

Checking Performance

A proven record of results is the primary criteria when hiring, so how can you check a candidate's "record of results"?

Let's examine that initial statement first. If that's really all there is to it, the business of recruiting could be greatly simplified.

Other Factors

At first glance, there seem to be a lot of factors that would influence your hiring decision, for instance:

- Knowledge & Experience
- Personality
- External Factors
- Motivation

Yes, all of these play a part.



For instance, if you have a highly technical role to fill, the Knowledge and Experience factor takes on a higher priority. In most cases, however, it serves merely as a preliminary method of sorting out your applications.

Personality can be a problem if there are some undesirable traits that would appear to impede your candidate. On the other hand, there have been many instances of candidates who, despite some quirk in their personality, have proven to

be topnotch performers. And it *is* the results that count, isn't it?

External Factors can also get in the way. Someone who has a crushing personal problem that is distracting them, for example, may or may not be a good choice. You have to find out whether this will actually degrade their ability to perform. You've probably seen instances where one employee collapses in a heap under such external influences, whereas another is quite unaffected. Once again, the key factor is: can they get the results required of the job regardless of this.

As for motivation, that's something you do have to check, for sure. Even the most potentially productive candidate will be of no use to you if they are not motivated for *your* job, but thankfully, that's easy to check. (See previous **Certainty** article: "What's Important Here?")

The fact of the matter is, Performance is an *additional factor*, quite separate from the above four. If you have someone who is a true performer, they will often overcome any shortcomings in the other areas. And, "getting results" is what really counts to any manager. That's why a "proven record of results is the primary criteria when hiring".

The Basis of Performance

Previous **Certainty** articles have shown that performance can be broken down into three elements:

IDEAS – ACTIONS – RESULTS

For anything to happen, there must have been an idea in the first place. Next, one has to perform some activity to finally bring about the desired results.

Now, from an employee's viewpoint, the "ideas" may be their own, or they may have been handed to

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them when they started the job. A good performer will be imaginative enough to come up with the bright ideas that will lead to results. They will also accept existing ideas as they relate to the overall achievements desired.

The problem is that some people are stuck in the IDEAS component of this formula. That's all they focus on. This includes those people who consider that their "title" or "status" alone should justify their existence. "But I have an honours degree in Marketing", said with a certain degree of self-assured haughtiness, is an indication that this person thinks more of their status and qualifications than of the results they can achieve.

Others are stuck in ACTION. They think that as long as they "do their job", all will be well. They generally have no concept of what their actions are supposed to **produce**. (See the earlier **Certainty** article entitled "Characteristics of a Performer" under the heading "This Really Happened" for a good example of this.)

Of course, no one gets stuck in RESULTS, except U-MAN, perhaps.....(joke!).

What to Look For

There are a number of steps that U-MAN performs in order to gauge the performance capabilities of candidates. It's the most important part of what we do.

(You can view the forms we use to accomplish this on our web site. Just go to www.uman.com.au/direct/direct_perf.htm. Sorry, you can't click on the link from here, the technology isn't quite up to that yet...)



Here are some of the techniques we use when going through this Performance Check Form with a candidate:

Are They Aware of Results?

A candidate who is high on the scale of performance capability will **know what you are talking about** when you ask them for the results they have achieved. You won't have to explain yourself to them.



A non-performer typically answers up with the **actions** they performed, rather than the results. If you ask a Sales candidate what they have achieved in the way of results and they tell you they got their daily call rate up to 16, watch out. This person thinks they were supposed to produce "calls", rather than "sales".

A good performer can envision the results they are supposed to achieve — this is what they focus on. How they get there is also relevant, of course, but they first look at what is to be achieved, and then they figure out how to do it.

Any "robot" can be given instructions to perform certain actions. Performing actions is not achievement — it is only the means to an end. And it's the "end" that's important.

How do They Answer Questions?

Do you ever get confused by the answers you receive from a candidate? Have you found yourself asking the same question several times in different ways in order to get a rational response?

Compare that scenario to one where you ask a good performer what results they have

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achieved. You get a straight answer — no waffle and no confusing statements.

And, if the candidate tells you that they have produced results, but they just can't remember them very well, beware! A performer never forgets their achievements. They are proud of what they have accomplished and are only too happy to tell you all the details.

Can you imagine a really effective Credit Controller “forgetting” that they reduced the outstanding collections from \$1,000,000 to less than \$100,000 in just 12 months? That's not the sort of thing one easily forgets.

Are They Aware of Their Statistics?

Some jobs have a natural statistic (or measure) associated with them; like sales revenue or market share. Many jobs, however, do not have an obvious statistic. Regardless of this, however, you will find that a good performer will always figure some way of measuring their results. They have an intense interest in how they are doing from week to week, month to month or year to year. They want to

know when they did well, and when they didn't (so they can correct it). And they will know *why* their results went up or down.

Consequently, when you ask a candidate for facts and figures (statistical measurement of their performance) and they cannot tell you, this is a bad indicator. It doesn't matter that there was no “official” measure for that post. If they were a good performer, they would have measured it anyway.

Will They Give You Referees?

Someone who has a good record of producing results is always happy to give you the names of people who can verify these facts. They will generally give you several. It could be their previous manager, a manager in a related department, a colleague, or a customer or two.

It's a healthy sign when they come right out with these. They probably included them in their application, but one who is proud of their results will also know them without reference to their CV.



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If your candidate waffles on about the fact that all the people who could verify their results have since left the company, or resigned, the alarm bells should be ringing. It's a stretch of the imagination to believe this of even one previous employer, but you should be checking back two or three jobs in their history. They can't *all* have magically (and conveniently) disappeared.

Can They Compare Their Results?

A good performer is always aware of how others in similar roles are doing. It's in their nature to be aware of results, including any "competitors" they may have, so this is a reliable indicator. The comparative performance may be of someone in the same company, or it could be of others in their industry.

A non-performer will get a blank and haunted look on their face when asked questions along this line. They either have no idea of how they went compared to others, or they know only too well, but are ashamed to talk about it. In either case, it's a bad indicator in relation to their ability to get results for you.

Conclusion

There are many factors to consider when making a hiring decision, but the candidate's proven record of performance is the primary one.

The process of establishing a candidate's past performance record is, therefore, the most important part of interviewing job candidates.

