

## THE SCREEN TEST



The hospitality business is like show business.

When you are casting, it is important to place people in suitable roles. The costs involved with hiring an individual should be a strong deterrent to rushing into decisions you may regret in 1 weeks time. Remember, once the casting decision has been made, your entire production's reviews are going to depend on the various people you've chosen for the performance.

Don't be fooled by first appearances and beware of being overly impressed by what appears to be an excellent Resume/CV. Although these can provide a valuable insight, neither may be truly indicative of whether an individual is suitable for the role you wish to fill.

Obviously the show must go on, but it is important to invest the time and effort needed to get the right person- A well planned approach can go a long way in accomplishing this.

**Here are a few casting tips to get you started.**

1. **Treat every vacancy like an open role in a play.** Define the role you are auditioning people for in terms of the part the new cast members must play and how they'll have to relate to the other members in the cast. Make people skills and technical knowledge of equal importance in your hiring.
2. **Identify the skills needed for the role.** Once the interview begins, it's too late to start thinking about what you want to learn. Based on the job description and your knowledge of the role you are casting, what traits or personal attributes do you want new cast members to possess? Friendliness? Courtesy? Optimism? Creativity? How will you judge the presence or absence of those traits to your satisfaction? Focus the various stages of the selection process on the real-world skills demanded by the part you're trying to fill.
3. **"Screen test" your applicants.** Consider the way applicants treat your staff, which may be a good indication of how they will treat your customers and their co-workers if hired. Try role-playing difficult customer situations with applicants, or posing "what would you do if" questions based on the kinds of situations likely to occur on the job. You don't want to listen just for "right" or "wrong" answers. You can train them to use the right words later. Listen for orientation and attitude.
4. **Use multiple selection methods. Remember test anxiety in school? Job applicants get it too.** Instead of sifting all applicants through one coarse screen, use a succession of fine ones to help you differentiate.

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5. **Ask the right questions.** There are questions that can be very effective in determining the general suitability of an individual applying for a role in your show. Following are several that can be adapted to your particular requirements
  - What does "great service" mean to you?
  - When was the last time you experienced great service and how did it make you feel?
  - In visiting the restaurant today, did you feel welcome- did you notice things we could improve on?
  - The restaurant business is a people orientated business- What
  - Characteristics do you have that you feel are well suited for this role?
  - How would you handle a difficult customer?
  - What do you like most about being in the hospitality business?
  
6. **Emphasize mutual selection.** Applicants need to make as good a selection decision as you do. Just as you want to pick the right person, you gain by helping them pick the right position and organization. If they make a poorly informed decision and discover it only after being on board for a while, you will end up with a competent but unhappy camper.
  
7. **Recruit actively.** Good people may not always find you. Sometimes, you have to find them. Where have your best people been coming from? Reward your people for introducing new candidates by paying a bounty for bringing in friends, former colleagues, even relatives who are capable of filling roles in your production.
  
8. **Hire people that are right for the role they need to play.** Customer focused organizations have whatever kind of people it takes to dazzle the customer and bring them back again. It's very human to overlay personal beliefs, values, likes, and dislikes on the selection process, but it's seldom in the best interest of the customer to do so.

Next month's article 'Directing the performance' will help you prepare for the show.

### About the author

Robert Duprey has over 22 years management and training experience in the Restaurant and Hotel industry. He started Lexington Interactive to provide eLearning specifically for the Restaurant & Hotel Industry. The company is developing a catalog of interactive hotel and restaurant training courses for the video game generation. Contact Robert at: [robertduprey@lexingtoninteractive.com](mailto:robertduprey@lexingtoninteractive.com)  
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