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15 Steps to the Right Remote Hire. Every Time.



Maren Hogan (https://www.business2community.com/author/maren-hogan) – February 21, 2018

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Hiring remotely is not for the faint of heart. It requires planning, careful thought and loads of processes and tools that need to be vetted, demoed and managed. However, the benefits of opening up your recruiting process to people all over the nation (or the world) can really give you a leg up on your competition. Considering that many people who are hired remotely get to

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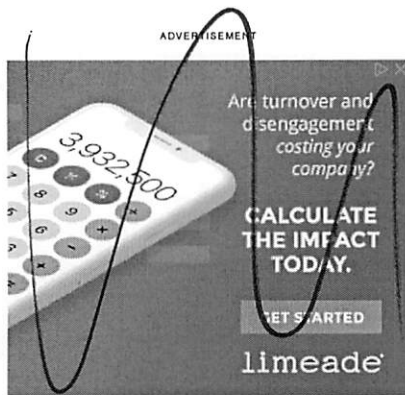
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Here are some challenges to hiring remotely:

- Scheduling interviews in different time zones
- Interviewing with multiple teams or hiring managers
- Getting acquainted with a candidate you can't see face-to-face
- Assessing skills of a candidate who isn't in the same room or town

Of course, sourcing, recruiting and hiring

candidates is hard no matter where you are, but the remote world brings it up a notch. Here's how we hire remotely and you can too!

Step 1: Build your squad. Like any great process within HR, hiring remotely starts with the cornerstone of communication. You have to understand your hiring manager and they need to understand you. Because of the distributed nature of companies that tend to hire remotely, it's crucial to get a team to support and assist you! Who should be on the team?

- The hiring manager (probably the person's future boss)
- A cultural ambassador (someone who gets your values)
- Someone currently doing the job (or similar)
- An HR pro or recruiter

In smaller companies, one person may have to fill two roles and in larger companies, you may have to switch up the people you ask for help, so no one gets burnt out.

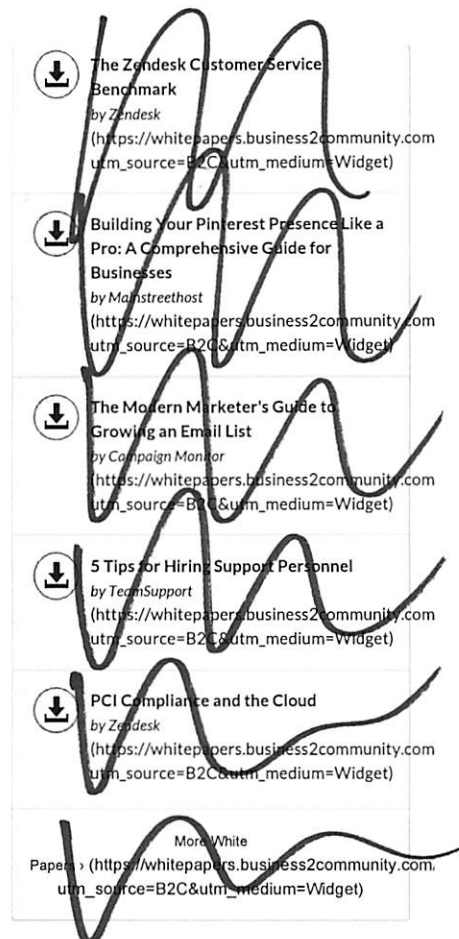
Step 2: Layout communication rules. While your team might be comfortable using email chains or the company intranet, neither is entirely appropriate for this purpose. Eventually, whoever you hire, will be part of one or both. Emails can get buried and the intranet may give you lots of opinions you don't need, making the decision take longer. Whatever you choose, make it a private group. Many ATS and interviewing solutions have a feature that serves this purpose, allowing hiring managers, recruiters and other members of the hiring team to share thoughts and feedback regarding the candidate.

Step 3: Get together. Don't groan too much. I'm not suggesting you meet up every week, but a hiring roundtable at the beginning, midpoint, and toward the end of the hiring period is useful, if only to get everyone on the same page. Your job is to facilitate this meeting, so come prepared with:

- The current job description
- Any ads you've run for similar positions and where, with results
- Suggested assessment or vetting processes
- 2-3 examples of superstars you'd like to try to emulate

Then have your team give you feedback on each thing. For instance, if you are looking for a designer with Adobe experience for the web department, your developer might mention they design exclusively in Sketch now, which would require a change in the job description. Your cultural ambassador might note that while Josh is a superstar when it comes to sales numbers, two of his sales assistants have quit in the past year. Finally, ask your hiring manager and your hiring team member what that team or group is missing. Agree on your scoring criteria. Some scoring scales to use:

- 1-10
- Very Poor-Very Good



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- A-B-C-D-F

Whatever scale you select, reinforce that scoring happen right after the interview, rather than scoring later and comparing one candidate to another.

Step 4: Have a chat. Some companies use video for the first hiring screen, some use the phone, a few even send a screening email to see how their candidates respond. It all depends on your culture and the job for which you're hiring. I find the first chat should be with the recruiter or HR professional OR the cultural ambassador. The goal is to describe the work ethic and set expectations about how the interview process will go, even up to the onboarding process. Here are some guidelines to go over:

- The purpose of the call. Be honest that you are looking to see if they will be able to work at the standards you've set internally.
- Truthfully, explain what your workplace is like, the good and the mediocre.
- Ask the candidate what they think of a workplace like the one you've described. Would they be comfortable there? Have they worked in an environment like that before?
- Describe some (anonymous) examples of people who love the environment and people who did not.
- Have they ever worked remotely before? How did they like it? What did they not like about it?
- Finally, set expectations for what happens next. Maybe they will be notified via email if they are selected to proceed. Perhaps the next step is something they need to do (submit an assessment). Take them step-by-step through the process.

So, what should you look for during this chat? First off, take note of how well the candidate pays attention to your questions and responses. This will give you a good idea of whether or not they're suited for remote work. Also check to see if they volunteer information about the job or the company. This shows a sincere desire to work there and penchant for curiosity that will serve them well if they're co-located. If they are on video chat, check out their surroundings. DO they have a home office or are they struggling to hear in a coffee shop? Are there interruptions during your conversation? You've interviewed many people in your job, you got this!

Step 5: Hone in on skills. This can be the hiring manager, but usually they're too busy to jump on every call, so have your department expert jump on to ask questions the candidate should probably know.

Step 6: Test the skills. After the skills call, we have the candidate do a short project in their area of expertise. Whether it's a coding challenge, a customer service improv situation or a writing test, watch for skills (of course) but also keep an eye out for following directions, how they solve problems when they get to them and where their frustration levels peak. For example, if your candidate cannot write a sample customer service letter because they don't know your product, and your product pages are easily found on the internet, that person most likely does not have the curiosity and work ethic to be a remote worker. Notes:

- The project should vary from department to department but not person to person to ensure standardized assessments.
- There should be a clear deadline.
- The project should be sent via email to ensure they can read nuance outside of phone calls.

Step 7: Time for a mid-point recap. At this point, you'll want to circle the wagons and discuss what you've learned so far. The person who wowed in the cultural interview portion might be the same one who couldn't answer basic skills questions. The person who seemed stiff and not interested on the phone may have been charming and easy to talk to later on. Have each person deliver their score before moving on.



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Do you have clear future employees and a couple of “never hires”? These are easy, it’s the ones in the middle that are hard to decide on. If you have some average performers, ask the Hiring Manager whether he or she wants to interview the median group. The goal of this is to determine who moves forward to the HM and whether we need more potential candidates in the pipeline. *Skipping this step can result in selecting a mediocre candidate simply because there is no one else.*

Step 8: Connect the Hiring Manager. This step is often overlooked and is totally crucial. Yes, hiring managers are busy and yes, their time is valuable, but we know that managers can make or break a new employee. The last portion of an interview cycle is the best time to ensure your new hire and your current employee have what it takes to work together. We highly recommend a video interviewing tool and standardized questions for this interview.

If your candidate has come this far, make sure the candidate has the opportunity to ask questions of their own about the team, their environment, successful employees and more. *Your hiring manager should have a good idea of when the candidate will have an answer and let the candidate know.*

Step 9: Figure out the details. Once the candidate has wowed the cultural ambassador, the HR pro, a future team member, and the hiring manager it’s time to give them an offer, right? WRONG! You still need to find out what their expectations are. You started this process and it’s fitting that HR and recruitment should finish it up. Your wrap-up call should cover everything you’d include in an offer letter:

- Compensation and Rewards (What are their salary expectations? Take home and any bonus pay)
- Wellness (Include Health, Dental, Vision, HSA, Prevention Programs)
- Benefits (Mention Learning, Tuition Reimbursement, IRA, 401k)
- Timeline and Schedule (When will they start? At what time?)
- Work Arrangements (Will they be provided a computer and cell phone?)

Step 10: Who you gonna call? This is an appropriate time to request references. We ask for no more than 5, but at least 2. Make sure to reiterate when the candidate will hear back from you. While you do have an advantage over a company hiring for in-house personnel, we’re still at record low unemployment levels, so if you have an amazing candidate ready to make the leap, you need to do everything you can to make their candidate experience as painless and transparent as possible.

Step 11: The background check. Depending on your industry, you may need to do an actual background check, but for many, a simple reference check will do. Many managers are only allowed to give out dates and verify the person worked there, but if the person has agreed to serve as a reference, they should be willing to answer general questions like:

- What was Tanya like to work with?
- Would you hire John again?
- How was your relationship with Becky?
- Please rate Dante’s performance: poor, okay, average, good, great, superstar
- If you could change anything about Suri’s work, what would it be?

Step 12: Have “The Talk”. You’ve collected your scores, reviews, assessments and projects... it’s time to make the decision. Now, only your hiring manager or department lead can make the call, but you can make his or her life easier by organizing the information. Here are some ways to organize the information to meet specific hiring goals or to cater to specific managers:

- Organize a dossier with no names or faces to boost diversity efforts.
- Arrange into Hire Now-Hire Later piles and create a talent pool to boost pipelining efforts.



Acquisition vs. Retention: Where Should Brands Focus? <https://www.quadrant.com/resources/acquisition-vs-retention-where-should-brands-focus>
Catalog so the lowest ranked candidate is on top to slow down hiring process
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- Categorize so the highest rated candidate is on top to speed up a slow decision maker.
- Organize according to ROI to the company for a financially-focused decision maker.
- Sort according to which candidate is most similar to the initial sketch.

A solid timeline and definitive date (which you've already communicated to the candidate via the entire hiring team remember?) should make it easy for the hiring manager to give you a relatively quick answer. As SOON as he or she does, send an email asking to set up a call to the candidate.

Step 13: Hi, it's me. Your new job. If you're a recruiter worth your salt, you probably LOVE this next step! You get to make someone's day! Once you've notified the candidate via phone, immediately have your letter ready to send via email. Since you already know the salary expectations, timeline, schedule and other information, you should be able to get this email out post-haste! A template makes this a LOT easier to write up, run past the hiring team or manager and get sent. An electronic signature or paperless onboarding system makes it a cinch to get the new employee's signature and get the paperwork started right away!

Step 14: It's not over until...well it's never really over. The hiring process bleeds right into the onboarding process if you're doing it right. Due to competitive hiring, it's in your company's best interest to invest some time in the new employee before he or she walks through the "front door". Just because they're a remote worker does not mean you can let them just log on and get to work! A robust onboarding program will help them:

- Get settled into their new role
- Understand expectations for the job
- Get to know company processes
- Guide them through their first few weeks
- Build rapport between new and current employees
- Create a sense of belonging

Of course, it will also help you set learning objectives, fill out important paperwork to stay in compliance, get their benefits sorted and keep your records up to date!

Step 15: Welcome to the club! We have a concrete set of learning objectives combined with mentorship programs, video lunch and learns and swag that we take our new hires through. While every company is different, make sure yours balances the necessary with the fun! Some ideas to make their first few (remote) weeks the best ever!

- Send a bed or sofa desk tailored to their needs to their home or remote office.
- Get a custom-made sticker for their company laptop or computer.
- Send a swag gift basket with company apparel.
- Have SkiptheDishes or UberFood arrive at the door for "lunch with the boss."
- Assign them a "Pen Pal" mentor in a far-flung location.



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