

# Finding, Developing, and Cultivating a Successful Team

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One of the best moments as a professional is when you beam with pride over an individual or a team you have assembled, mentored, and supported that has succeeded beyond your imagination. For this feeling of “it was worth it” to be a golden moment, worth repeating, it takes much effort to recruit, select, and on board staff. While getting to that golden moment can be full of opportunities and challenges, strategic efforts around an intentional hiring process help to avoid some of the obstacles that can come.

Selection, training, and cultivation of members is critical to any organization’s, department’s, or headquarters’ success. Professionals are always seeking ways to ensure that members of our organizations are a *good fit*, perform strongly, represent the organization’s values, and fully commit to our mission. Developing authentic systems that allow for growth and development of members requires commitment, consistency, and most of all, patience. Consider the following when establishing effective processes.

## Finding and Connecting to the Ideal Candidate

The intention with which we reach out and find individuals who fit our needs is essential to success. Everyone has experienced a time where you did not have individuals who matched your needs or a time when you lacked enough qualified candidates. How do you find individuals who are a match?

**Know what you need to find.** This sounds easy enough, but it is a work in progress. Start with understanding the needs of the organization, standards, and key attributes that make an individual highly successful. What are the attributes that, when present, turn a prospect from *okay* to a *hot commodity*? Revisit these prior to every recruitment cycle as an organization’s needs are always changing, as are the students we work with, and being able to identify that fact alone is often an asset of any potential hire.

**Build key relationships and then ask for prospects.** Cultivating relationships with key professionals is a key strategy for recruitment. These individuals know the type of work you do, the quality of operation you run, and the outcomes you seek. So use them! Actively seek nominations of candidates. Sometimes all it takes to convince a potential hire they should join the team is to tell them they were nominated as a potential fit for your organization.

**Reach out to a variety of groups.** Kindred spirits can be found in the most unusual places. Get out and visit clusters of potential hires anywhere they gather—professional conferences, masters programs, social media, etc. This may feel like making a cold call, but it can be fruitful. If you can find one great individual in an untapped market, more will follow in the next cycle.

## Evaluating a Candidate’s Membership Potential

Developing a strong process for evaluating and educating candidates is an investment in the future of the organization. Think of this in two parts: 1) gathering data on the prospect, and 2) educating the prospect on the organization.

**Gather data on the prospect.** Be clear on what information a candidate must provide in the application. It bears repeating again, be clear on what you need. All too often organizations ask candidates to answer questions or provide documents that are then underutilized when determining if an offer should be made. If you collect it, you should use it; honor the time and effort the candidate takes to submit their materials.

Develop a process that is multi-faceted and high impact. Interact with candidates multiple times and in different settings. Provide opportunities for different characteristics to be exhibited. Ensure the process lets multiple personality types show their aptitudes. Highly effective teams know they need a variety of personality types to reach their goals. Sometimes personality inventories, like StrengthsQuest or True Colors, can be of use, and at other times, simply providing the situations where a critical thinker, a jovial presenter, or team player can rise to the occasion allows for the hiring agent to see where a potential employee would fit within the team.

Train evaluators to provide feedback, ensuring ratings and quality indicators are consistent. Every candidate deserves a consistent and fair process. Helping evaluators to understand what they need to observe and report will provide candidates with a fair process and ensure the organization receives consistent data. Think about the following: What constitutes strong application materials? What are you looking for during an activity? What does a strong response to each interview question contain?

**Educate the prospect on our organization.** Allow candidates to learn about the organization, experience what it would be like as a member, and interact with other candidates and members. Provide opportunities for individuals to learn the expectations of joining the group, requirements for being a successful member, and the mission and values of the organization. Aid the individual in determining if they are a *good fit*. Remember it is a two way street—do you think they are a match, and does the candidate think you are a good fit for them.

### **Helping New Members Thrive**

The best recruitment and selection process is only successful if there is a strong orientation or onboarding process. Providing an environment that encourages new individuals to feel welcomed is only the first step.

**Set the stage for inclusion.** Determining who will interact with a new member and in what capacity should be a deliberate decision; success will rest on the team assembled. The process may only need to include an individual; however, the inclusion of more individuals will allow new members to see the depth of the organization's knowledge and commitment. Include members that have shown commitment, strive to meet the mission, and uphold organizational values. Individuals need strong communication skills, depth of organizational knowledge, and willingness to be a mentor. All those team members who are part of the onboarding at any level need to be able to discuss how the members are progressing and know that these conversations are confidential.

**Think into, through, and beyond the onboarding process.** Connecting the discrete pieces of information a new member must learn is critical. It is how these items are interconnected and related to the mission and vision of the organization that is sometimes missed. Spend time ensuring each component has a strong *introduction*, utilize activities or multi-faceted presentations to help members move *through* the concept, and then build understanding for how to utilize the information *beyond* the orientation. Lastly, when you move on to the next topic help members understand how the previous information connects to the new topic.

**Encourage personal growth and development.** Individuals join organizations to gain something personally, so develop training programs that allow individuals to understand their personal attributes. Opportunities for both the organization and individuals to learn about their personality traits can be highly

effective for team building. Articulate to members the skills they can develop from participating. Utilization of mentors can be effective in helping new members develop. Just remember to provide guidance, training, and ongoing support to the mentors. Much in the same way mentors will pour into the new hires, it important the mentors feel fulfilled as well. As a supervisor, check in with the mentors; help them help the newest level of staff by giving them all the information they could possibly need and then some; train them on how to be a good mentor through modeling the behavior for them; and assure to them their role is one with long-term payout while the immediate gratification may happen exceptionally.