

INSIGHTS IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Needing a Rock Star? Hiring a Rookie May Be Your Best Answer

by Nancy Hintz, Managing Director, Human Resources and Training Vertical, Global BioAg Linkages

There is an allure to hiring experienced employees to fill critical roles with practiced intuition, accumulated knowledge, and the ability to leverage a multitude of techniques. We dream of organizations guided by seasoned executives with orderly processes and skillful employees. With years of experience, we envision them as the master of their profession and coach others to the top.



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While there is an element of security in hiring experience, research shows that rookies can outperform experts. There is significant value in not knowing and having a mindset of learning, as we have seen with Marc Zuckerberg in his undeterred fascination with computers leading to his creation of Facebook. Likewise, Henry Ford's love of cars spawned new ideas and revolutionized the car industry. Closer to home in sustainable agriculture, Pam Marrone's passion led to ground-breaking biopesticides and the formation of Marrone Bio Innovations.

The bottom line is this – rookies think and work differently to compensate for their gap in knowledge. Regardless of their age, a rookie is someone who has never performed a specific type of work. They tend to perform better than veterans in innovation and completing tasks. They also are more open to seeking out expertise,

experimenting, learning from their mistakes and making improvements. Simply put, they listen more and ask for help by not operating with false bravado. Their advantage is in thinking young with acuity and agility.

Pam Marrone offers this point:

"When you are creating a business and developing products from scratch that no one has done before, it is dangerous to assume that the experienced person, typically from a larger company, will know how to develop, commercialize, and sell novel biologicals. How to field test, manufacture, register, and sell biologicals is quite different from traditional pesticides and fertilizers. It requires people to think outside the box, not necessarily relying on what they have done before. The good news is that the biologicals industry is maturing, and many more people have successfully gone through a full cycle of product development, manufacturing, marketing, and selling biologicals. In that case, a mixture of newbies and those with such biologicals experience can make for a powerful combination. Most important for any employee, investor, or board member, do they add to the desired culture, and do they have an unwavering belief in your mission, vision and values?"

Research shows that when we rely on what we know, we slow down progress in learning what we don't know and are less receptive to advice.



INSIGHTS IN HUMAN RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

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There are many books written about the best hiring practices, and one classic that remains pertinent to today's tight labor market is *Rookie Smarts* by Liz Wiseman. Considering candidates without job-defined experience may lead to a new untapped pool of candidates for open positions.

Liz cites, "A study from the IE Business School in Spain and the NEOMA Business School in France found that CEOs in S&P 500 corporations, with former experience as a CEO, performed worse than those without such experience."

For years we have highly regarded mastery in a deliberate practice. However, the ability to mobilize the skills and abilities of people around us has a much bigger impact on our performance than our experience.

Experience plays an important role in the workplace, but doesn't need to be the only factor in hiring. Inexperience can be an untapped resource, as rookies have a different mindset. First, they perform at higher levels for innovation and reaching deadlines. Also, since they don't know all the answers, they reach out for others' expertise and advice, being open to making mistakes and learning from them.

Rookies listen intently, enjoy learning, and learn quickly. They don't have false bravado to create blind spots like that of experienced veterans, causing them to be stuck in habits. In short, they think young. In our February issue,

we mentioned that competitive advantage in innovation is one of the key factors of future success for companies. Agility and acuity generate vibrancy in an organization. Regardless of age, we can all put ourselves in a rookie mindset by allowing ourselves to experiment when we have new ideas. Try to put aside old habits to develop new practices, and be inspired by amateurs in the field to gain insight.

To successfully hire a rookie for a position, there are four main traits to look for in the interview. First, how curious are they? Do they have a strong desire to learn and understand? Are they seeking out new experiences due to their hunger for knowledge?

The second trait: are they humble? A mindset needs to be reachable to be teachable. In other words, an individual needs to believe they do not elevate higher than others allowing them to learn from those around them.

Another important trait to identify is playfulness. We have all heard the phrase, "if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life." A goal we all should strive for (as seen in the outperforming rookie) is to truly believe that work is play, and enjoyment of time spent working.

Finally, the last trait to focus on during the interview is deliberation in approach. Does the rookie candidate show intentionality in what they do and how they do it? Do they focus on incremental gains? If they are deliberate, they will naturally want to gain success for themselves and, ultimately, the organization.

So how should you change your process of sourcing and vetting candidates? Every company needs to consider the goals of their organization and identify who the best candidate is to address their needs. We are here to help you successfully grow your business. For more information on how we can assist, you can reach me at nancyhintz@bioaglinkages.com for your Human Resources and recruitment needs.

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