



with CREATIVE MANAGEMENT! By Bud Haney

Is there a skills gap in your organization? Do you have vacant positions requiring high-level skills that are hard to find? According to a recent study from CareerBuilder, 38 percent of employers cannot find qualified candidates to fill a position. The study found that the top five areas most difficult to recruit for are as follows:

- /// Engineering
- /// C-level positions
- /// Information technology
- /// Research and development
- /// Production

Candidates are also having a hard time finding jobs for which they are qualified. Nearly two-thirds of candidates state that they have applied for positions even when they know they don't possess the required skills.

Skills gaps in today's industries can hurt organizations. In the study, CareerBuilder CEO Matt Ferguson said, "Prolonged vacancies can result in lower-quality work, lower sales, and reduced morale, and can cause a delay in creating other related positions within the organization."

Even if you don't have any vacant positions now, you could in the future—and you need to be prepared to fill them as quickly as possible. So how should companies deal with this staffing challenge? The answer is simple: *effective management and development.*

A recent article from *Forbes* titled "The Case for Hiring Under-Qualified Employees" sparked hundreds of Internet comments and discussions. The article states that many companies, especially smaller startups, may not be able to afford hire superstars—instead, they're better off focusing on discovering potential stars and effectively coaching them.

Coaching can be powerful! When hiring and developing employees, effective managers need to consider four aspects that will help them maximize both potential and productivity.

BE HONEST. Another shocking finding from CareerBuilder's study is that only 12 percent of candidates were told they did not have the requisite skills for a job they applied for. It's important to provide productive feedback

to candidates, whether you hire them or not. Taking an interest in an individual's personal growth and showing you care is what true coaches (and effective managers) do. When you do hire a candidate, be up front with them about your expectations and the skills the new employee may need to focus on strengthening and developing.

SET GOALS. Let's say you end up hiring an individual who may not possess all the job-specific skills but certainly has potential. It's absolutely crucial that you outline goals and objectives for the employee's training and development. Work together with your employee to set goals specifically geared toward the position, as well as personal goals. Don't forget to ask for the employee's input. Are there any additional skills he or she would like to develop or learn? It may even be helpful to create a timeline for any certification programs or projects to be completed.

KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEE'S LEARNING STYLE. To be an effective manager, you need to know how to coach your employee. Does he or she need step-by-step guidance, or is the employee more independent? Is the employee comfortable making decisions? How does the employee solve problems? To objectively answer these questions, you can use assessments. Total-employee assessments, like the ProfileXT®, can be useful for discerning an employee's thinking and reasoning style, behavioral tendencies, and interests.

HAVE REGULAR MEETINGS. A popular quote from a Profiles International research report says, "Coach early and coach often." Check in regularly with your employees to review their performance. Whether it's a meeting once a week or frequent conversations, communicate with your team! Make it your business to be aware if they have any concerns or questions. Ask them about their workload: Is it too much? Do they need more challenging assignments?

Coaching makes a difference! With it, not only will your employees develop the skills they need to succeed, but you will also grow as a leader. **N**

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