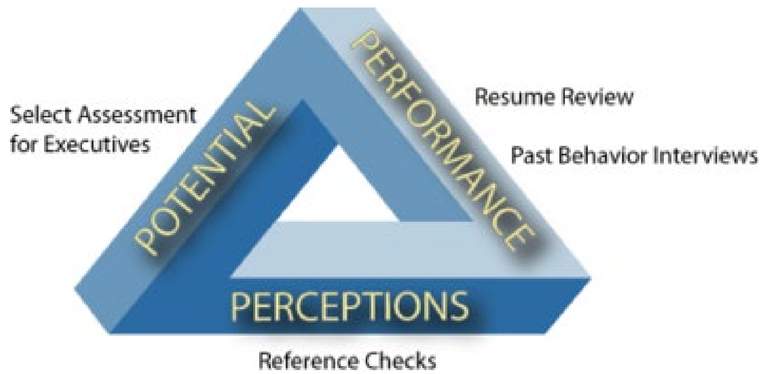
The Art & Science of Executive Selection

by Joe Hunt

Getting the right people in the right seats at the right time is every executives #1 imperative. Neglecting to make this the #1 priority will always results in systemic failure of the team and often the enterprise.

This might seem like common sense, but common sense is rarely common practice.

This is a macro overview of the Leader*Shift* Architect selection process, where we look at candidates Performance, work to determine their Potential and both challenge and validate our Perceptions. In the coming months, I will publish a detailed break down each step into micro presentations you can apply in your own recruitments and selection, so watch for and check back for newly released articles and recorded webinars on the topic.



We call our system Leader*Shift* Architect because Leader*Shift* best denotes what every executive has to do as a player/coach to personally deliver and enable others to deliver against the constantly changing business and market dynamics to achieve success in each businesses unique value creation plan.

Step 1: Create a Performance Profile. Start with the job(s) that your currently working on or need to fill, but it's important that you create a performance profile for each role on your team over time, so you and every individual clearly understands how they and every team member fits into the organization. A performance profile should not be the generic job description stating duties and responsibilities that your likely using today. The performance profile must identify the 3-5 most important deliverables for each job, along with the other notable deliverables you expect the person to deliver. It is the "what" people deliver, not the "how" that this process focuses on. This must include both what the individual role must personally deliver and what each role must enable others to deliver as a manager and leader.

The Leader*Shift* Performance Profile serves multiple purposes. It clearly identifies what each individual, team, and department must deliver in service of achieving or exceeding the high-performance business goals and commitments. It is the foundation document that should be used for everything from strategy to execution of what needs to get done. It is the benchmark from which performance management, professional development and selection can be constantly applied against that identifies specific behaviors, motivators (drivers/values), acumen (critical thinking/capacity/potential) and competencies (personal skills) required for success in the job that are unique within every organizations culture and ecosystem.

Here is a link to a sample Leader*Shift* Performance Profile (←LINK) used in the internal and/or external candidate selection process.

Step 2: Create a Leader*Shift* Scorecard. We are focusing on selection in this article, but this scorecard will also be applied to performance management and professional development. The Leader*Shift* Scorecard is in large part created from the Performance Profile.

This starts by identify and prioritize the specific Key Accountabilities for the job, then identifying and matching the requisite competencies (person skills) and experiences required to best assure success. Once that is done, we assess candidates against each Key Accountability and score them as objectively as possible on each one.

A resume will barely scratch the surface of the information required, so we employ a Leader*Shift* Interview, which is a Structured In-Depth Interview that will provide you the insights required to accurately determine a candidates Skill and Will alignment around the role.

Here is a link to a sample Leader*Shift* Scorecard (←LINK) that can be used in the internal and/or external candidate selection process.

Step 3: Leader*Shift* Assessment. There are varying opinions on the use and value of assessments, but used properly they provide highly valuable data points that help inform and validate fit in selection.

Conscious and Unconscious Bias is an enormous problem for the vast majority of us, and a primary reason for using assessments in selection is to try and eliminate bias as much as possible in the decision process. Most people hire in their own image and/or think their unquantifiable intuition and instincts about people is good, but all the evidence points to all these things most often being both wrong and not at all in alignment with what the actual business needs in any given place in time. Assessment should never be used to make Go- or No-Go decisions in and of themselves. They should be used for what they are, and that's one additional data point in the decision-making process matrix, from which you can probe deeper into a candidates fit for the role and organization.

You can assess talent in numerous realms, but equally as valuable is to develop a job model that identifies the ideal measures most conducive to success on the job that correlate to the exact sciences you choose to assess candidates on.

There are countless assessment instruments on the market, and most can provide valuable insights about the talent your assessing. There are multiple challenges using assessments in selection, but by far the biggest is that people do not know how to use them properly.

We recommend clients standardize the assessments they use and invest in training so that every manager has at least a basic understand of how to use and apply them. Making assessment a best practice and part of the DNA of the company culture is essential to assure wholesale adoption that best assures the tools are adding significant value rather than adding to the confusion of an already highly complex process of selecting talent.

The Leader*Shift* Assessment battery utilizes multiple sciences that include Behaviors (DISC), Motivators (driver/values), Acumen (critical thinking/capacity/potential), Competencies (personal/leadership skills), and Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

Popular assessments like Myers Briggs, the Culture Index, and others are good for team building and understand how best to communicate with the various behavior styles but are NOT accurate predictors of success on the job.

At very least, you must include a combination of Behaviors and Motivators to begin to predict success on the job. As you move up the management and executive ranks, Acumen (critical thinking/capacity/potential) and Competencies (personal/leadership skills) become more important and valuable.

The same assessments used for selection, can be applied to onboarding, performance management, and professional development. That is another reason assessments should be standardized within the organization, so they don't change or lose value through a whim someone has or with the inevitable executive turnover of any sponsors.

I recommend our Leader*Shift* Assessments, where each assessment science can be separated or combined. Here are a couple links to download some examples of our combined assessment sciences instruments for Job Modeling ←, Talent Assessment←, Job Fit ← of a single candidate against the job model, and to compare and contrast Multiple Candidates ← against the job model.

Step 4: Leader*Shift* Interview. There is nothing more important or more valuable than a properly conducted interview to accurately assess the skill and will of a candidate.

Unfortunately, most people are unskilled, unprepared, and unwilling to make the effort and time to conduct a proper interview. We recommend and personally employ a structured in-depth interview, we call the Leader*Shift* Interview.

The LeaderShift Interview is actually a series of interviews, starting with the screening interview(s), followed by structured in-depth interview(s) that can be done individually and/or divided up amongst stakeholders.

Here is a link to an example Leader*Shift* Interview Guide ← that will provide some granular details of the process.

Step 5: Reference Checks. Reference checking is another area where most hiring managers are unskilled, unprepared, and unwilling to make the effort and time to conduct a proper interview.

I place executive ranging from board members, CxO's and functional vertical VP's and I always encourage hiring managers to conduct some reference checks personally, but very few have done it in the past. The only exception are my private equity clients. The Managing Partners/Directors not only want to conduct references interviews personally, but they usually do some back-channel inquiries as well in an effort to prevent a very expensive mis-hire.

Reference checking both validates information and provides deeper insights into a candidate. These calls should go well beyond the basic verification of dates of employment, duties and responsibilities or just calling 2-3 people the candidate provides the names of.

If you chose to read through the linked information about the Leader*Shift* Interview, you learned that we encourage a deep gig into every job that includes getting the name of each candidates direct supervisor for every job on the resume and asking some probing questions about the relationship dynamics, that you can validate in a reference call.

"A" players don't have anything to hide, and shouldn't mind if you talk to former superiors that might not give a glowing reference. Hiring manager should also be realistic and not expect every reference to say the candidate walks on water. If any candidate appears to be a perfect human being and void of weaknesses, you are not being realistic or delving beneath the surface.

Here is a link to an example Leader*Shift* Reference Interview Guide ← that will provide some expanded details of this important process.

There are numerous additional benefits to this process we don't have time to cover in this article, but rest assured if you and your company are serious about building, developing and retaining an all "A" player team, there is no other way to accomplish this, other than follow and adhere to the Leader*Shift* Architect process and principals.

About the Hunt Group

The Hunt Group is the leading human capital and private equity advisory specializing in consumer goods & services, diversified industrial and related professional services markets. We apply our market mastery and expansive executive network to the human capital realm, working with multi-nationals, PE, private, and family owned companies. We partner with investors throughout the deal cycle to help them Invest in, Grow and Exit their portfolio companies by appointing senior operating executives (CEOs and Direct Reports), Chairs and Outside Directors with Private Equity DNA. Our industry and functional vertical connections and engagement guarantees we're in the know, have broad insight and full access to the best talent in the marketplace. Our mission is to create and exponentially grow accretive value for all client stakeholders.

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