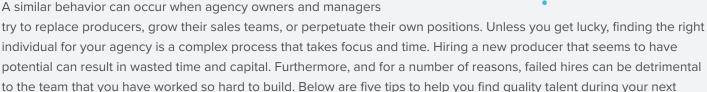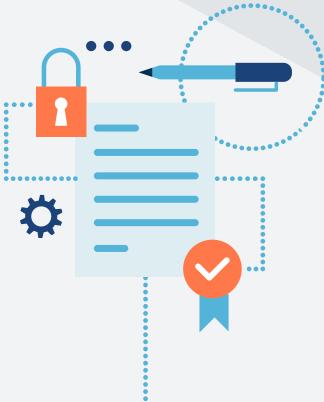# Leavitt Group

Recently, I purchased a used off-road go-kart for my 11-year-old son, Jackson. After a few hundred dollars and several hours of quality father-son time, Jackson was the envy of all the young kids in our cul-de- sac as he sped around an adjacent empty lot. I should add that he was also now the source of concern for most of their parents, my wife included.

One evening I found Jackson in our backyard with two of his friends removing the engine from his go-kart. The three boys had somehow acquired an eleven-horsepower snowblower engine and they intended to install it in place of the existing six-horsepower engine. Long story short, the engine was not compatible for many reasons. Additionally, many hours were wasted and the good motor was damaged in the process. The eleven-horsepower engine had potential but resulted in setting the process back because the execution was not well thought out.

A similar behavior can occur when agency owners and managers try to replace producers, grow their sales teams, or perpetuate their own positions. Unless you get lucky, finding the right individual for your agency is a complex process that takes focus and time. Hiring a new producer that seems to have potential can result in wasted time and capital. Furthermore, and for a number of reasons, failed hires can be detrimental to the team that you have worked so hard to build. Below are five tips to help you find quality talent during your next producer hire:

1. Referrals! Referrals! Referrals!

Don't limit yourself to the first two or three potential candidates that come to YOUR mind. Surprisingly, this is extremely common. The larger the pool of candidates that you can build, the greater the chances of finding the right hire. Social media outlets and job sites are a tremendous resource and should be utilized. However, data shows that referrals are more likely to become the best hires. A referred new hire is often culturally compatible and has an emotional connection within the office that motivates them to succeed.

When asking for referrals, keep in mind that A-players know A-players. Start by asking the top people in your network and at your agency who they think would be a good fit. Be willing to offer a financial incentive to the referrer for any hired candidate.

2. Keep Your Biases and Mental Shortcuts in Check!

Conducting a productive interview takes practice. If a candidate has characteristics or interests that we admire, our nature is prone to give them the benefit of any doubt. The opposite can occur for candidates who do not share our interests. A simple but effective way to keep our biases and mental shortcuts from ruining the effectiveness of an interview is to ask simple follow-up questions such as, "Why?" "How?" or "Please explain." Don't let your mind fill in the blanks to comments such as, "I was just looking for a career change," "My boss and I didn't see eye-to-eye," or "I've always been successful." These types of statements teach you nothing about the candidate, and if you don't ask follow-up questions your final decision will be based on your biased imagination.

3. It's All About the Who and Not About the What

Until hiring managers completely figure out this principle, leadership books will continue to be written about hiring based on a person's abilities rather than their work experience or for personal reasons. But for now, authors of these books will continue to line their pockets... good for them.

I've asked the following question to many agency owners and leaders: "What is the number one attribute that makes a new producer successful?" Answers include tenacity, work ethic, personable, intelligent, service-oriented, and so on. Never have I been told, "Insurance experience." Having industry experience should not be diminished, but it is secondary to a person's work ethic, relationship skills, intelligence, and ability to drive business.

During the interview, you should focus on uncovering patterns of behavior that give evidence to who the candidate is and not be blinded by the job titles on their resume.

4. Don't Overspend and Don't be Cheap

Finding a great candidate is exciting. By this point in the process, you have likely built a good relationship with the prospective new hire and you want to get them in the door. In today's world, it is necessary that you pay a salary, commission subsidy, or draw. Your competitive side with tell you to break the bank if necessary. Your frugal side will be offended because no one gave you a salary when you started.

Most strong candidates will be coming to your agency with at least a few years of career experience. This means that they likely have the expenses of homes, cars, and/or kids. The contract should be designed to cover their expenses, not to instantly make them rich. Becoming wealthy is their responsibility. Find a candidate who is hungry to build their personal net worth and give them what they need to maintain a slightly comfortable standard of living at home.

5. "Mentorship is The Key to Unlocking Each of Our Entrepreneurial Spirits" – Richard Branson

If you have not already done so, start preparing to become a mentor to at least one new producer. Sadly, the odds are not in your favor to find a "plug-and-pay" candidate. Because of the nature of our business, good producers tend to have lengthy tenures at the companies they work for. Top industry professionals are going to command top pay as well.

Think of it like this — you are trying to find another you. You are driven, great with clients, and have several years of experience in the industry. You have strengths that took years to develop. You are rare. Rather than wasting time to find a clone of yourself, let's try to find someone like you when you began in this industry. They have all the raw talent, but they are in an increasingly complex industry. A new producer will benefit greatly from your guidance. Building a strong sales team around you is far wiser than trying to do all the producing yourself.

// **To find out more about this process, please contact anyone on the affiliations team or Brent Davis at (435) 865-2987.**

Brent Davis
Vice President Talent Development

Agencies affiliated with Leavitt Group enjoy the benefit of hiring producer candidates utilizing these five tips. Leavitt Group's Talent Search & Development team has many years of experience recruiting and hiring quality sales people and developing them into world-class insurance producers. They've mastered the process of casting a wide net and narrowing candidates down to the very best one or two before hand-delivering them to agency co-owners.