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## Human Resources

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### Recruiting: Surrounding Ourselves with the Right People

By Ron Alvesteffer  
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We started formulating our recruiting process five years ago. At that time, we were unhappy with our 15 percent turnover rate and not satisfied with our ability to predict whether a candidate would be a good fit for the position and for Service Express (SEI). Our recruiting experience told us there must be a better way to identify the right candidates. Since then, we have fine-tuned the process and brought our turnover rate down to less than 10 percent.

Our approach is a very thorough five-step process that can take up to two months to complete. Although being short staffed can put pressure on a team temporarily, hiring the wrong person can put pressure on the team even longer. If we hire the wrong person, they won't make it and they won't perform while they're here. We have to repeat the hiring process when someone leaves and we usually have to clean up a mess as well. By resisting the urge to hire quickly and sticking to the process that's proven to bring us the right people, we are able to build a great team. Our recruiting process is the tool we use to consistently hire people who are right for SEI.

#### Steps of the recruiting process

**Step 1:** Phone Interview which covers:

- The candidate's previous experience
- Opportunities the candidate is looking for
- Information about SEI and the position the candidate is seeking

**Step 2:** Face-to-Face Interview with Manager

We cover in more depth some of the same ground covered in the phone interview: the candidate's job history, why the candidate is looking for a position, and the type of opportunity they are seeking. In addition, we ask questions to determine if the candidate shares our values and philosophies - and has the traits and talents we look for.

**Step 3:** "Ride Along" with an Employee

Next, we ask the candidate to participate in a "ride-along." A ride-along is a day on the job in which the candidate shadows an employee in a position similar to the one they are applying for. Employees are encouraged to answer the candidate's questions about SEI openly and honestly and to express their opinions. We ask our employees not to try to influence candidates' decisions either way, but to tell them what they love about working at SEI and what challenges them about working here.

Feedback indicates that candidates appreciate the ride-along. It gives them a snapshot of a real day at SEI and they can ask questions that they might not feel comfortable asking a prospective manager. Experiencing the ride-along gives a candidate a better level of comfort about joining SEI if offered the position.

**Step 4:** Final Interview

When possible, we conduct the final interview with candidates at the corporate office in Grand Rapids to allow them to form a big picture view of our company. Candidates talk with managers in several departments they would interact with as employees, and they get an opportunity to ask any remaining questions. We get a last look at the candidate from the perspectives of three or four managers.

We follow up the final interview by calling at least three of the references provided, two of whom must be managers the candidate has worked for. Our caller pays attention to how the reference-giver answers our questions as well as to what he says.

**Step 5:** The Offer

Candidates going through our recruitment process gather so much knowledge about our company that the right candidates seem to buy in even before we make an offer. At this point, they believe they want to work here and have been talking to their families and friends about us. Employees at many companies start new positions hoping they'll fit in; our new employees have a high level of certainty about their decision and are excited to be at SEI.

#### Benefits of our recruiting process

- It helps us identify the right people.
- It lets us evaluate the candidate's behavior in various situations.
- It prevents the mistake of "falling in love" with a candidate too early in the process.
- It weeds out people we don't think will succeed at SEI.
- It gives current employees confidence that new employees will share their goals and values.
- It gives successful candidates the confidence that they've made the right decision.

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