Making great hires: How GE recruits talented professionals who have an impact
Finding experienced professionals to help drive the business is a challenge every organization faces. It’s essential to the success of a company that experienced professionals are pursued who have the required skill sets and past performance, but who also are well poised to make a positive impact. This requires recruiting, interviewing and assessment processes that are tailored to identifying the right professional for the position who also is likely to accomplish shared long-term career objectives.

More companies today are recognizing the importance of making great hires, as the consequences of not being fully staffed are increasingly felt in competitive markets.

“When critical positions are left open, it costs the company in productivity, efficiency and real dollars,” says Tracy Hughes, U.S. Talent Recruitment Leader at GE Capital.

At GE, we’ve developed processes for seeking out and hiring the best possible professionals to help our company move forward. By focusing on finding the right hire as well as on the candidate experience throughout the recruiting, interviewing and assessment phases, we’ve built a strong talent recruitment program that gives us a competitive edge.

**Eyes on the prize - talent**

It’s a job that’s never finished; when done correctly, recruiting experienced professionals is a constant process. While we rely on our recruiters who are dedicated to finding talent, we also encourage all of our managers to be on the lookout for experienced professionals who could make a positive impact at our company, even when fully staffed. Managers should focus on making industry connections through special interest groups, events, conferences and meetings, and work to keep in touch with those contacts to build a network of passive candidates.

“The mindset that everyone is a recruiter is important,” says Hughes.
In the past few years we’ve put a stronger emphasis on recruiters who work for GE, instead of outsourcing this function. These professionals have the advantage of being able to leverage their experience in recruiting while also having in-depth knowledge of the industry and of our company. This has proven particularly useful in recruiting passive candidates, or professionals who aren’t necessarily looking for a new position but have the experience and skills that would meet our requirements.

We’ve also learned the importance of leveraging social media and analytics tools to identify great passive talent, and maximize initial and ongoing efforts to ultimately drive conversion of high-quality prospects. Passive candidates are more responsive when they understand an organization’s differentiated strengths and the advantages offered over their current roles. Leveraging technology to reach these candidates, as well as to interest them in specific opportunities, is important.

Once top talent is identified, presenting a strong value proposition for the position helps attract candidates. Because GE is a multinational company engaged in many different businesses, we are able to leverage our brand and offer candidates a rich career path and the ability to use their talents in a variety of industries. Every company has advantages to offer candidates; the better organizations are at communicating those advantages, the more talent they will attract.

Interviewing: Listen. then ask
The interview process is an important way that hiring managers gather information about candidates as part of an overall assessment. At GE we put the same amount of energy into making a hiring decision as we would any other type of sourcing decision, to ensure that our resources are invested wisely. This means putting in the time and effort to:

- Know what critical experience, knowledge, skills and abilities are required for the candidate to succeed in the position before the interview
- Make the most of limited interview time by formulating questions in advance that will produce the information required to arrive at a fact-based decision. Also know what are considered to be good answers to these questions, and ask the same set of questions for all interviewees so they can be compared against common criteria
- Focus on assessing critical experiences, knowledge and skills needed to successfully perform the job
- Ask past behavior and/or situational questions that have been identified in advance. Use secondary or “drill down” questions to clarify and expand upon the interviewee’s answers as needed
- Avoid asking irrelevant questions that offer no insight into the job seeker’s ability to perform specific job-related tasks (e.g., who is a leader you admire and why?)
- Avoid questions that can be misconstrued as biased (e.g., “do you plan to have children?”)
- Listen. Interviewees should listen for 80 percent of the interview and talk for only 20 percent. They should listen carefully for answers with specific examples of what the interviewee has done and the results achieved
- If you take notes, make sure they are job-related, factual and specific. Record the critical elements of a job seeker’s answers so that there is a record of the circumstances, primary actions and results described. Notes help us to remember and readily share facts, and enable justification of assessments based on facts, not instinct.

For this reason, all notes taken in association with the interview process should be retained

Beyond the resume
While it’s important that potential hires possess the skills and experience to match the requirements of the position, there’s also the question of whether a candidate has what it takes to succeed and fulfill shared long term career goals. Determining this is more complex than running through a checklist of qualifications, and requires interviewing managers to ask questions that go beyond the resume, such as requesting specific examples of how a candidate worked through a challenge, led an initiative or dealt with a crisis. Often the answers to these open-ended questions regarding how a person behaved in the past are good predictors of future behavior and performance. Situational or hypothetical questions — asking how a candidate would respond when faced with certain circumstances — can also help gauge whether a person would be successful in the long-term.

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— Tracy Hughes, U.S. Talent Recruitment Leader at GE Capital
At GE, our hiring managers ask candidates questions that tie back to our Growth Values — Clear Thinker, Expertise, External Focus, Imagination & Courage, and Inclusiveness — to gain such insight. For example, an interviewer might ask how a recent change in the industry impacted their current or recent role in order to understand their external focus. The answers to such questions often can be indicative of whether the candidate will perform well and find job satisfaction.

“If people don’t feel valued, there is a risk of them not giving 100 percent. You can bring in someone who does the job, but if they don’t see your company as a long-term place where they can thrive, then you’re not going to get the most out of them,” says Hughes. “And for a manager that’s one of the most difficult things to manage, because it will lead to performance issues.”

It’s important that the overall interview experience is a good one both for hires and non-hires, says Hughes. For example, while it’s good practice for multiple people at the hiring organization to spend time getting to know candidates. Companies don’t want to make candidates feel like their time is being wasted by scheduling too many interviews.

“There is competition for talent. When you’ve got individuals who are highly marketable and can make a choice of where they want to work, you have to not only sell the company, career opportunity and the role, but also make it a positive experience for the candidates,” says Hughes. And for the candidates who don’t end up hired, they should walk away with a positive impression of the company because they are potential customers, partners or future candidates for different positions, she says.

Assessment: A team effort
Making the right hiring decision should be a group effort. First and foremost, the preferred candidate must possess the experience and skills that meet those documented in the job description. But at this level, it’s typical to have multiple candidates who can do the job. That’s where having discussions to drill down on specific skills or competencies, as well as unique needs of the team, business or department can help. Such dialog helps maintain hiring standards while ensuring fair and accurate decisions.

“It’s important that the interview team explore different avenues of a candidate’s skills, knowledge and abilities, so that managers aren’t just relying on their own assessment but are getting well-rounded feedback,” says Hughes. “At the end of the day hiring decisions have to be made on qualifications. A well-rounded panel is key to ensuring that.”

With preparation, dedication and commitment, companies of all sizes can develop effective talent recruitment strategies that will serve them for years to come. Understanding the importance of hiring the right person for both the job and the company will lead to more successful hires.

How interviewing experienced talent differs from interviewing new recruits

At GE, we acknowledge that there’s a difference between interviewing a professional who has extensive experience and interviewing a recent graduate or someone at the early stages of their career. Therefore, we tailor the interviewing process for experienced candidates accordingly:

• The manner and style of interviewing is more conversational and engaging, as opposed to a line of direct questioning. This helps the experienced candidate feel respected, while still allowing the interviewer to collect the information needed to make an effective assessment

• Personalization plays an important role. When interviewers can demonstrate to experienced candidates that they have done their homework by acknowledging past experiences, employers and achievements, interest in and respect for the candidate is shown

• Understanding it’s a two-way conversation is also key. At this level, the experienced candidate is also interviewing the company, the position and the manager as much as he or she is being interviewed. Interviewers should be prepared with the information about the position and company needed to make the best possible impression

• Persistence pays off. Experienced professionals may require a number of attempts before contact is made, since they are typically busy and aren’t likely to respond during core business hours. It’s important that interviewers make themselves available before and after work or over the weekends
Getting to Yes

In today’s market, companies need to offer candidates a great recruitment experience, as well as a competitive compensation and benefits package. Some best practices to help make recruitment positive for potential hires:

- **Accurately define job qualifications up front** — understand the needs as well as the market realities of the geography or salary range. Know the “must-have” vs. “nice to have” qualifications, and hire based on how well candidates fulfill these qualifications, not on how they compare with other candidates.

- **Always keep the candidate experience in mind** — ensure candidates feel their interviews are important, and limit the number of interviews per candidate to ensure maximum efficiency. Remember to sell the company and position to the interviewee as well as evaluate him or her. Communicate timeline expectations and inform candidates of decisions.

- **Networking with top talent is everyone’s responsibility** — everyone should be considered a lead for the next great hire, don’t limit networks to people in the same industry or geography.

- **Make filling the position a priority** — move quickly to avoid losing top candidates. Don’t require 100-percent consensus among interview participants to make a decision.

- **Get to Yes** — make an offer that the candidate will accept quickly. Be prepared to move fast to get the right candidate, and come prepared with answers to important questions.

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