Entelechy's Newsletter for Trainers, Managers, HR Professionals and Others Responsible for the Performance of Others

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RETURN ON TRAINING INVESTMENT

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Return on investment. Payback. Prove it.

One of the most challenging — and rewarding — experiences we face as purveyors of performance is justifying the return on the client's training investment. Most people intuitively know that training is a good thing but find it difficult to explain how training will positively impact the bottom line.

We at Entelechy begin with the bottom line — performance — and customize our training to meet our client's performance requirements. In fact, much of our training is devoted to helping each participant with his or her unique problems, opportunities, and goals. For example, in *High Performance Sales*, participants apply their skills and knowledge to a Personal Breakthrough Opportunity (PBO), a prospect/account that represents significant revenue potential which they normally would not have pursued. By the end of the program, many participants have achieved their PBO and are pursuing others. Talk about your return on investment!

We're proud of our continual devotion to your bottom line. In this issue of the newsletter, we've provided you with our Return On Training Investment Calculator, which you can use to determine the bottom line impact of training — or any other venture designed to increase performance.

Prove it to yourself. Entelechy's training can help you improve your bottom line. And we'll give you the Return On Training Investment calculator FREE to prove it. Entelechy's Return On Training Investment Calculator is a 4-page pdf file that will help you determine your training initiative's return on investment by examining ALL of the associated benefits and costs. Just go to our website (www.unlockit.com), click on Free Stuff, and download your free copy today.

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HIRING THE BEST

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Hiring? Are you nuts? We're laying off folks, not hiring!! The Florida sun must have fried your brain while you were on vacation!!

I hear you and suggest that with today's economy, hiring the BEST people – even if it's only one – can be a difficult and sometimes company-altering endeavor. While there may be many people in the candidate pool, finding one with the skills and attributes to fit into your organization requires effort.

In this section, we will discuss the tools that effective hiring managers use to separate the best from the rest and to hire those who will contribute in the short term as well as for years to come.

PART I

In today's competitive environment, hiring has increasingly become a key link in establishing and maintaining your company's edge. By attracting and hiring the best people, your company can move quickly and grow steadily. On the flip side, however, poor hires cost you precious time, money, and opportunity. Poor hiring could cost you your company.

Unfortunately, hiring candidates who can do what they say they can do is getting tougher. A whole industry has sprung up in the past ten years helping job seekers land a job — sometimes at all costs. You can't afford to hire someone who can't 1) do the job, 2) do it with minimal direction, or 3) do it quickly. Fortunately, there are techniques that you can use to ensure that the candidate you select can do the job. We will examine four techniques here — demonstrations, simulations, problem solving, and testing — and introduce a powerful interviewing technique — High Performance Interviewing — that we will cover in more detail in the next section.

Ideally, the best way to see if candidates are able to do the job is to have them actually do the job. To have them, in other words, demonstrate their ability to do the work. Sales representatives can sell something; software engineers can code something; machine operators can operate a machine; secretaries can answer phones or type a memo; etc.

Sometimes demonstrations are not possible or appropriate. The next best thing to a demonstration is a simulation. A simulation is like a demonstration except that the situation is not real. In sales or customer service, for example, you can role play an angry customer and have the candidate respond to your anger. Another example of a simulation is having a telesales representative call you (the “customer”) to sell you something. Or, if you’re interviewing for a training position, you could have the candidate teach you something.

Sometimes demonstrations and simulations are not feasible. Then problem solving might provide you with confidence in the person’s ability. Problem solving is a technique many interviewers use to see how adept the candidate is in addressing real or hypothetical problems and challenges. It is one step removed from simulation because in problem solving the candidate describes what s/he would do rather than simulating what s/he would do. A cautionary note: problem solving by itself may only indicate what a person SAYS s/he will do in a given situation, not how they actually will or did behave. Still, problem solving is a good way to check a critical skill.

Tests are also sometimes helpful as part of the hiring process. Psychological tests provide a way for some companies to identify key characteristics in an individual. Other ways of testing include asking specific knowledge questions such as “What commands might you use to initiate a subroutine?” or “What are the advantages and disadvantages of common network protocols?”

However, sometimes demonstrations, simulations, problem solving, or testing might not be feasible; at the very least they — by themselves — are inadequate. Interviewing is required. Effective interviewing requires that you have sharp probing and listening skills to get the candidate to describe or explain relevant experiences from which you can draw highly predictive information. We call this type of interviewing High Performance Interviewing, which we will cover in more detail in the next section.

PART II

In Part I we found that ideally we want candidates to demonstrate to us that they can do the actual job. ("Call a prospect. Gather account information.") Because of limitations, however, we may have to settle for a simulation where the candidate performs in a simulated environment. ("I'll play the prospect. Sell me something.") Often simulations are not feasible and we must settle for problem solving. ("Tell me what you would do if an angry customer called....") And while testing — the fourth technique discussed in Part I — can assure you that the candidate knows the information, you don't have time to quiz a candidate on all the critical information he or she must bring to the job.

Therefore, we resort to the traditional interview. Can we maximize the traditional method of hiring candidates — the interview — to hire more effectively? The answer is, "YES!"

Many interviews result in a mutual exchange of meaningless information and a "gut feeling." The process we call High Performance Interviewing (HPI) helps you gather meaningful, predictive information and provides substance to your "gut feeling."

HPI is based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. HPI is designed to extract highly predictive, accurate target data from candidates. Target data is:

- Behavioral: The data must be about what the candidate did, said, thought, or felt. We do not consider what the person "was responsible for" as target data since it doesn't tell what the person actually did. The data must be about the candidate. We do not consider "we" data target data since we don't know what the candidate did.
- Volunteered by the candidate: Target data comes from the candidate's memory, not the interviewer's suggestions or prompting.
- About a specific past situation: Focused on what actually happened, not on what might have happened, or what generally happens. Having the candidate state what they would do in specific scenarios may point out problem solving and quick thinking but may not predict what the person actually has done in similar situations. Only data based on past situations is considered target data.

Step 1: General Opening Statement or Question

Begin gathering target data with general opening questions or statements. The purpose of this step is to get the candidate to talk about what we want them to talk about. Here are examples of general openings. (The phrases in parentheses are examples of specific skills I might be looking for in a candidate.):

- "I'm looking for (examples of when you managed multiple priorities)."
- "I'd like to hear more about (your experiences in delegating)."
- "I'd like to find out how (you respond to autonomy and little direction)."
- "Can you think of a time when (you had a difficult deadline to meet)?"
- "Do you recall an instance where (you were aware that another member of the team was not pulling his or her own weight)?"
- "Is there an example of (a challenge you faced in coding a new module)?"

Step 2: Get Deeper

The next step in gathering target data is to get deeper in those areas important to the job. Questions that help you get deeper include:

- "How did it start?"
- "What were the key points in the situation?"
- "What were the results?"
- "What happened first/then/next?"
- "What did you do/say/feel/think?"
- "How did you prepare/follow-up?"
- "What do you believe was the most important event/decision/activity during that time?"

Here are several guidelines for getting deeper:

- Ask what the candidate did, said, felt, thought.
- Separate the candidate's actions from others' actions.
- Ask "who", "what", "when", "where", and "how".

What is your role throughout this questioning? Take notes to help you guide the conversation. Listen. Ask for clarity when necessary. Remember, we cannot assess a candidate's qualifications if WE do all the talking!

What You Don't Do

It is important that you as interviewer don't:

- Ask leading questions: Leading questions give you exactly what you want to hear. And they typically result in inaccurate data.
- Accept generalizations: Generalizations don't tell you what the candidate did. Target data must be specific.
- Accept collectivisms: Collectivisms are the use of we, the group, my team, etc. They don't tell us what this individual — the candidate — did. Again, target data must be specific.
- Assess the candidate before hearing all: Prejudging a candidate before the data is heard is a serious mistake. The brain can easily "find" data to support its prejudgment. Therefore, stick to the script; write down what you hear as the interviewer. The time for assessment comes later.

How To Get Back On Track

Because HPI is a dialogue, it is sometimes easy for the candidate to digress. It is your responsibility as interviewer to pull the candidate's discussion into more relevant and appropriate direction. Here are some pithy phrases that will rein in or focus the digresser:

- "If I was there, what would I see?"
- "You said there were meetings. Could you tell me about one?"
- "Can you give me the details?"
- "Let's backtrack a bit."
- "Who do you mean by 'we'?"

When you've gathered an appropriate amount of data for a particular skill, repeat the HPI technique until you are satisfied with the results. Then close the interview.

This information also comes from *Superior Selection and Interviewing*, a module in Entelechy's *High Performance Management* program. You can purchase the source files to this training and customize the training to meet your company's specific needs. Check out all you get at http://unlockit.com/HPM-TSI.htm.

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MAILING AND PRIVACY INFORMATION

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Send this newsletter to your friends and colleagues who may be involved in training and the performance of others and could benefit from FREE performance tips, tools, and techniques.

Terence Traut, President of Entelechy "unlocking potential"

ttraut@unlockit.com

phone: 603-424-1237

fax: 603-424-6361

http://www.unlockit.com/