



SkillSharpener Web Extra

Look for positive energy when hiring reps

Negative attitudes in the workplace — in the customer service center in particular — can ruin morale and undermine productivity, says Jon Gordon, a productivity consultant and author of *The Energy Bus*. In an organization with a positive culture, on the other hand, “the collective positive energy of team members influences each individual, creating a perpetual cycle of positive energy that affects attitudes, productivity, and customer perceptions.”

How do you ensure that you are recruiting people with positive energy? Can you hire for positive energy? What should managers be looking for?

“Optimism is the first thing managers should be looking for when hiring for positive energy,” says Gordon. “Ask job candidates this question: ‘Do you feel lucky?’ Lucky people attract good fortune, and I would prefer to have lucky people — or people who perceive themselves to be lucky — working for me. If somebody says, ‘Oh, no, I’m never lucky,’ take that as a sign of negativity. Optimism, luckiness, attitude, and spirit, these are all things you should be looking for in the interview process.”

Another important question to ask is, “How do you deal with adversity?” says Gordon. “How a person describes the process of overcoming adversity or challenges in a past job or other situation will tell you a lot about the type of attitude they will bring to your workplace.”

Some people can put on a positive facade during interviews, of course, and to get behind the facade, Gordon suggests that managers need to get a little creative with their interview process and style.

“Southwest Airlines, for instance, auditions people — putting them into a job-like situation or role-play and asking them to behave as they would if they were an employee,” he says. “Another strategy that Southwest uses is to interview people in groups — interviewing three or four job candidates together to see how they interact with each other.”

Gordon also believes that job candidates should be interviewed by a number of people, rather than just human resources or the department manager. Frontline supervisors and even team leaders should be part of the process so that candidates are seen from a number of perspectives, and so that candidates get a better sense of the job and the culture that they will be getting into.

Gordon is also in favor of letting frontline customer service reps play a part in the process for the same reason. In fact, it’s very important during the interview process to give the candidate a sense of the environment and the culture that they will be working in, says Gordon.

If you’re building a positive culture and you’re looking for reps with positive attitudes, let candidates know that. “Tell them straight out that you don’t allow negativity, that you don’t allow mindless complaining,” he says.

“The bottom line is, if you want to build the positive energy in your organization, you have to hire for energy,” Gordon says. “So do you genuinely like the person? Are they positive? Do they have good energy? If you start paying attention to those things, you will begin to see more clearly what you are looking for and which candidates have it.”

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