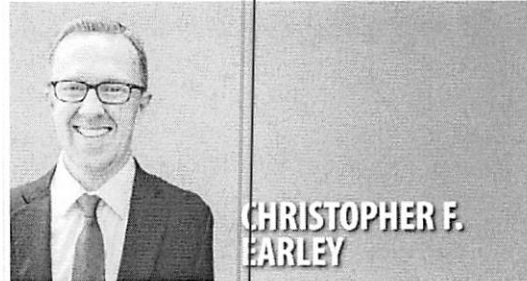


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Hiring: finding the right person is mission critical

By: Christopher F. Earley | May 20, 2021

We've all been there. We hire someone we really believe will be a great hire. Soon, though, it becomes clear it is not a good fit.



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I had to make the really tough decision of letting go of a team member recently. I am really, really slow and deliberate with hiring. I look for superstars, and there are only so many of them on the job market at any one time.



Applicants to any position here have to go through a series of interviews and evaluations. Here is what that entails:

1) 10-minute phone interview. I email the applicant and ask for a call back on a mutually agreed date and time. If the applicant is late for the call, that to me is a "tell" that this is not the right applicant. If the applicant is on time for the call, I will ask questions that the person may have never been asked before in an interview. Questions such as "What are you reading, listening to, and watching?" tell me a great deal about a person's interests. Also, "What

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2) If the 10-minute call goes well, then I will have her jump on a Zoom call with me. Again, if she is even a minute late, I will not have the applicant go onto the next stage of the process. To me, these details really matter.

3) Next, I will have the applicant complete an online evaluation that is administered by a third party. The results of this evaluation reveal a great deal about the person’s decision-making, ability to follow systems, capacity for empathy, etc. If the results reveal traits and tendencies that do not align with our firm’s goals and culture, then the applicant is removed from further consideration.

4) Next is an in-person interview. During this interview, I share with the applicant things that I liked about the results of her online evaluation and things I did not like. I will tell her that unless she is able to follow our team’s exact processes and procedures, things ultimately will not work out (each team member is initially on a 90-day probationary period). Following this interview, I will reach out to references. If everything comes back good, I will have the applicant in the office for another interview during which I will present the job offer.

Most times this system works well in finding superstar employees. However, as with all systems, it is not perfect. Despite putting this now former employee through this rigorous vetting procedure, she ultimately turned out to be a poor fit.



Despite putting this now former employee through this rigorous vetting procedure, she ultimately turned out to be a poor fit. Where did the system fail? What could I have done differently?

When things like this happen here, I look to identify ways I can improve that system (as well as the processes that make up the system) of doing things. Where did the system fail? What could I have done differently? Now, I am reevaluating this system to find out where things went wrong so that it is improved.

Key takeaway: Always be flexible and willing to fix key systems in your business that need to be tinkered with from time to time, to ensure optimal performance and results. What holes can you identify in your practice and business that, when fixed, could yield big dividends to you and your clients? Small hinges open big doors. Always look for weakness that can be shored up in your business.

No team excels with average players. The name of the game is to identify and attract the best players. Finding the right people and putting them in the right seat on the bus is mission critical for any successful business, and law firms are no different.

Hire slow. Really slow.

Christopher F. Earley is a Boston attorney and author who concentrates his practice on the representation of the seriously injured and their families.

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