

Determining team fit - Are you asking the right questions?

The Chamber's latest snap poll of over 1,100 employers indicated an increase in employment intentions over the next six months. If your organisation is among those needing to recruit new talent, ensure you know how to conduct an interview that is going direct you to the best candidate for the role and your team.

When interviewing potential staff, most employers ask the stock standard questions relating to the candidate's experience, knowledge and qualifications. The importance of these is indisputable; however, deciphering whether the candidate will be an effective fit with your team should be the top of your priority list.

In fact, an employer survey conducted by Victoria University revealed that both local and international employers' chief concern was the interpersonal skills, communication skills and teamwork ability of potential employees, as opposed to their education or experience.

There seems to be unanimous understanding among employers that team synergy is the cornerstone to the creativity and prosperity of their organisations. A spanner in an otherwise cohesive team can be a barrier to peak productivity and dampen motivation across the entire business.

This may stick out like a sore thumb in an office context; but how can you, as an employer, weed out uncomplimentary personalities in 30 minute interview.

With over 50 years of combined experience in recruitment under their belts, the Chamber employment team has coached countless businesses through the recruitment process. As such, they recommend you ask some of the following questions at interview stage in order to determine team fit:

- What experience have you had working in a team?
- Tell me about a time when you used tact and diplomacy.
- Tell me about the most difficult person you have worked with. How did you manage to work with them?
- What have you disliked in your past jobs?

- What kinds of people do you enjoy working with?
- Describe the types of teams you've been involved with. What were your roles?
- Describe a team experience you found disappointing. What would you have done to prevent this?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?

These questions don't have 'right' answers (although the wrong ones might be fairly obvious) and should help you identify whether the candidate works well within a unit or an inter-departmental team.

Align the responses to your requirements and the dynamics of your team to see if you can identify any major discrepancies or consistencies. Consider the ideal function of the new employee in a team environment and think about whether they display the desired characteristics. Indications of a strong team player will include being able to demonstrate the ability to compromise, a willingness to share ideas and a sense of empathy towards other team members.

Ensure you are on the look out for discriminatory comments or instances of antisocial behaviour as these will serve as warning signs. However, don't discount someone on the basis that their opinions and views may differ from your own. Remember, diverse teams tend to be the most vibrant, creative and productive ones.