

# Epic Advice for People Who Suck at Hiring

By Joe Hunt

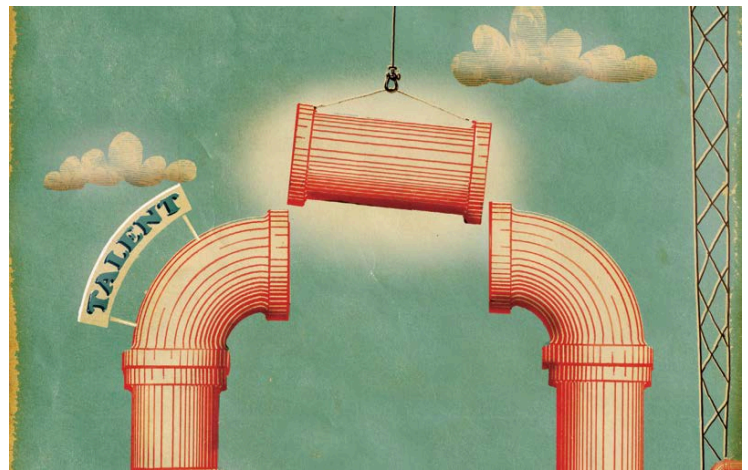
Hiring is arguably one of the most important skills for managers at every level. With ZBB and organizations delayered to the bone, I don't think anyone would disagree that its mission critical each and every person on your team be an "A" player. Despite that fact, most managers are terrible at recruiting and interviewing. Terrible as in "F" for fail.

Are people too busy, ignorant, or just lazy? I think the answer is all three.

**At most companies, people spend 2-3% of their time recruiting and 80% managing their recruiting mistakes.**

Most executives spend very little time on recruiting, usually relegating it to "fire drill" status instead of a core component of their strategic plan. To make matters worse, they delegate it to HR or a Talent Acquisition organization which is staffing oriented vs. recruiting focused. Finding a person with some basic qualifications to fill a position is staffing, which doesn't require a lot of expertise. But most businesses need the best intellectual and leadership capital to be successful, and the only sustainable way to get "A" players is to build a perpetual recruiting process that's standardized, well-managed and constantly measured.

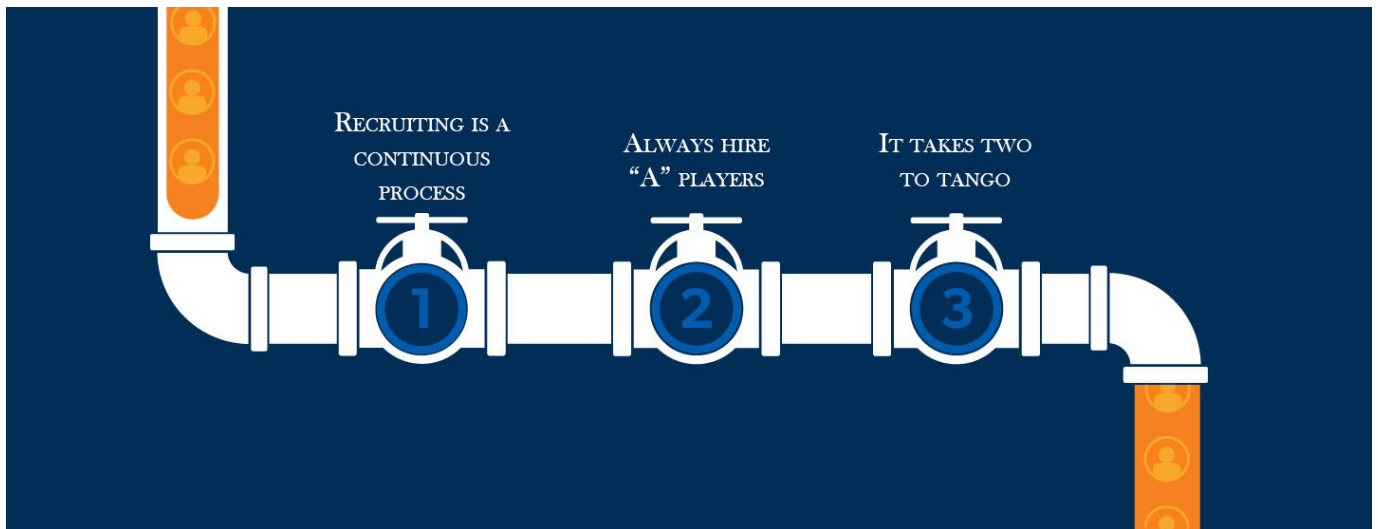
This irrefutable truth was the catalyst that enabled our clients to GET HELP. HELP stands for Hunt Executive Leadership Pipeline. You can employ the following principle and maxims on your own, but click the [\*\*GET HELP link\*\*](#) for more information on this service.



## Ten Essential Recruiting Maxims of HELP

### 1) Recruiting is a continuous process:

You can't wait until you have a position open to start the recruiting process. "A" players are extremely rare (top 10-15% amongst their peer group), and its a lot more difficult to find them when you have an opening. The best talent is generally currently employed, and may need to be wooed to consider making a switch. Be sure you and your direct reports are constantly trolling in the market to identify top performers.



**2) Always hire “A” players when they’re available:**

Unless your company is already filled with all “A” players (unlikely) and you don’t plan on growing (not recommended), why would you turn down a top performer? In the most successful businesses, executives hire every “A” player they can get their hands on.

Create a job or deploy a “B” or “C” player. By definition, an “A” player adds more value to your business than they cost, so not hiring them is equivalent to flushing cash down the toilet. Even if there is no opening, a need improve always exists. *(Read my article from last month for more evidence of this eternal truth.)*

**3) It takes two to tango:**

Recruiting is reciprocating sales process. You expect potential hires to sell themselves to the company, but the hiring manager and company also has to sell itself to the employee. Over and over again, I have seen companies forget the second part of this equation and assume that the candidate will do their own due diligence and take the job if its offered.

While mediocre “B” player employees probably will, the best performers will be weighing several options and need to be sold on the opportunity.

**4) Haste not, want not:**

Time is of the essence. Act fast to engage prospects and keep the process moving, but don’t cut corners. Top performers won’t stay on the market long, and their enthusiasm will wane if it takes your company too long to engage them. The longer the time between interview and offer, the less excitement the candidate feels. With my HELP clients, I set the goal of two weeks from when we first get the candidate’s resume until we have a job offer in their hands. If the candidate is ready to move, you should be able to make things happen in that amount of time.

**5) Set a high bar, with a standard:**

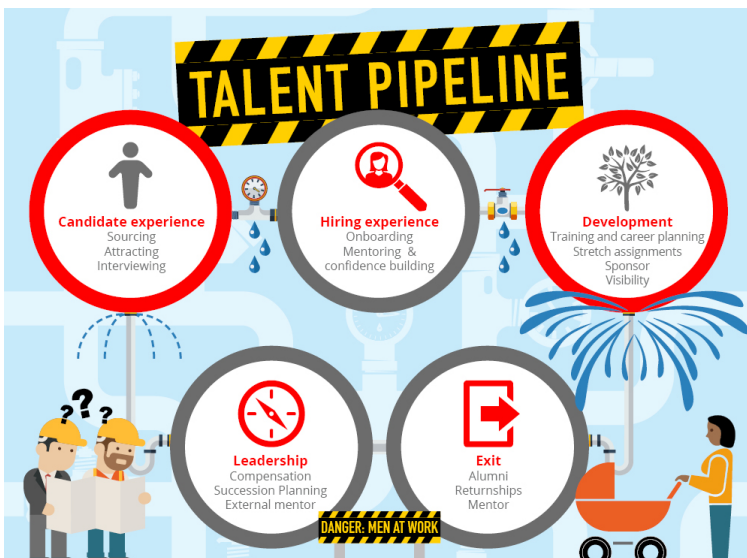
Someone needs to be accountable and objectively set the standards. I believe it’s important to have one executive interview all potential hires, irrespective of whether that person is a direct report whenever possible.

This helps assure consistency in adhering to the high standards of the organization. It doesn't necessarily have to be the CEO, but I can't think of a better use of a CEO's time. It could be the functional vertical head or a specific HR executive, but it's a good practice. People get good at recognizing the most talented individuals, and learn what to expect for a given position at a given price point in the market.

### 6) Look for disruptive events:

Top performers often become available because of disruptive events. Mergers, acquisitions, senior management changes, loss of business, or relocation of operations are just some of the events that become cause for downsizing, reorganization, or the type of unrest that causes "A" player's "opportunity antennas" to go up.

I make it a practice as part of my proactive talent scouting to call CEO's, and even executives I don't know, to inquire about their best talent being affected by these disruptions. Many good managers I know recommend their currently employed people for opportunities I present because they want to see their best people continue to grow.



### 7) Your recruiters must be top people:

Most HR and talent acquisition staff are not recruiters. Your best recruiters are your top performing executives and managers that are in the marketplace every day. They must be able to recognize a top performer when they see one. They should be extremely professional and knowledgeable, because candidates will spend more time engaged with them than anyone else in your organization. In my opinion, your recruiters should be viewed as the most important individual contributors in the company.

### 8) Cultivate unique sources:

Look for places where candidates might have a particular reason to work for your company. For instance, I attend dozens of executive level industry events where I meet hundreds of executives I would otherwise not have the opportunity. I'm on industry association boards and committees. I constantly building relationships with other leaders and staff members who regularly refer and recommend talented executives within their own networks, because I constantly make it known I have clients who are always on the lookout for "A" players and I'm a talent scout. I've never seen another search consultant at these events or on committees, and I only know a few operating executives that employ the same strategy.

### 9) Formal onboarding is non-negotiable:

I've seen countless hiring managers make the mistake of hiring the candidate that they think will get up to speed in the least amount of time. This is an incredibly shortsighted approach.

I advise the assumption that every employee will take three months of onboarding guidance to become fully productive. Even if you have to create your own, there should be a formalized onboarding program for all employees covering everything from “where is the bathroom” to the vision of the CEO. New hires should have a robust schedule to meet key executives and learn about the company. Every business and culture is unique with its own challenges. Spending the time upfront to guide new employees is critically important to a successful recruiting process.

## 10) Track your performance.

While I personally track KPI's for my HELP clients, those that do it on their own must keep metrics for recruiting like they do for other parts of the business. Here are several metrics you should watch closely to continuously improve the hiring process:

- ✓ ***Time to Fill Open Job:*** If the company is doing a good job of continuously recruiting and a pipeline is properly maintained, this time can be kept to a minimum. If it's taking multiple months to fill every new position, there is a problem in the process.
- ✓ ***Time from Submittal to Offer:*** I shoot for two weeks for HELP generated candidates and three weeks during retained search execution due to the fact were coordinating multiple candidates simultaneously. This requires the recruiter and hiring manager to be in sync and prepared to move quickly if the right candidate is found.
- ✓ ***Percent of Candidates Accepting Offers:*** While I shoot for 100% and usually don't extend an offer not pre-closed to accept, I'd advise companies to maximize the time-consuming hiring process by having 80% or more of candidates accept your offers. I'd advise the companies recruiters and hiring managers to lay the groundwork for an offer from the beginning and properly selling the candidate.
- ✓ ***Track Candidate Losses:*** It's one thing to lose out on potential employees to Amazon, Apple, Google or another high-flying company, but if you are losing frequently to run-of-the-mill competitors, this should be a sign that something about your company and/or process is not very attractive.
- ✓ ***New Hires Rated “A” Player 2Q after Hire:*** Every employee in the company should be rated by their manager each quarter. “A” rated performers are those who are in the top 10-15% in the industry considering their job and pay.

Because most companies don't employ this Epic Hiring Advice, the average company would hire an "A" player ~10-15% of the time. That said, "A" players rarely look for a job through normal channels, it's rare that the average company is able to hire "A" players at all. I'm an expert and have been continuously honing my skills in this realm for 25 years and invest countless hours on each hire and still miss the mark about 10% of the time. My assessment of the better companies I observe is they hire "A" performers ~45-50% of the time, 3-4X what would be expected by random chance and ~10X the performance of the typical public company.

Executives who set the standard on what talent is allowed into the company and what level of performance is permitted to remain are setting their organizations up for success. Unfortunately, most companies' reality is in alignment with *Pareto Principle*, and managers and leaders are forced to spend ~80% of their people time dealing with the issues caused by the bottom 20% of their team—their "B" and "C" performers. I advise clients to flip the 80/20 rule by spending 80% of their time with their most valuable talent and 20% of my time dealing with the bottom half. Building an outstanding recruiting organization will enable you to do this. I recommend you either employ this Epic Hiring Advice or **GET HELP**.

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