

Volume. The mere mention of volume when it comes to hiring can produce sweaty palms in most hiring managers. When I think of doing anything in volume, an unforgettable picture comes to mind. I think of the “I Love Lucy” episode in which Ethel and Lucy go to work for a [chocolate factory](#). They struggle to assemble the few chocolates they are given, and then their supervisor increases the quantity of chocolates they have to make. Eventually, they crash. They can’t handle the volume.

High-volume hiring is also intense. It can be challenging and overwhelming in any industry. To top that off, our present economy leaves little room for expensive mistakes when it comes to human capital decisions. No pressure.

Employers that hire high volumes of employees have specific challenges to face when it comes to hiring. One of the greatest concerns in a high volume environment is safe hiring. High Volume Employers (HVE’s) know that if they don’t take measures to conduct pre-employment screening and exercise due diligence in hiring, it is a statistical certainty that they are sitting ducks for expensive litigation, workplace violence, false claims, theft, embezzlement and economic loss. On the other hand...most HVE’s are facing budget restraints. A balance has to be met.

The Danger

Let’s look at the facts. Just one bad hire can cost a firm literally millions. Studies show that screening reveals criminal records for up to 10% of job applicants and at least one-third of all resumes contain material falsehoods. For food establishments, manufacturers, hotels and other businesses that have a national brand, one negative employee-caused event can result in significant damage to the company brand. Who has the time or the money for that?

The Cost

Large hourly employers face enormous financial and logistical challenges in implementing safe hiring programs. Screening large numbers of candidates can be expensive and time consuming. HVE’s tend to work in industries with large numbers of hourly, seasonal, temporary or contract workers and/or significant turnover. With that in mind, how can these employers protect themselves without breaking the bank?

- a company-structured application
- a phone screen
- thorough behavioral interviews with at least two hiring managers
- in-house skills testing
- reference checks



By intensifying the front-end of the process, you can eliminate most candidates that could have been a problem, anyway. Only when the candidate has passed the front end of your process, do you need to perform a background check. You can save screening costs by only doing a background check on candidates you are ready to hire. Finally, be sure to keep several qualified candidates in your pipeline in case some of your final choices fall through.

All Aboard

The most important thing you can put into place for this strategy is a system. If you recall, Lucy and Ethel were pushed into a room with no training, and given no set strategy for getting the job done. They had the tools, but no instruction. Make sure that your entire hiring staff is on board with the new strategy and are trained to interpret applications and conduct interviews with high perception and efficiency.

Evaluate

After your system has been in place for 30-60 days, plan to evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of your program. Check and re-check attrition rates and causes, and begin to adjust your plan to improve in weak areas. Most importantly, communicate any changes to your plan quickly and clearly, company-wide. Let your hiring managers know that a portion of their compensation and advancement will be based on the attention they pay to the hiring process. Organizations typically thrive in areas that are measured, audited and rewarded.

We are heading into 2010, and everyone is looking forward to continued recovery. However, we have to prepare ourselves for the new expectations that accompany a downturn of the magnitude we have just experienced. Corporations are already beginning to hire again, but with the cost of turnover presenting at 1.5 times the salary for a position...we don’t have the time or the money for hiring mistakes. Now is the time to innovate new screening strategies with your team. The team you build now will be the team that evaluates and trains the new hires once this recovery speeds up. Prepare them for success.