



Myths and Realities about Hiring Processes for Municipal/County Executives

Myth	Reality
<p>#1: Hire a search firm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Firms, sometimes known as “headhunters,” focus on recruitment – not hiring. Most counties and municipalities need more help with evaluating candidates than with recruitment. Search firms are expensive (typically charging 20-30% of annual salary) given the return. • Given the Internet and professional associations that provide excellent recruitment methods, there is less and less reason to rely on search firms to make contact with quality candidates. • Currently, leading search firms are located out of NC and do not have as strong a pipeline to potential managers from within the state. There is certainly nothing wrong with considering candidates outside of NC, but it is not effective to focus primarily out of state.
<p>#2: Get public input in determining whom to hire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public should be highly involved, but primarily on the front end of the selection process, to determine the desired characteristics of the ideal candidate, not on the back end in deciding whom to hire. • Through structured focus groups, the public can be helpful in identifying the community challenges facing the new manager. These challenges should be incorporated into the hiring process to ensure that candidates can meet them. By being involved, the public will be more supportive of the overall process and of the hiring choice. • The hiring decision should not be based on the reactions of large groups of citizens based on interviews or presentations by the candidates. This type of exercise does not provide a valid or reliable assessment of the candidates’ ability to perform the essential functions of the job. This is not the type of decision process a sound business would use nor is it consistent with a representative democracy.
<p>#3: Candidates can be adequately assessed through interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews are necessary but not sufficient for evaluating candidates. Management candidates are often highly skilled at handling interviews. Their answers may not reflect their subsequent job performance. • Interviews have the capacity to measure a few skills, but not many essential ones, such as developing proposals, analyzing the budget, conflict resolution, and leadership. Interviews are helpful for identifying the philosophy, vision, and knowledge of the candidates. Once the most competent candidates have been identified, interviews are also helpful in assessing “chemistry” in working together • Conducting multiple interviews with different groups does not substantially improve the limitations of the interview. There would be greater statistical accuracy flipping a coin over who to hire than the way interviews are typically conducted for hiring executives. • Assessment exercises based on a thorough analysis of the job provide the best predictors of candidate performance. Examples of such exercises might include presentations, meetings, press conferences, written plans, role plays, and community meetings. Through such exercises, expert raters can evaluate the ability of the candidates to perform the actual job.
<p>#4: Intellect and technical skills predict managerial success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellect and technical skills are both vital. Nevertheless, given a sound level of both, the more successful managers exhibit Emotional Intelligence (EI). • EI measures the candidates’ ability to deal with others, understand their own feelings and attitudes, manage stress, and solve problems. These capacities are essential for influencing the community, managing staff performance, and dealing with the complex problems that emerge on the job. • EI can be measured through a variety of means including interviews, role-plays, and instrumentation.

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