

Finding the Needle in the Haystack

Who is the perfect hire?

By Robert Meier

How do you find that one-in-a-million employee, the perfect candidate whose past results prove they can contribute to your organization? Let's start by defining a perfect hire as one who can *prove*—not just imply—how their past job performance benefited their employer financially, operationally and strategically.

When you want to add new staff or replace someone, you have to dig through a blizzard of resumes. This process can often prove to be a daunting task; however, when reviewed with a shrewd eye, however, resumes can eliminate time wasted interviewing inappropriate candidates. The key to finding the “needle in the haystack” is to identify resumes where the candidates validate their capabilities, results and contributions.

A typical hiring manager looks for exceptional performers, or those who are part of the top 20% of their peer group. Reading resumes is a little like studying weather charts. There's a whole lot of information, facts and statistics, but often without the underlying data necessary to make an accurate forecast. Using this same analogy, we can group candidates into three categories: *Cloudy*, *Sunny* and *Clear*. The *Cloudy* prospect finds it difficult to communicate anything understandable or compelling and tend to focus their resume on highlighting functional skills—as though the resume is a job description. The *Sunny* prospect uses results—usually a bunch of bright points of success, yet omit the details that validate those results. The *Clear* prospect is the one that realizes that results are critical and that the hiring manager needs concise explanations of the strategies used to gain results.

Here is an example of responsibilities described by three prospects for a Business Development Manager (BDM) position for a medical device company:

Cloudy BDM

Responsible for supporting general managers of all company operating units in Asia Pacific to analyze and grow their businesses.

Sunny BDM

Grew business 18% annually in a market growing 3-5%.

Clear BDM

Created the first-ever Regional marketing program, a strategy that uses clinical research to prove our product-line advantages. Hired four regional sales managers and trained 100 account executives on how to use the \$1.5m clinical studies as a selling tool.

Result: Sales increased by \$10mm or 18% from \$55 million to \$65 million a year.

Although the *Clear* prospect used a lot more words, he knew this was his cornerstone strategy to building revenues and was worth the extra ink.

There are typically 200+ resumes for each good job opening, and a hiring manager has the time to interview 4 or 5 candidates. Clear prospects take it upon themselves to make the evaluation process simple by pre-selling their qualifications and offering valid information to support their successes.

The main objective in the hiring process should be to invite only top candidates in for an interview—those who can explain their accomplishments clearly and believably through clear statements and plausible statistics, demonstrating their ability to execute tangible results for an organization.