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Hotel Online News for the Hospitality Executive

Hiring Seasonal Employees – Look To Your Gut To Find the Right Fit! By Gary R. Hernbroth Chief Motivating Officer

May 10, 2012

Getting ready for your “high season”? Hiring seasonal employees can be a tricky business. You really need them to help handle your increased business levels, but you cringe about whether they will fit into the fabric of your existing team, be a proper reflection of your brand, and not drive away your customers or members with their lack of experience with your product or service as a “short-timer.” Sometimes you hit, sometimes you miss. Consider these factors when glazing over the mountain of resumes, interviews and social media profiles of potential candidates:

Commitment & Culture

One of the biggest intrinsic factors with a seasonal employee is just that – they are around for the *season*, not the long haul. Because of this, you’ll need to be as sure as you can be that they share the same commitment and outlook that reflects all of the history, efforts, and time that your full-time team has invested in creating and maintaining your organization or club’s culture. *Are they a good fit?*

To be sure that you are not plugging a round hole with a square peg, ask questions that will get the candidate talking about how they view the job or task they are applying for. Do they know anything about your organization, or its history, its membership, what it stands for? What do they think about that, what does it mean to them? When asked to pull the tough shifts, or jump in and help outside of their particular area, or learn a new skill set, or get their hands dirty, will they?

Asset or Liability?

You’ll want to find people that will help raise the team or specific department they will be working in, not tear it apart with poor working habits, bad behavior, or the wrong attitude. You don’t want poor service, low morale, bad customer experiences, and disheveled team unity left in their wake when the high season is over, just because they joined the team.

Things to look for when sizing up their candidacy, and also during their initial training period: How well do they follow instruction? Are they trainable, or are they more of a know-it-all? Are they responsible, trustworthy, and timely? Are they quality-driven? Are they a good team player? Will they fit in here?

Personal Branding

What about their “personal brand”? Are those characteristics they are showing you in the selection process in line with the branding of your organization, and with the team they will be working on? You don’t want to hire someone who comes with their own set of rules or baggage, and will expect the organization to bend to their style and ways of operating. Certainly, while you should look to hire people that can think on their

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own, and be able to offer suggestions on improving things and making things better (after all, a fresh pair of eyes can often see something that the full-timers overlook or ignore), you don't want what they think of as "their way" to become a point of disruption or distraction.

Consider carefully the branding make-up of your full-time team in place – Will this person fit in and be a great representative of that department (and, ultimately, of your organization)? Consider who their supervisor or team leader will be – will they work well with them? Personalities play a role here.

Your "Gut Feel"

There is a lot to the adage "Trust your gut." We don't always make the best hiring decisions, as we can all be fooled at some point in the selection process by some people. But more times than not, if you ask these revealing questions and consider the "fit" of the candidate within your organization or club's fabric, you'll get a gut feel for their candidacy.

Your two key *gut questions* should be: "Can they do the job we are hiring them to do at a high, professional level?", and, "Will they portray themselves in a way that best represents our quality, our commitment to our members and guests, and the culture of our organization?"

And remember, it doesn't stop with the selection process. Don't just throw them to the wolves. Hire those that you feel will get up to speed with the pace and flow of your business quickly, and give them a legitimate training experience. The initial break-in training and follow-up coaching is also extremely critical to their success during the high season – and, ultimately, yours.

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