Hiring for soft skills?

Keep these 7 tips in mind.

Make soft skills a part of your organizational culture.

That means understanding what's important to your organization, and emphasizing the importance of soft skills and how they impact every area of your business. For example, highlight customer satisfaction metrics alongside revenue and sales goals. Don't know where to start? Try researching what values are emphasized at peer organizations. Their mission and values statements will provide clues.

Identify the soft skills that matter to the position you're hiring for.

Talk to your hiring managers about what they look for when they're building a team. Discover what behaviors make those teams work—and fail. Take a look at competitor's job descriptions to see how jobs are being positioned. And rely on experts who've already done the legwork of researching job-specific behaviors.
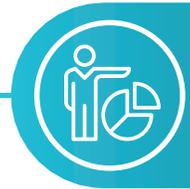
Use job descriptions to communicate required soft skills.

Hiring managers tend to think first about whether a candidate has the requisite hard skills. Yes, they're important, but 67% of HR managers say they'd hire a candidate with strong soft skills even if hard skills lacking. Make soft skills required and detail what you're looking for in posted job descriptions.

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Include high priority soft skills in recruitment campaign messaging.

Don't stop with job descriptions. Communicate soft skills wherever and however you can. HR can make an impact on recruitment campaigns. And you can also work with marketing or your brand officer to make sure the soft skills your organization has prioritized get incorporated into ads, website copy, and more. These assets are the first place good candidates go to learn more about your company. Use them.

Source talent from places known for cultivating soft skills.

Companies that value soft skills are getting a lot of press these days. It's worth figuring out who has an organizational culture similar to yours and who prioritizes soft skills during the hiring process. And remember to source creatively. Explore online communities where the soft skills you value are put into practice.

Prioritize soft skills in the selection process.

Review job letters, resumes, and CVs for examples of soft skills in action. Practice behavior-based interviewing to uncover a candidate's past performance and behaviors—the single most predictive factor of success. Update the rubrics you use to evaluate candidates. To avoid bias, institute a matrix to assure the skills of each candidate are transparent to decision makers.

Make soft skills a part of your organization's learning and development programs.

Teaching soft skills is notoriously difficult—we tend to believe a candidate either has them or doesn't. But innovative companies are working hard to identify the specific soft skills that are required for success and teach their employees. As Millennials with great hard skills, but different types of soft skills, enter the job market, organizations will need to find ways to develop their soft skills with relevant onboarding, mentoring, and performance management programs.

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