

**Subject:** The Management Tip of the Day  
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**From:** Harvard Business Review  
**To:** Elizabeth Derrico

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### Today's Tip

## Make the Right Hire — Not the Perfect One

You've spread the word that you're hiring — but the applications you've received have been less than ideal. How should you evaluate an imperfect candidate? And when should you take a chance on someone? Start by pinpointing the job's basic requirements. Look at employees in similar positions, and ask: Which qualifications do the top three performers have in common? The objective is to help you see more clearly which flaws are fatal and which may be constructs designed by HR. For example, you **shouldn't automatically discount someone who's changed jobs recently**, or who was **out of the workforce**, or who doesn't have a certain title or degree. Next, gauge the candidate's capacity to grow. Ask them to describe the steps they take to learn something new, and use reference checks to assess the predictors of potential — namely curiosity, confidence, and motivation. But don't ignore any character defects; if candidates lie, are abusive, or have lousy work habits, they're not likely to change. And remember that the cost of a

bad hire is steep, so you shouldn't succumb to pressure to hire quickly. In reality, you're highly unlikely to find a perfect candidate for any role, but these tips will help you have a better sense of when to take the leap on an imperfect candidate.

This tip is adapted from [“When to Take a Chance on an Imperfect Job Candidate,”](#) by Rebecca Knight

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