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A catalyst for connection

WHITE PAPER

> Get Better Employment Screening with a Custom Skills Survey



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Collecting and assessing resumes is currently the most popular way of evaluating candidates to determine which ones are the best. Due to the nature of the circumstances under which a resume is designed and made, it is certain that it cannot reveal the whole story of a candidate – leaving the strong possibility that a hiring team is going to overlook many highly qualified candidates.

Oftentimes, candidates may not even alter their resume to fit the job description – or, it is even possible that the job description is lacking sufficient details and the candidate cannot provide a finely tuned resume for the position. Either way, a resume simply will not be enough to determine the top talent. More information is needed.

A Skills Survey is another powerful tool that can be customized by your company to give you the extra insight you need to be able to make highly informed decisions. It will let you peer much deeper into the candidate's experience and attitudes, putting them on a level playing field to help you determine the best easier.

The Skills Survey, and other tools for candidate evaluation, were designed by Patrick Ropella, who has been an executive recruiter for more than 25 years. He has been providing top talent to worldwide companies such as Dow, Johnson & Johnson, DuPont, BASF, Shell, GE, Pfizer, and many more – and they continue to come back to him when more positions are open.

In this whitepaper, Patrick Ropella will show you why you should not base hiring decisions on resumes alone, what a Skills Survey can do for you, and he will even show you how to customize one to enable you to truly get a much better and more practical insight into the candidates you are considering. Perhaps just as important is that he will also show you what you need to do to prepare a hiring team to be able to deliver what you expect – the best candidate.

Why Job Interviews Often Fail to Deliver the Best Candidates

It is not unusual that many companies look at interviews with candidates as something that can be done on the fly. It is almost as though their attitude is –that no preparation is needed. Because of this, it happens all too often that employees are often asked to participate in a job interview – and it often happens with only thirty seconds to spare.

On the way to the interview room, the employee is handed a copy of the resume, and given a quick rundown of its highlights. With this kind of advance preparation, is it really surprising that companies often end up with employees that are clearly not top talent?

If that has happened to you, did it make you feel that you really brought very little value to the overall interview process? Did you also wonder if the person being interviewed realized how little prepared you really were? And, do you think that if they could tell you were not ready for it, it might have made the candidate feel less important?

Thinking back to your own job hunting experiences, were you able to tell how well prepared the interviewers were who met with you? Did you notice that your opinion of the company and your interviewers was negatively influenced by their lack of preparation for the interview?

Finding interviewers who are really prepared and qualified for interviewing is not easy. As a result of a lack of preparation, they bring little to the interview process, and they stick out like a sore thumb. During the interview, it can create a number of awkward moments and will tend to create problems and confusion. There is also little doubt that it will give candidates a bad impression of your company, too.

Preparing for Quality Interviews — and Results

Companies will often declare that they want the best employees. The interview process is undeniably part of that attempt to choose the best talent. There is no doubt that interviews help you to weed out the non- or low-performers, and that they will help you to get the top performers, as well as the ones that would be a good fit for your company.

Choosing the best employees for your company is a good strategy, and this is stressed by Jack Welch, who has been a former chairman and CEO of GE. In his book, called *Winning*, he said that “Nothing matters more in winning

than getting the right people on the field. All the clever strategies and advanced technologies in the world are nowhere near as effective without great people to put them to work.”

Most companies today believe that choosing the best people can be accomplished by collecting the relevant information, and then carefully assessing, evaluating, and comparing it to other candidates. While this method appears to be rather straightforward – is it really? Does this method of gathering and analyzing information really enable you to make the right selection? How has it worked for your company so far? Are all of your employees top notch? Sadly, most companies find that only about 20 percent of their employees would fit that bill.

While many people have come to believe that “knowledge is power,” the truth is that it is not enough. Wisdom has to be added to make it work. Wisdom enables people to be able to use knowledge correctly.

There is no doubt that simply reading a resume will give you some knowledge about a candidate, and an interview will enable you to learn more. The thing that will make a difference is that you must know what to do with the knowledge you gain from those tools. This is where you get the real value that you need in your decision-making process. This is what this whitepaper is about.

The Skills Survey - Discovering Who's Got the Skills

When you were ready to enter the working world, you probably were given a job application and told to fill it out. Most likely, you probably had no idea of what a resume was, and it is just as unlikely that you knew what should go on one. Even if you did know these things, though, you probably did not have any information of real value to put on it anyway – so why bother?

Entry-level employees will typically have a lack of applicable information. This is why an application is used. This form will provide the employer with enough information to decide whether or not you are going to be hired.

There are other situations where applications will also be used, but it will often be at the other end of the hiring process. They are not used, however, during the interview process when it is for a position above entry-level. In some cases, a company will often give candidates an application as a final checklist item just before they bring them

on board. Even then, while the information may be used in order to do a background check or for benefits processing – they still are not used until sometime after the hiring decision has been made.

The Problem with Resumes

Even though a resume is nearly always asked for when applying for an above entry-level position, it also has some shortcomings – just like an application. The truth is that both documents really only provide an employer with a baseline of information – and that can hardly be called sufficient. Determining the real fitness of a candidate requires much more information than that.

In order to prove the point, take a moment and think about your own resume. Does it really contain all of your experience? The obvious answer is no – otherwise the document would be way too long for practical purposes.

Typical resumes only display the highlights of an individual's career. In addition, they are also usually generalized so that there can be an emphasis on the scope of their capacities and skills. Then, the resume is also customized to ensure that it will present the individual as being a good fit for the position. If they should fail to do this, then it is very unlikely that their resume will be seen by the people responsible to make the hiring decisions. Many candidates never take this step because they think it is too time consuming – even if they are well qualified.

Further problems come from resumes when you realize that the applicant has to customize their information according to the job description. This can create a real problem if they do not know enough about the actual job's duties if the details of the job are only given in too brief of a form.

This creates a problem for both the applicant and the company that is going to base their determination about a candidate's worthiness on a resume. How is a candidate going to be able to provide a resume showing that they are highly qualified for the position, if the very job ad they are answering is insufficient and seriously lacking in details and expected outcomes? In spite of this, resumes are still the main criteria which HR and hiring managers will use to make hiring decisions.

When a candidate works at a competitor's company in an identical position as the one you have open, you would rightly expect that a resume would show that they are

the ideal candidate under those circumstances. Is this what really happens? Probably not. Instead, you are apt to receive about 100 resumes from candidates who are labeled as being "potentially qualified," and then this number gets reduced to about 25. After further elimination, you might end up with one to three candidates as being an obvious match.

If the same position were given a much more detailed and accurate job description at the start, you would undoubtedly have considerably higher numbers of those who are clearly qualified for the position – because they would then know how to write their resumes. Who knows how many highly qualified people were overlooked simply because they did not know enough details about the job when they submitted their resumes! It is even quite possible that you may have overlooked the most highly qualified candidate. This should show you the importance of updating your job description whenever you have a new job position come open.

Even when more detailed job descriptions are given, it will still be rather rare that you get many resumes that show that a particular candidate lines up exactly with your needs. In some cases, it will certainly require some mental gymnastics to see how the two documents line up at all – and this is sometimes true even when they hold the same job position in a competitor's company!

While performing your candidate search, you want to remember that a resume is merely presenting data in its raw form. You will still need to perform interviews in order to get a much clearer picture. There is, however, something you need to do before you start interviewing candidates.

Time for the SMART Skills Survey

When the author of this whitepaper, Patrick Ropella, developed the SMART system to help determine the best candidates for his executive search company, he designed several tools to be able to assess candidates more efficiently. His company has delivered highly qualified candidates to many of the world's top companies, such as Dow, Johnson & Johnson, DuPont, BASF, Shell, GE, Pfizer, and many more – and they continue to do so now.

One of the tools in the SMART system, which is called the Skills Survey (can be found on the Ropella Website), should be given to candidates prior to any interviews. It will provide you with more data that will enable you to make a

more accurate assessment of a candidate's potential and fit – before you ever meet them.

One thing that makes the Skills Survey different from a regular job application is that it enables the company to customize it – and it does not take long to do it. This makes it even more valuable to you. After you have upgraded your job description to include clear objectives and expectations, then it will be easy to use his information to gain more key knowledge about your candidate.

Just so that you can see how this will work for you, here is a look at an ad for a hospital registration clerk that has been upgraded. Now, it includes expected outcomes of the position – which have been underlined:

1. Do you take pride in your healthcare career? Do you care about people? Does solving problems fulfill you? Then you'll fit right in here! We have one of the top customer satisfaction ratings in the country, and we got there by always placing a focus on developing our people and taking care of our customers and staff.
2. We use MEDITECH (healthcare information systems). Our preferred candidate would have some experience (1 to 3 years is ideal), but experience is not required. If you have some other information systems experience, we can train you to use MEDITECH.
3. A minimum of 2 years (5 years is ideal) of previous Emergency Room registration experience is required.
4. We're open 24/7...Want to work some nights or weekends? We need you! Preferred candidates show the flexibility to rotate schedules and share nights and weekends and have a verifiable track record of doing so.

5. We serve a wide variety of customers, so you need to have experience serving all kinds of people. We serve all races, all income levels, and all types of personalities. Preferred candidates enjoy diversity, are relationship builders, and have demonstrated success working in a similar role.
6. Things move fast here—you need to be able to multitask and stay very organized. We track productivity levels and expect a minimum of 10 percent improvement annually. We also encourage and measure innovative ideas, systems improvements, and creative thinking.
7. In an Emergency Room, it can get stressful and emotional as injuries and healings create emotional lows and highs. We have to regulate ourselves to meet the needs of our customers, their families, and our staff. Candidates need to be stable, well adjusted, and capable of handling high pressure moments.

Once the job description and ad are completed, you can easily rearrange those statements into a customized Skills Survey form:

Emergency Room Registration Clerk

Please type your answers in BLUE and return ASAP to bonnie.robinson@prestigemedicalcenter.com

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Tell me why you have a career in the healthcare field. Have you received any recognition or awards in your role as it relates to customer service? If yes, describe the recognition and/or awards received:

2. Describe examples of the most significant problems you've solved. How did you identify the problem(s) and then go about solving them?

3. What experience do you have using MEDITECH? How many years have you used the software? Please describe your level of competency and any special training you've received. If you don't have MEDITECH experience, please describe what other information systems experience and/or training you've received.

4. How many years of previous Emergency Room registration experience have you had? With what hospitals? Please outline dates for each position where you worked in an Emergency Room registration role.

5. Have you ever worked nights or weekends? If so, where and for how long at any one stretch? And/or: Describe your experience with rotational scheduling.

6. Are you available now to work nights or weekends? If so, for how long at any one stretch?

7. Please describe the demographic breakdown of the hospitals where you've worked. Were the customers mostly high-income or low-income? Were the patients predominantly Caucasian, Latino, or African-American?

8. How would you describe your organizational skills? What methods or systems do you use to stay well organized?

9. How have you been recognized for creating better ways of doing things? What's been your most innovative (or creative) idea or your greatest system improvement?

10. How has your performance been tracked with numbers in the past? Have you been recognized for any productivity increases? If so, describe them:

11. While working around an Emergency Room, how do you cope with or regulate stress and emotions? If you were training someone who is new to this type of high pressure environment, what would you suggest to them to help them cope with the stress and emotions that come with this role?

12. Please outline your education and any special training courses you've taken that you feel will benefit you in this role.

13. If asked one of these questions during an interview, how would you answer: Why are you looking to change jobs? What is it that has motivated you to consider this position?

14. This position will be located in Atlanta, GA.

a. Are you currently a commutable distance from the site or will you need to relocate?

b. If you will need to relocate, do you have any relocation issues or special requirements? If so, please list them.

References: Please provide at least three references. The first priority is past bosses, then employees, then peers, and then customers. Per the example below, please provide relevant details and contact information for your references:

Example: Bob Smith, current Director of Administration at General Hospital, 412-123-4567, Email: bob.smith@generalhospital.com.

Bob was the administration manager and my direct boss while I was a registration clerk at General Hospital from 2006 to 2009.

Note: We will not contact any references until after completing the interview process or before notifying you first.

1)

2)

3)

After looking at the above example, you should be able to see that developing a customized Skills Survey is not difficult. From experience, we have found that it should be limited to between 10 and 15 questions. You may only need 5 strong outcome questions, but you may need as many as 20. It will depend on the specialized search you want to perform.



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