

# The Right Person for the Job

By Pamela Holloway

Selecting the *right* person for the job has never been more important than it is today. Mistakes are costly. According to Dr. Pierre Mornell, *if you make a mistake in hiring, and recognize and rectify the mistake within six months, the cost of replacing that employee is two and one-half times the person's annual salary.* Put another way, the wrong person earning \$50,000 will cost your company \$125,000. The wrong executive making \$100,000 will cost a quarter of a million dollars *if you rectify the mistake within six months!*

You've probably heard the term *right person right job* or *job fit* before. But what does it mean and how does one accomplish it? According to the experts (and this is one of those rare fields where there aren't many), job fit refers to *"the degree to which a person's cognitive abilities, interests and personality dynamics fit those required by the job."* (Chuck Russell – *Right Person Right Job, Guess or Know*)

The folks at Advantage Hiring describe job fit as *having a positive orientation to the nature of the work to be performed, the characteristics of the work environment, and the other demands and conditions of the work opportunity.*

If you're not sure what a *positive orientation to the demands and conditions of your work opportunity* is, much less whether you have it or not, think of it this way. Job fit is where the passions and talents of the individual match those required by the work and where the values of the individual are in sync with the values of the organization. You're doing what you do best and what you like doing with people who share your core values.

If you have job fit, you'll have personally experienced what athletes refer to as "being in the zone." That sense of everything clicking, you're at your best, you're on. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes the experience of what he refers to as "being fully engaged in one's work."

Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult or dangerous.

So job fit is great for employees, but why should employers care about it?

## Bottom Line Impact

Job fit isn't one of those warm and fuzzy concepts that you implement because it makes people feel better. It has been proven, many times over, that job fit positively effects performance, eliminates costly mistakes in hiring, lessens turnover, and can even be used to attract talent. Who wouldn't want to work for a company that provided regular *in the zone* experiences?

Job fit has a positive impact on the bottom line, or a negative impact if you don't have it. Caliper, a psychological testing and HR consulting firm, have conducted a number of studies that suggest that one of the main reasons for turnover is lack of job fit. Poor job fit as been associated with job dissatisfaction, higher levels of job-related stress, and intentions to leave the organization (Lovelace and Rosen, 1996)

Where there is job fit, satisfaction increases, turnover is reduced and people are more productive. Research by O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell (1991) shows that new hires whose values fit well with the values of the organization and culture tend to adjust more quickly, feel more satisfied, and remain with the organization longer.

John F. Binning and Anthony J. Adorno of the Human Resource Group, suggest that turnover can be reduced by 50-60% through job fit.

“We've been able to dramatically reduce voluntary turnover rates by 50-60% by using a Job Congruence System which 1) identifies specific negative job characteristics which are used to 2) create a custom assessment instrument in order to 3) screen out individual job candidates who are most likely to have a negative reaction to specific job characteristics.”

Binning and Adorno suggest a relatively simple, but effective approach: Find out what is most frustrating about the job and hire people who have the temperment and emotional competencies to best deal with it.

## Selections Based on Emotional Intelligence Provide Big Return

A key component of job fit is understanding and leveraging emotional competencies like self-discipline, interpersonal skills, empathy, and motivation. Companies who determine the emotional competencies that are most important for success in a job, and then purposely seek out people who have those qualities, are finding a significant return on investment. These are from Daniel Goleman's *Working With Emotional Intelligence*:

- At a global consumer beverage firm, 50 % of division managers were leaving within two years resulting in search costs of close to \$4 million. When the firm started to evaluate for competencies such as initiative, self-confidence, leadership, and the like, the retention rate was much greater – only 6 percent of new hires left within two years.
- At cosmetics giant, L’Oreal, sales agents who were selected for their strengths in emotional competence had 63 percent less turnover during their first year than did those whose selection disregarded their competence profile.
- Among newly hired sales reps at a start-up computer company, those hired for emotional competence were 90 percent more likely to finish their training than those hired on other criteria.

## How Job Fit Addresses Key Problem Areas

Job fit is not a “nice-to-have.” It is critical to success. It offers many benefits, solves many problems and enables companies to capitalize on key opportunities.

Retention & Turnover	When people are happy and fulfilled with their work, they are less likely to be lured away. Studies have shown that retention rates are higher where job fit is employed in both the initial selection process and in continuing career development
Brain Drain	Job fit helps blue the “brain drain” by helping you determine who else in the organization has traits similar to those in key positions.
Attracting Talent	Being an organization committed to people and providing meaningful work will help you attract start talent. Culture matters!
Recruiting & Staffing	Job fit assessments help you filter out applicants that aren’t good matches so that you can focus on those that are. Providing job fit information to potential candidates also helps discourage poor fits early in process and motivates <i>good fits</i> to action.
Performance	When people are matched with work that makes the most of their natural talents and is in sync with the passions, productivity increases.
Doing More With Less	Employees stand a far greater chance of being able to take on additional work if the work is in keeping with their natural talents (i.e. the stuff that comes easy for them).

## How Do You Achieve Job Fit?

There are many different kinds of tools and methods you can use to achieve job fit. It is critically important that you get to know not only people (look under the hood so to speak), but also the organization and nature of work – the context of the job.

One of the primary flaws in many assessment approaches is that they only look at the person. There is every manner of test these days for every type of competency one can imagine. You can assess for interpersonal skills, cognitive preferences, emotional intelligence, adaptive intelligence, performance under pressure, empathy, leadership, learning style, you name it. There is no doubt value in all (well maybe not all) of these process, but the key is that it does absolutely no good to assess a candidate without first assessing an organization and a job. How else do you know what you're looking for?

OK, so real job fit requires that you identify what it is you're looking for before you set out to find a match. Hey what a concept! You look at the job and determine both the explicit, technical skills required, but more importantly, the tacit, intuitive, emotionally based competencies that are important to success.

You also identify, if it hasn't been done already, the values and personality of the organization. What are the cultural characteristics that are important to fit? What does the organization value and therefore reward?

Think about it. If you only look for a match on the obvious things like technical skills and work experience in the same area, you're missing easily 50% of what actually determines success in an employee.

Again, study after study has shown that it's less about what you know and more about who you are. Emotional competencies, soft skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, motivation, these are the things that make a difference in terms of why one person succeeds and another doesn't. It's not about IQ, advanced credentials, or who you've worked for. It goes much deeper than that. It's about your deep interests, behavioral patterns, cognitive preferences, and emotional and social needs.

## Look Under the Hood

If you compare hiring an employee to buying a car (sadly, most of us put more time and effort into car selection than we do hiring), you realize that the way we typically go about hiring – Put out a request for a specific set of technical skills and hire the first person whose resume has those same skills listed. It's like buying a car because the list of features on the sticker matches what you were looking for. You wouldn't do that. You wouldn't buy a car without first looking under the hood, giving it a test drive, getting a "feel" for it.

Why shouldn't you do the same thing when you're hiring an employee? Here's how it translates:

- Look under the hood.....** Identify natural talents, passions, and motivations
- Test drive.....** Find out how they'll respond in real world situations
- How does it feel?.....** What's your gut feel - How well does this person "fit" the organization in terms of values and core competencies?

In Part II of the *Job Fitness Series*, we'll provide tools and guidance for integrating job fit into your recruiting, retention and performance strategies. We'll also provide information on specific tools and methods that will help you achieve job fit.