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SUSTAINABLE SAFETY EXCELLENCE

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Guard the front door: The next step in an excellent safety culture

Once you have created a strong, mature safety culture, the next step is to protect it from outside forces. Most begin with a focus on contractors, but what about the people you hire and promote?

In 2008, while working with a global corporation employing close to 80,000 employees with a total recordable rate of 0.08, a facilitated strategy summit with business and safety executives led to an important realization. How a new or promoted employee thought about safety, regardless of position in the company, wasn't realized until well into the first 90 days. They were unintentionally hiring and promoting risk in the company. They should have been more proactive in their selection practices. There are many tools available to prevent this and to better assess candidates.

Beliefs and mindsets

Although it is not practical to administer a perception survey (as the responses would be suspect due to the desire to gain employment), one can ask questions to determine beliefs about important concepts that represent the ideal mindset an ideal candidate would hold. An April 2010 Industry Week article, "Hiring for Safety: Risk Takers Need Not Apply," outlined four questions recommended to ask during interviews: How would you define safety? What role does safety play in an organization? What does it take to reach and sustain zero injuries? What do you think the safety roles, responsibilities and expectations are for someone in this position?

Behavioral interviewing

This interviewing technique attempts to assess past behavior as a predictor of future performance. A Notre Dame study by Janz, Hellervik and Gilmore found "behavioral interviewing is said to be 55 percent predictive of future on-the-job behavior, while traditional interviewing is only 10 percent." More information can be found at www.interview-questions.org/hrguide/behavioral_interviewing.htm.

Locus of control

According to Wikipedia, locus of control is the "degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcome of events in their lives, as opposed to external forces beyond their control. Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B.

Rotter in 1954 and has since become an aspect of personality studies. A person's 'loci' (plural of 'locus,' Latin for 'place' or 'location') is conceptualized as internal (a belief that one's life can be controlled) or external (a belief that life is controlled by outside factors which they cannot influence, or that chance or fate controls their lives)." Sample questions can be found at <https://thegmtmaven.com/2013/12/02/to-hire-or-not-to-hire-evaluating-locus-of-control>.

Cultural fit

"Recruiting for Cultural Fit," a 2015 Harvard Business Review article by Katie Bouton, proposed some example questions: What type of culture do you thrive in? What values are you drawn to, and what's your ideal workplace? Why do you want to work here? How would you describe our culture based on what you've seen?

Once you have created a great culture, attention moves beyond intentionally reinforcing desired beliefs and behaviors toward ensuring the right people are coming in the front doors. If a well-liked and influential individual is hired or promoted, but has the wrong beliefs and behaves incongruently with what is desired, there is a good chance the culture can begin to regress. What steps can you begin to take to ensure your documented and reinforced beliefs, decisions, behaviors and stories are a part of the process you undertake in hiring and promoting? Working to create a culture of safety excellence is a noble goal, and it is everyone's responsibility to protect it. Ensure your systems are working with you rather than against you.

Shawn M. Galloway is the president of ProAct Safety and co-author of several bestselling books. As a consultant, adviser and keynote speaker, he has helped hundreds of organizations within every major industry improve safety strategy, leadership, culture and performance. He is also the host of the highly acclaimed weekly podcast series *Safety Culture Excellence*®.

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