

Managers Know Best

Why you should abandon existing screening standards

Companies have always sought the best talent, but the sad reality is that only the top few are reaching this goal. Why? Because most are sticking to what I call the Existing Mid-Career Recruiting Standard (EMCRS).

When the population was growing, and rich talent was entering the workforce each year, the EMCRS was functioning well. But not anymore. As society ages and the population shrinks, this approach is no longer enough.

During the period of rapid economic growth, the seniority system, simultaneous recruitment of new graduates, lifetime employment, the retirement system, and EMCRS worked well. Among these, EMCRS is the easiest to change, and a move away from it is the fastest way to obtain results and revitalize the entire employment system. Because it will not directly affect the rights of existing employees, this change can be enforced quietly and directly by upper management.

So, what is the EMCRS to which most companies cling? As a recruiting professional, the top three conditions that I hear companies fuss over are: age, gender, and experience in the field.

As mentioned, this worked in the past but fails us now. We need to face the fact that Japan labor ranks 22nd in productivity among the 35 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries, and first in aging and shrinking population. If our ultimate goal is to find and



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hire talent that will drive growth in the company, will age, gender, and experience matter that much? Will we be able to find talent by sticking to these old standards?

The answer to both is no. If we abandon these three conditions, we will discover ample rich, untapped potential. An excellent guide to achieving this is the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan's Women In Business White Paper *Untapped Potential: A Collaborative Blueprint for Achieving the Japanese Government's "2020/30" Overall Target of Women Holding 30 Percent of Management and Leadership Positions by 2020*.

Companies that are successful in finding this talent—especially for management roles—are not clinging to the traditional EMCRS. Instead, they look at a candidate's motivation, willingness, and purpose.

Another important fact is that upper management should get involved in

the initial screening process instead of delegating this important task to someone else. It is upper management that truly understands how to screen for these qualities, because they are the ones who decide the business strategy.

When searching for management-level talent, it is dangerous to delegate the initial interview process to those who are not involved in deciding the business strategy. Why? First, they are not responsible for executing the strategy. Second, they will usually stick to EMCRS for initial screening. And third, it often creates a conflict of interest, such as not wanting to hire someone more talented than themselves.

It is critical, therefore, that upper management be directly involved in the initial screening. There are many recruitment firms and HR managers that do not understand the business strategy, and thus the qualifications necessary to execute the strategy.

It is time for top management to take the lead, to see potential talent with their own eyes. Only then will you discover that the common sentiment—that there is no qualified talent in the market—is not true.

Wise managers know exactly what qualifications are needed, and will not screen out candidates based on age, gender, or experience. This will open the doors to a world of rich, untapped talent and enable your company to execute its strategy much more quickly and successfully. ■

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