

staff on board

Companies should not be shocked when employees quit. International consultant *Shari Harley* says there are many reasons for an employee to leave a company but a little effort into the 'on-boarding' process can help employers retain more staff for longer. She reveals more in this exclusive teaser to her upcoming *HR Summit* presentation

If you find that your staff stay less than a year or that the people you've hired aren't a good fit within your organisation, it could be time to start thinking about getting help with your recruiting processes. Shari Harley, an international consultant specialising in the development of young professionals, says learning the best way to interview and screen candidates can help any company in its search for the "right" talent.

"Let someone you trust with a good hiring track record screen your candidates," she suggests. "After each interview, sit down and understand how they formed their impressions, so that you make better decisions next time."

Harley believes hiring the right staff is too important to not get right. "Everyone can make bad hiring decisions," she tells *HRM*.

"Candidates are elusive and most will say anything to get hired. The more thorough, disciplined and deliberate you are, the better decisions you'll make."

The trick, she says, is to devote more time to the interview process. "You just can't hire

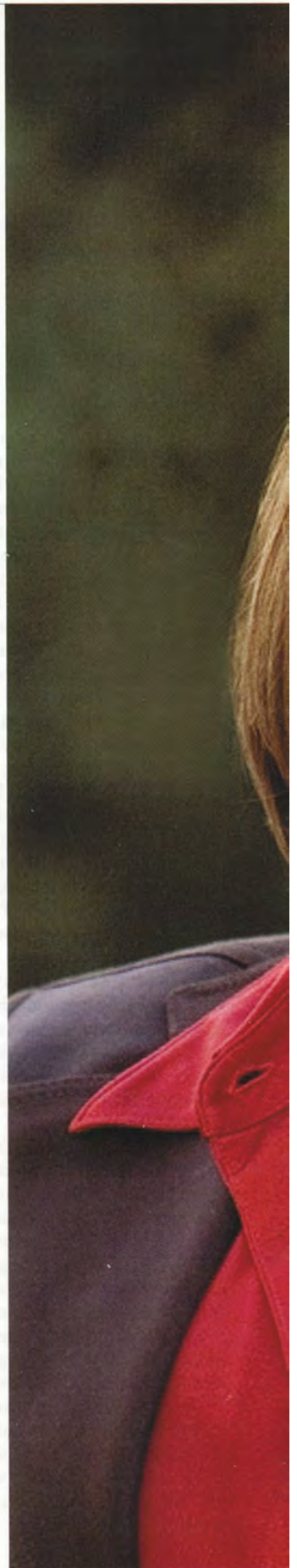
the right person in less than 90 minutes. If you are spending only 30 minutes, you are going on gut instinct. Sometimes this works out but most of the time it doesn't.

"Turnover is extremely expensive. If a person stays for less than a year, the company is going to lose money and time. But it only takes 90 minutes to avoid making a bad decision."

That extra hour

Using a triple-layered interview approach will help your company hire the right candidate. "Companies need to interview for basic skills, go more in depth by using a behavioural interview and then test candidates using a scenario-based interview."

Recruiters should keep their questions open-ended and keep digging. Harley advises them to ask candidates what will keep them in the job and what would make them leave. "Listen carefully to how they respond and set your assumptions aside."





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Shari Harley, international consultant

how to hire the best fit talent

Recruiting new staff is not a one-size-fits-all task. Shari Harley, an international consultant, advises employers to think about the following tips whenever they are on the recruitment trail:

- + Hire to your weaknesses. If you plan ahead and know where you need to build your team, you will be able to add employees who can add real value to the organisation.
- + Evaluate whether a candidate will be comfortable following your company’s values and norms. If those traditions don’t resonate with the candidate then they probably won’t be a good fit.
- + Make sure you are asking the right questions. Many of the needs, behaviours and preferences employees exhibit shortly after starting a job can be detected during the interview process.
- + Demand a writing sample. Regardless of the job, most professionals need to write using proper grammar, syntax and structure and few employers have time to teach staff the basics.
- + Give candidates a chance to demonstrate their skills. Ask potential trainers to do a formal presentation, ask potential sales people to conduct a mock sales call. Ask potential project managers to design a project plan based on information you provide.

Harley also warns not to rely too heavily on a candidate's résumé. "Résumés do not offer you insight into what employees loved most about their prior jobs." Instead, Harley suggests finding out what kind of organisation they feel would best fit them and why. This can help determine whether the candidate will work well in the company.

Knowing where they don't work well is just as important for recruiters. "Ask candidates what were the worst fits for them." Although candidates are coached not to be negative during an interview, asking them what was wrong with a prior company will provide insight into what kind of 'deal breakers' may exist if they do eventually sign up.

Building trust

"Employees leave managers not companies," Harley warns. She says it is important for bosses and supervisors to develop a positive working relationship with their staff members from their first days on the job. "Employees are going to go out and hear all about the company from their co-workers, so you better make sure that you take advantage of their first day to start building a relationship."

Although the new employer may feel inclined to deliberately paint a rosy picture of their company, it is also important to be upfront about less ideal factors. "Spend your first lunch explaining all the bad things about the job that you can appropriately tell," Harley says. "Let employees know the bad things up front so that if problems arise they can be addressed before they become a serious issue."

"It takes time to build a trusting relationship with your employees. Face time should be continual and not just on the first day."

An open communication culture

Not all corporate cultures or managers encourage open communication. Harley says this can be a particular problem in Asia. "This is going to push the culture a little bit: I recommend candour." She says a company that aims to provide such frank and open communication between staff should begin slowly.

If the management style is more formal, she says staff can still think about asking questions in a subtle manner. "Don't make any assumptions that what you think is important is also important to your boss or your employees."

"One strategy is to ask one question a week. If you have to give something to an employee or another executive, ask where they would like things left. If you need to contact someone, ask them how they like to be contacted." By asking one or two questions at a time, recruiters can find out what really makes employees happy in their jobs. Which will give a much clearer picture than mere guesswork. **HRM**

+ Shari Harley will speak as part of the Corporate Learning stream at *HR Summit* in May.

+ www.hrsummit.com.sg