

Hiring Right -- For You by Danielle Dresden

The saying goes that when you hire people who are smarter than you, you prove you are smarter than they.

But the sharpest managers don't hire only the smartest candidates, they hire those with smarts their organization can use.

Even the most sophisticated personality tests can't give you sure-fire answers on this one

Resumes can tell you if candidates have the basic skills and background you need. Interviews will tell you more about how candidates use their functional and industry-specific knowledge.

However, deciding if someone is right for your organization calls for more. You need to see if there's a good fit between a specific candidate and your organization's "corporate culture."

Yes, it's a buzzword and hard to measure, but hiring managers ignore corporate culture at their peril. Corporate culture is a major factor in whether or not a new employee becomes an effective member of your work team.

Your corporate culture is the norm, the baseline, for life in your organization. It shapes how independently employees work, how much feedback they get and what behavior gets rewarded or reprimanded.

It affects the little things, too, which have such a strong impact on daily work life, from how much small talk is O.K. to what people wear on casual Friday.

It's not easy to describe corporate culture because it's how you do things. In fact, what you're least likely to notice could be your most important, if unspoken, assumption.

If yours is a free-wheeling operation, where staff are independent and heated discussion is the rule, a retiring person who likes a lot of direction isn't going to fit in well. Similarly, if you run things by the book and emphasize precision, a free-spirited innovator won't be happy with you.

No matter how smart candidates are, or how much your organization needs their skills, if they don't mesh with your corporate culture they might not do a good job.

Before your next hire, take a good look at the rules – spoken and not --which guide daily life at work. Work with your hiring committee to develop interview questions to see how a candidate would fit into your environment.

Then you can use interviews to see how people would adapt to your organization and forget about hiring smart because you'll be hiring just right -- for you.