



Hiring on Attitude - Quality vs Quantity

In uncertain times, it can be tempting to pull back on growth strategies and tighten the reins. While restructuring the business can be seen as an 'easy' way of reducing both overheads and staffing risk, it may not necessarily take the business forward.

However, by focusing on having the right staff (as opposed to headcount) businesses can continue to thrive, even in tough times.

In a recent article in the Harvard Business Review ("HBR"), the ethos of hiring for attitude was once again canvassed. Although this ethos is not new, it is certainly gaining more mainstream attraction in businesses both in New Zealand and overseas. The challenge for employers is to look outside the norm, beyond what has been done before, and get to the heart of what makes their particular business tick.

In the HBR article, Dr Gwande (doctor, researcher, author) stated his research findings that in "*high impact organisations that are changing the game in their fields, [the businesses have] adopted a range of strategies and business models... but they all agree on one core 'people' proposition: **They hire for attitude and train for skill***". These companies believe that one of the biggest challenges they face is to fill their ranks with executives and front-line employees whose personal values are in sync with the values that make the organisation tick. That same challenge is no different for businesses in New Zealand.

To really understand what the core values of a business are, its leaders need to spend time reflecting on the business and what makes it successful, as well as their role in the business. This will require working 'on' the business (as opposed to 'in' it), building a deep understanding of the company's strategy, and understanding of the roots/history of the business. The benefits of this process cannot

be underestimated. It is only when leaders know and understand the core values of the business, that hiring for attitude and fit can really be achieved.

For example, the game-changers at Southwest Airlines, which has prospered for nearly 40 years by challenging conventional wisdom in the airline business, thoroughly embraced the “hire for attitude” philosophy. Their recruitment philosophy was explained: *“The first thing we look for is the ‘warrior spirit’ [because] much of our history was born out of battles — fighting for the right to be an airline, fighting off the big guys who wanted to squash us, now fighting off the low-cost airlines trying to emulate us...anyone we add has to have some of that warrior spirit...we would rather take an eager, hungry, customer-oriented mind and mould it to what works well at Southwest, than try to change the habits of someone who’s come up through an organization that views life differently”.*

Hiring for fit and attitude means that **well-being matters**. Who a candidate is as a person matters. Interviews clearly matter, as do reference checks (which in my view are the biggest key to understanding a potential employee) and personality profiling. By hiring someone to fit the shape and heart of your organisation, you will increase the effectiveness of your team and this in turn will drive the performance of your business.

If you require any assistance in preparing suspension clauses or conducting suspension and disciplinary action, please contact The Engine.

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