"If you could wave a magic wand and create a perfect environment to work in, what would it be like?"**

Suppose the potential employee answers, "I don't like to have someone breathing down my neck. I like to be left on my own, to make up my mind how to do things." You know immediately that this is the wrong person for a job that's heavily supervised. Choose someone



Know something about a person's hobbies to determine if the job demands are going to be stressful. - AFPpic

who says, "I enjoy a lot of feedback" instead.

Consider both the demands of the job and the working environment. If a quiet, personable individual replies, "I love working with people, but I'd like to have my own space," be sure that is possible. Work areas quickly become private domains and rightly so, or people wouldn't take pride in them. But if the job requires sharing a table with the coffee machine, your employee may not last or do the job well.

■ **"Describe the best boss you ever had. What made him or her so special? Describe the worst boss."**

If the description of the worst boss sounds anything like you, you know that person won't be happy working with you.

■ **"What's your hobby?"**

You may want to know something about a person's private life to determine if the hours or job demands are going to be stress-

ful. For instance, if you need an employee who is bright and alert at an early hour and his hobby will keep him up late on week nights, you both may have a problem. Or if her hobby requires occasional time off to participate, the time to discuss the appropriateness of this is now.

Before you sit down with a potential employee, ask yourself:

■ **"What am I offering this person besides money?"**

What opportunities for growth, excitement, achievement, and fulfilment go along with the paycheck? Enthusiasm, motivation, and persistence are rarely proportional to salary. Often they are in inverse ratio. Self-motivated employees are great, but it never hurts to highlight some incentives.

But once you have got the right people in the right jobs, your own job still isn't over. You should ask yourself:

■ **"How do I keep my people highly motivated, productive, and eager to come to work in the morning?"**

Your answers can be critical to a happy, productive, low-turnover organisation.

Here are some suggestions.

> Start by making the job fun whenever possible to keep employees from getting stale;

> Share the big picture with them, so they realise their contribution is part of an important whole; and

> Solicit their feedback and act on it to prove to them that they are really making a difference.

Then watch your people respond with hard work, loyalty and enthusiasm.

● **ARTICLE** by Patricia Fripp, a San Francisco-based executive speech coach, sales trainer, and award-winning professional speaker.

● **FOR** more on jobs, please refer to category 515 in *Metro Classifieds*.