



# Wading Through the Talent Pool

*CM&P* takes an in-depth look at the hiring process

By: Jordan Brandes

**A** company is only as good as its employees and when it comes time to bring in new talent, the experts agree, the process must be done right. At a contract manufacturer the human resource department is designed to help you and your company in its task of finding new talent in the workplace. In order to make sure that your company hires the best professionals in the marketplace, both manufacturers and the human resources department must work together. Knowing the role of the HR department can help the process of bringing in new talent run smoother and faster.

“Human resources exists to achieve the organiza-

and abilities of a company's human capital relates to an employer's competitive advantage and advances the organization forward. The idea is that there is a correlation between the functions of human resources and the company's performance. Therefore, the human resources operation must be in concert with the overall business strategy,” explains Christina Stovall, director of the human resources services center at Eules, Texas-based outsourcing firm Odyssey OneSource.

## HR and Management

When it comes to the hiring process, there are two factions at work: human resources and management. “In a well-oiled company, they should work hand-in-hand with everything coordinated by human resources to make sure the process runs smoothly,” says Schroeder.

Ideally, human resources will design the entire process from job description and identifying the final candidates to making an offer and integrating the employee into the



**“Business is nothing but a human interaction conducted within a commercial context.” – Keld Jensen**

meet our needs (communication and benevolent concern).

- Do they communicate with openness and transparency (communication and integrity)?
- When our interests conflict how do they resolve the issue in a fair way (alignment of interests, benevolence)?

**Sinta:** We believe short-term trust is built on a project-by-project basis, so, again, ensuring brand equity, maintaining efficiency and delivering on intentions from concept to the consumer. Long-term trust is about taking care of a client when things don't turn out as planned. Resolving a bad situation and fixing what went wrong, instead of falling back on a limitation of liability clause in your agreement, will help build long-term trust.

### **CM&P> What actions can end a partnership with a contract manufacturer?**

**Jensen:** From an internal perspective, there are a number of factors that can contribute to a partnership falling apart. These include dishonesty, lack of communication, failure to meet contractual obligations, distrust, the inability to collaborate and work together creatively, changing the rules midstream, withholding important information, creating an imbalance of rights and responsibilities, issuing threats and indulging in other combative or unfair tactics, and being greedy when the benefits begin to roll in. In the end, it is the human factor which matters the most to the success or failure of the business relationship.

**Hurley:** Failure to honor one's word and a loss of confidence due to a failure to deliver in a mission-critical area will often cause a loss of trust and an end to the relationship. Trust can be repaired but it requires a good deal of effort because it involves changing certain perceptions of trustworthiness back to the pre-trust violation levels. Real reforms and real demonstration of trustworthiness over time are required.

**Sinta:** Mistakes will undoubtedly end a partnership. When a company makes a mistake without the ability to look at the root cause and implement corrective actions to avoid the same mistake in the future, a partnership will

### **CM&P> A good partnership goes both ways, what can a CPG company do to gain the trust of a contract manufacturer?**

**Jensen:** First and foremost, it begins with respect. This entails respect for both the manufacturer as an organization and the representative of the manufacturer as an individual. It also includes respect for the contractual commitments and the negotiation process itself. Other key factors include openness, honesty and good communication skills, such as being an empathetic listener and being able to deliver messages effectively. Demonstrating an understanding of the other party's position and a willingness to listen to their concerns goes a long way to building trust in this context. Indicating a willingness to meet their demands halfway in exchange for something in return can advance the relationship. Showing the other party that there is much to be gained through a spirit of cooperation and that both parties can actually realize more from the transaction if they work together also fosters a trusting relationship. Trust is a relationship, and if a person is not able to communicate it first, and then get it back in return, it is worth almost nothing.

**Hurley:** Trust and distrust are contagious. When a supplier enters into the relationship with a contract manufacturer with a trusting orientation, it tends to induce this same orientation in the contract manufacturer. The opposite is also true. When a supplier begins with suspicion and no trust, it teaches its partners to do the same. When suppliers model the five key dimensions of trustworthiness (alignment of interest, benevolence, capability, predictability and integrity and communication) it increases the odds that the contract manufacturer will reciprocate with like behaviors.

**Sinta:** In many industries, companies today are doing twice as much with a fraction of the staff. We find that people are generally looking for partners that will step up and lead rather than waiting to be led. They can gain our trust when they allow us to direct them in areas such as new technologies and different approaches to workflow. We find trust being built when companies aren't overly controlling and are open to hearing and implementing new methods and approaches that will ultimately lead to revenue and suc-

“As an internal function of an organization, human resource management entails the decisions, policies, practices and actions for the entire employee lifecycle. In practice, it can be everything from workforce planning, integrating candidates, and managing performance to properly exiting employees,” says Stovall.

### Who Decides

Before a company can begin the search for a good candidate, whether it is looking for a chief executive or a line manager, the first step is clearly defining what the position entails. “This depends on the size of the company and the position it is looking to fill,” says Beth Schroeder, general counsel at the Los Angeles-based law firm Silver & Freedman. “Usually it takes a handful of people to define the role they are looking to fill. They must look at what has worked in the past and see how it can be applied to the current position.” That is where human resources comes in, accessing the current situation and creating the definition for both the role they are looking to fill and who needs to be present in order to achieve goal.

Another key factor is whether or not the company has decided to conduct the hiring process in-house or through an outside firm. “There are a variety of ways a company can fill a position,” says Schroeder, “if [it] decides to conduct the process in-house, then it will most likely use its own human resources department. If it decides to hire from outside, the company can talk to a recruiter or even a trade association to help with the process. Many do not realize that trade associations are great when looking for new hires.” The human resources department would take the helm of this side of the project, coordinating with the outside company to make sure each step of the hiring process is taken care of in accordance with a company’s guidelines.

### The Interview

While the experts admit that every company approaches the hiring process in a different fashion, there are a few steps which are universal, such as sitting down for an interview. The interview can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours depending on how rigorous a process the HR staff has planned. After going before a panel of interviewers consisting of HR representatives, managers and employees that will most likely be working with the interviewee in the future, the potential candidates can be evaluated a number of ways, including psychologically and, in some cases, physically if the job demands heavy labor.

## Top Employee Interview Questions

Although much of the talent management process involves planning both before and after a new employee is hired the interview itself is fundamental. Below you will find some common questions that can be used during the interview of a manufacturer or anyone else with technical expertise:

1. Describe a critical system or program for which you acted as the primary developer and tell me how that system, program, or process is being used?
2. Describe for me a situation where you were required to gather a large amount of data, to analyze it objectively and to make a decision or a recommendation based on the results.
3. Describe a time when you had to build a collaborative relationship either within your department or outside in order to achieve a particular goal. What steps did you take to ensure this was a success?

Source: <http://www.blueskyinterviews.co.uk>

interviewing will know how to react in certain situations on the job,” explains Wienick. Often times the tests are written and contain questions meant to gauge how a candidate would respond both as a leader and a general employee. Like a square peg in a round hole, even if an employee interviews well they may not have the right skills for the task at hand.

Not all companies agree with the use of psychological testing in determining the right employee. “You can never test without running it by a lawyer first,” says Schroeder. Some questions may not be appropriate for the position and others may be unethical, she explains.

“A good interview and a good background check can usually tell you more about a person than a psychological test,” states Schroeder. A Google search can give you insight into a potential candidate as well. “People lie on resumes all the time, make sure to be thorough.” Googling a job applicant can show you information about