

HR in the Gulf Region:**People are Successful, Not Organizations**

Presented by Dave Millner

MR. MILLNER: Hi, I'm Dave Millner. I want to talk about the fact that I think it's people who are successful, not organizations. Now, to my way of thinking, there are really only two ways to improve an organization's performance—that's to nurture and grow the talent that you already have within it, or to hire a new talent. That sounds really simple, but as we all know, making the statement is the easy bit; doing something about it—that's the real challenge.

All too often recruitment's about filling a vacancy, no more, no less. But even more so today, and certainly when the economy really picks up again across the Gulf, organizations don't fill vacancies, they hire talent. If you don't have that mindset and focus on just filling the vacancy, you're going to end up with someone else's problems. It's a really important attitude shift that will need to take place to ensure that employer has this mindset and doesn't get immersed in the inevitable, short-term operational challenges—the quick fix. Many organizations seem to focus, even now, on filling vacancies quickly and cheaply despite the fact that at the current time, there is more choice available of quality people for a job than probably ever before. Now, I do sympathize with this dilemma, and I know only too well the business drivers that make this imperative. But I have to say, HR—you haven't helped this, particularly by promoting the time-to-hire target as a real way of measuring their success. My view is you can always do things quicker, faster. But the real issue is not about how long it takes to hire someone; the real issue is about the quality of the hire. That's a far more meaningful measure and that's always going to drive more long-term, more successful organizations.

I've worked with many organizations, well, a few I suppose, over the past 25 years or so that really do appear to have it worked out and have really sorted this dilemma out in their own minds. Now in these organizations, everyone you come into contact with from the very first impression that the receptionist gives you, all have a real passion and pride in what they're doing and what their organization stands for. The interesting thing is that whoever you meet in these organizations, this impression hits you every time. The question I have to ask myself is that it must be possible for organizations to make a start in this direction by at least identifying and then separating out those roles where they should be thinking solely in terms of hiring talent as opposed to simply filling a vacancy. It's a part of the succession planning debate, I know. And whilst most organizations are really quite weak in implementing this critical process across their businesses, surely it's a debate that it isn't difficult to have. It doesn't mean that those lower-level, less complex roles aren't important—it merely allows you to ensure that you know where the jobs are that are critical to your business success and that these are the jobs that you need to give some serious thought about the type of talent that's required to fill them.

Once an organization can start to think in terms of hiring talent rather than simply filling a vacancy, two key things should realistically happen. Firstly, hiring of people should become a more business critical process, where the key capabilities and experiences necessary to make a lasting, rather than just an immediate short-term contribution, should be given a higher priority. I've lost count at how many times I've seen organizations creating a job advertisement at the last minute with a list of key skills needed for a job—basically because they haven't got a job profile, or a performance profile as I call them, that shows what's expected from the job in the first place. Hiring managers must recognize more clearly the overall value to the business of getting it right, and just as importantly, the cost of getting it wrong.

From Kenexa's research, the customer bad hiring decision can yet be anything between 1.5 and 2.5 times the job holder's salary—that's serious money. Secondly, where an organization attracts talent and the recruitment methods they adopt, also have a direct effect upon the caliber of a person ultimately hired. Does an organization do it itself? Or does it outsource it to expert organizations to do it for them? The quality of the recruitment process in terms of time, methods adopted and the impression given to candidates throughout every stage of the process, are critical to getting the best talent you can. It can be done in-house or it can be outsourced. But that's the underlying message that needs to be retained.

Now whereas previously filling vacancies often meant simply recruiting in the cheapest way possible, hiring talent should encourage proper consideration of the whole process. Once it becomes widely accepted that sourcing talent is absolutely key to an organization's business success, it will lead to quality taking precedent over simply doing it in the cheapest and quickest way possible.

So deciding beforehand the right balance between quality of the hiring process and the value for money, the cost is absolutely crucial. It's a simple fact that organizations aren't successful. It's the people within them that are. Therefore, make sure your process reflects that fact.

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