



## HIRING FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

*The first steps necessary for finding the right person for the job.*



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**P**lanning to hire a new employee? Congratulations! Your business is obviously doing well—despite the slow economic turnaround.

And if you're only considering it, now might be the time to take the next step. Uncle Sam is offering an immediate tax incentive through the end of year for hiring unemployed workers, (see sidebar article on page 42).

Feeling a little nervous about hiring? I understand. For most performance shops, a new hire is a big investment of time and money. Depending on how big your staff is, one employee can effectively double your staff. That can make the process stressful.

But what makes the process even more difficult is that hiring is probably something you don't do very often. Or perhaps something you've never done before.

Picking the right employee is an important job. So you want to be careful not to take any shortcuts that could land the wrong employee at your shop.

When I say "wrong" I don't mean someone who lacks job skills. I mean someone that doesn't fit in with your shop personality (corporate culture) or is difficult to work with. Having technical skills is one thing. Being a good employee is something entirely different.

You may be extra-busy and need help fast. But, don't let that force you to rush the process. Perhaps you can find a temporary moonlighter or part-timer to help you buy the time you need until you can make the right hiring decision. Or maybe you need to farm out work to another shop for a while.

Whatever you need to do to get the work done without rushing to hire someone is in your best interest. Finding the right person takes time. In that way, hiring can be a lot like dating—only less fun.



Is it time to hire a new employee? Congratulations! Now the hard work begins.

Here's a brief overview that will give you a roadmap through the initial stages of the hiring process—and a few tips on pitfalls to avoid.

### Defining the Job

Performance shop owners and managers, like most small businesses, tend to make one of two hiring mistakes: They don't define the job clearly, or they hire someone that doesn't fit the job description.

Those are very easy mistakes to make. You didn't open a shop to work in human resources. You opened a shop to work on cars.

You should start by deciding what job you want to fill. Sometimes that's harder than it sounds—although if an employee is leaving and you're filling an existing position, that can make it easier. Just jot down a list of what that person did.

More often than not, however, you'll find yourself creating a new position. That's great because it means you're growing, but it also means you need to take the time to think about what you need. It takes time to decide what the new position is and the duties of that job.

As I see it, performance shop jobs fall into three major categories: sales, clerical/managerial or technical. Although you may be able to find someone who can handle two of these roles, chances are you will rarely find someone who can do all three well.

So, I suggest you choose one major category and one minor category of job skills you're looking for. Say you want a salesperson who can do paperwork or stock inventory. Or perhaps you want a technician who can do a little selling, like writing up an order or cross-selling a customer.

If this is your first employee, I suggest you find someone whose strength is your weakness. If you're disorganized, find an organizer. If you hate selling, find someone who likes serving customers. The great part about this strategy is that it frees you from the drudgery and allows you to focus more time on what you love doing. It's a win-win situation.

Once you've defined the job, write it down. Creating a job description is very important. When you meet a likable candidate, it can be easy to lose sight of your job description and end up hiring a "likable liability"—a great person who isn't so great for the job.

The better you define the job, the better chance you'll have of finding the right person for it.

Break down the position into job duties—five or 10 tasks you expect

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## HIRE Power: Jobs Bill Gives Employers New Tax Credits

The HIRE Act (Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment) gives shops an incentive to hire unemployed workers.

The new legislation offers employers a 6.2-percent tax credit on the Social Security portion of FICA for any workers hired between Feb. 3, 2010, and Jan. 1, 2011. The employee must have worked less than 40 hours in the 60 days prior to being hired and sign an IRS W-11 affidavit stating they meet these requirements.

"The best part is that you're getting your tax credit immediately," says Steve Kamerschen vice president of sales for Corporate Payroll Services ([www.corpay.com](http://www.corpay.com)). "We've seen a slight uptick in the number of new hires at the companies we serve already."

There is also a second tax incentive of up to \$1,000 you can claim on your 2011 tax returns for qualified workers who are employed for 52 or more consecutive weeks.

"This is a great time to be hiring," says Kamerschen. "There are a lot of quality people out there who are unemployed to choose from."

For IRS form W-11 or for details on either credit, search "HIRE Act" on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or ask your tax or payroll advisor.

— Phil Sasso

Don't let a time crunch rush you into hiring the wrong person. Figure out a temporary solution to your overfilled schedule so you can concentrate on finding the best employee for the job long-term. (Photo by Beth Sasso)

MILITARY - Branch of Service:  
Describe any military training received below:

### Generic Employment Application

Employer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>		Telephone Number
Name (Last, First, Middle)		Message Number
Address		E-mail Address
City/State/Zip		

Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?  Yes  No  
 Are You Applying For:  FT  PT  Temp      What Shift(s) Will You Work?  Days  Evenings  Nights      May We Contact Present Employer?  Yes  No

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY - Begin With Most Recent Employment			
Dates From	To	Company Name	City, State
Titles and Duties -			
Reason for Leaving:		Supervisor's Name	Telephone Number
Dates From	To	Company Name	City, State
Titles and Duties -			
Reason for Leaving:		Supervisor's Name	Telephone Number
Dates From	To	Company Name	City, State
Titles and Duties -			
Reason for Leaving:		Supervisor's Name	Telephone Number
Dates From	To	Company Name	City, State
Titles and Duties -			
Reason for Leaving:		Supervisor's Name	Telephone Number
Dates From	To	Company Name	City, State
Titles and Duties -			

this person to do regularly. Listing job duties is important, no matter if you're hiring an experienced technician or a young part-timer.

Take the part-timer. His or her job duties might read: "clean-up showroom, stock shelves, sweep shop floor, answer phones, update website, and other duties as assigned." It's always a good idea to have "other job duties as assigned" on the list to avoid "it's not my job" complaints as well as potential legal issues. (I think some wedding vows should read "...love, honor, cherish, and other duties as assigned.")

Remember, not only are you looking for a job fit, so is your employee. No one wants to be surprised on the first day that the job isn't what they applied for.

The job description and duties will also come in useful when it's time to do a performance review. Having a clearly defined job allows you to measure your employee's performance.

## Getting Applicants

You may have heard other shop owners complain that it's hard to find good help. More than likely they haven't drawn from a big enough pool of applicants to find the right one.

It's a lot like fishing. If the lake was just stocked, you're more likely to catch a keeper than if the lake has been over-fished. In the same way, you're more likely to find the right employee if you have 20 applicants than if you have two.

So, you need to do everything you can to drum up as many job applicants as possible, so you have more to choose from. You don't want to end up with your only prospect being your cousin's daughter's boyfriend.

A sign in your window and an ad in the local paper are nice. But most jobs are never listed in the want ads. So, it's best to start by putting your feelers out through the folks you deal with every day.

If you're looking for someone experienced, give copies of your job description to your mobile tool dealer and your parts supplier. Ask them for referrals. They have connections with others shops and know experienced people. Rather than damage their relationship with you, they'll usually only refer prospects they trust. That serves as a prescreening function, so you can avoid wasting your time interviewing a guy who thinks he's a performance technician because he once washed a race car.

If you're looking for an entry-level person or part-timer, you might ask the high school auto teacher or community college or vocational school instructor to tell their best students about your job opening. You may have just the job a student like this would thrive at.

Back to your want ad. Writing a want ad may sound hard. But the way I look at it, someone has already done all the hard work. All you need to do is assemble the pieces.

Some candidates will submit resumes, others will expect to complete a job application. (Docstoc.com Start by looking on some of the popular job search engines like Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, or even Craigslist.com for similar job listings, (you might use this technique to develop your job description and list of duties, too.). Print out the three or four listings your think

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Use INFO #28

# BUSINESS BASICS



Be sure to use your network of industry contacts to help you find the right person for your particular situation. (Photos by Beth Sasso)



sound most like your opening. Take a bit from here and some things from there and add a few thoughts of your own. Pull them all together to create the working job description/help wanted ad for your situation.

Now, you can let a pro take over. Call your local newspaper classified ad department or fax/email them your write-up and ask them to help you turn it into a killer want ad. They write classified ads every day. You stick to headers; let them handle headlines. Once the ad runs, use the same wording in online ads on websites like Craigslist.com.

### Sorting Job Applicants

Some applicants will submit resumes, others will expect to complete a job application. So, you should probably have some applications on file. You can often pick up a packet of applications at a local office supply store. Or you can find hundreds of editable job apps online (Google “free employment application template”).

Having an employment application in Word or PDF format will

allow you to email an application to a prospective employee so they can return it faster.

As the resumes and applications come in by mail or email, quickly look them over and store them into two stacks: “Maybe” and “Maybe Not.” You’ll still want to review both stacks carefully later, before you rule anyone out entirely. But this will give you a quick way to determine if you’re ready to start interviewing.

Once you have enough “Maybes,” you’ll want to start making calls. But don’t let those big stacks of paper fool you into thinking the hard work is done. I hate to be a downer, but the hard work has just begun.

In our next article, we’ll tackle the steps needed to interview and ultimately hire the right person, and get them started on the path to success.

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