

Why Should You Choose a Candidate Who ISN'T Experienced in Your Industry?

If you've found yourself tossing a candidate's application when you realize that there's no relevant industry experience, you may be making one of the most common mistakes for hiring decision makers.

Filtering candidates based on previous experience, rather than on universal skills and abilities, is an age-old approach and to abandon it sounds strange to some. Why would a company stop searching for qualified job prospects with proven experience in their particular field? They shouldn't. No company should ignore candidates with qualifications unique to the field. But that same company also shouldn't toss a resume into the trash simply because the candidate doesn't have industry experience.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, companies should look at "talent shortages" as a mirror of an industry's inflexibility. Instead of seeking the perfect candidates to fill a particular job, the answer may be to find high potential hires that can do the job with a bit of training and a skillfully constructed onboarding program. To do that hiring managers should be looking for the key talents and skills that will translate into success regardless of the industry.

Looking at a resume through new eyes, you might see an applicant who has the ability to persevere through challenges, who is great with people and a team builder, who can solve problems easily. You might see someone who rose through the ranks of another company, leaving only when he or she was no longer appreciated or permitted to lead. A resume can tell a story of far more than experience—it can tell you everything you need to know about the fundamental qualities that a candidate has to offer.



What are the qualities that a hiring manager should be looking for? Flexibility, adaptability, leadership, humility, curiosity, ambition, insight, engagement, and determination are some good keys to top talent.

These qualities can't be taught. A candidate either has them or not, and there's no training program or shadowing system that can infuse a new hire with the ambition and insight to see how to contribute to a department. But a candidate with adaptability and humility can be cross-trained for multiple jobs, while a prospect who has demonstrated leadership and determination in previous positions is a good option for an internal promotion track.

With the focus on skills rather than industry experience, hiring managers may find themselves unexpectedly filling their departments with new approaches to old problems that can eliminate burnout and increase innovation. While it's easy to be able to plug a candidate into a job with minimal training, it can be much wiser to encourage the development of bench talent and ingenuity to face an ever-changing marketplace.