Four steps to optimize virtual hires

Article

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Four steps to optimize virtual hires

Mastering the selection processes in 2021 is critical for companies looking to have the most skilled staff.

Hiring processes changed dramatically last year, as the pandemic forced interviews and evaluations to take place remotely. When done correctly, virtual contracting can be far superior to its live counterpart, offering greater speed, ease and accessibility. Although remote interviews deny the opportunity to meet candidates in person, observe how they perform in the environment, and assess how they fit into the corporate culture – all core elements of the face-to-face hiring model – our latest research concludes that the benefits of virtual hiring outweigh these conditions.

Currently, organizations have no choice but to adopt remote methods to recruit new staff, so mastering virtual hiring processes is essential for companies looking to have the most skilled staff. 75% of the companies that have hired new elements during the pandemic have had to transform their selection processes from the beginning.

Our intention was to discover the secret to making optimal hires, for which we analyzed 300 job interviews, conducted in March and December 2020. Thanks to our analysis, we found four steps that companies can take towards optimal distance hiring.

1. Spend enough time. Good preparation is required – from writing an attractive job description to solving video calling platform problems – before interviewing any candidate, and it all takes time.

Companies must carefully craft job offers, be clear, concise and free from bias to attract more qualified and diverse candidates. As Liz Wessel, CEO and co-founder of WayUp, explained in the course of our research: "The way you write a job predicts who your next employee will be, because language affects who is applying."

In order to identify the most qualified candidates, among all the contestants, recruiters must previously determine what they intend to find in the applications; in addition, they need to make sure that they have set aside enough time to review each of them and their candidates correctly. Consider that in more than 150 virtual interviews, we found that interviewers had underestimated the time they required to get to know their candidates.

Another important aspect to prepare is to choose a family communication platform, be it Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom or Skype, so that interviewers can avoid or solve possible technical failures. Companies are required to provide detailed instructions for the use of any platform that is employed during the selection process and should encourage candidates to also check their use in advance. (If 2020 taught us anything, it's to expect the unexpected, and that with kids, pets, and temperamental technology the order of the day, anything can happen.)

2. Be prudent and attentive to detail. When candidates do not have the opportunity to visit an office, many features of the organization and the position itself may not be as apparent as before, so clearer descriptions or explanations are now required. Our study concluded that companies should be direct and offer details when describing the position, the responsibilities involved, and during the interview.

Interviewers should ask direct questions to get the answers they need. Instead of starting with the typical "Tell me about yourself," better ask specific questions, such as "What was your biggest challenge at Company X?" Don't be afraid to take a few seconds to take notes; candidates can

expand their answers if they wish, during silences. When recruiters took notes, candidates' satisfaction increased to more than 70%, because it gave them the opportunity to think and reflect in the middle of the interview, so they felt more confident.

Details matter in both the presentation and the conversation: we found that more than 60% of candidates were distracted by the use of virtual funds. To ensure that interviewers represent the organization well, they should choose as a background a suitable image, be it a virtual office or a corporate brand, if necessary.

The choice of microphone and webcam is also critical, as well as remembering to mute to avoid interference and the conversation going wrong. Conducting interviews from a well-lit location, with excellent Internet connectivity, not only improves the image of the brand – by 80%, according to our analysis – but also facilitates communication.

Converse authentically. Remote interviews can now serve as the first substantial interaction a potential employee has with a company, but the truth is that Zoom calls are boring; 80% of respondents consider video calls to be more monotonous than in-person interviews. This is an obvious problem when many interviews are conducted in a single session.

The first challenge for any recruiter is not to get bored, but it's easier said than done. Typically, interviews consist of a "question-answer, question-answer" pattern, which flows worse on screen than live, since the lack of social gestures can lead to awkward pauses or long monologue-like answers.

Our study suggests that, rather, interviewers start a real conversation with each candidate and tailor each interview to their answers, to stay attentive and present. In more than 275 interviews, we found that this method increased candidates' satisfaction by up to 90% and made them feel comfortable, which in turn allowed their recruiters to gain useful information and thus improved the hiring process.

A more authentic conversation could attract a greater number of candidates, as 75% of candidates are likely to feel willing to share their experience on social media, if it is positive, compared to 62% if it is a negative experience, whether they end up hired or not.

It answers the concerns of the candidates head-on. Our study concluded that it is essential to address any concerns directly: in more than 264 interviews, we observed that candidates expected their interviewer to be able to answer questions about the method of remote work and organizational culture in the pandemic. WayUp's Wessel identified some of the candidates' top concerns when they are starting their career and suggested possible answers.

The implementation of the home office skyrocketed in 2020, so, today as never before, it became necessary to have a work space at home. "Before accepting a remote job, a candidate will want to know the kind of technology they require to perform their tasks correctly," Wessel said, noting that candidates may feel concerned about access to these tools, "anything from having a laptop, to having a good Wi-Fi signal." Candidates for more specific positions might need equipment they would normally have available in the office, such as video editing equipment, or something less expensive, a special headset or another screen.

Aware that organizations around the world have adopted new policies in light of the transformations caused by the health crisis, candidates will also want to know what the changes in the company culture have been. Recruiters are required to share details with candidates about how they have fostered a sense of unity or how they have improved remote productivity.

Wessel pointed to the example of Apex Systems, who "created [branded content](#) where they showed how they adopted more flexible attitudes for staff and how, at the end of the day, the culture was strengthened during the pandemic."

The Last Word

Virtual hiring is here to stay. The advantages of accessibility, speed and ease can greatly improve the experience of a job interview, while also helping managers to choose new talent in an optimal way and with more information. That said, the virtual hiring process must be based on the four pillars we've outlined above to find and hire the best employees.