

Member Communication Experience

Check Your Hiring Blind Spots Before They Cost You

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You wouldn't pour a foundation without a level, and you wouldn't wire a building without a plan. But many business owners hire without a structured approach to assess people, identify key behaviors, or predict how someone will actually perform once they're out of the interview chair and on the jobsite.

Think of hiring blind spots like traffic blind spots – they're just there. Everyone has them. The difference between companies that thrive and those that struggle is whether these blind spots are checked before making a move. U.S. Department of Labor research shows bad hires can cost up to 30% of the employee's first-year salary when you factor in recruitment, training, project delays, and lost productivity.

That hurts! But it's avoidable. The cumulative effect of multiple bad hires can tank any business. Here are the three most common hiring blind spots and how you can eliminate them with a clear, simple hiring system.

THE LIKEABILITY TRAP

Sometimes a candidate just clicks. They remind you of someone you trust or someone you worked with years ago who turned out to be a star. That gut feeling is powerful and, in many cases, it feels like it should be trusted. The problem is that likability doesn't guarantee capability. Someone can talk a good game and still struggle to follow job specs, enforce safety protocols, or manage a crew under pressure.

This blind spot becomes dangerous when personality starts



replacing proof. Just because someone sounds confident doesn't mean they can coordinate trade partners or respond effectively when a project hits a snag.

To avoid this trap, shift your focus from personality to real-life scenarios. Ask every candidate to walk you through situations that test the skills they'll need on the job. A foreman should be able to explain how they'd deal with a crew member who repeatedly skips safety checks. A project manager should describe how they would handle an unexpected permit delay. A skilled tradesperson should be able to talk through their inspection preparation process.

The goal is to hear their actual method, not just hear that they've handled it before. Too many owners get burned by candidates who interview well but can't deliver when it matters.

INDEPENDENCE ISN'T ALWAYS ACCOUNTABILITY

Most construction roles require some level of independence. Crew members, project leads, and equipment operators are often expected to perform without constant oversight. Because of that, it's easy to assume that someone who says they like working independently is also someone who takes responsibility for results.

That's not always the case. Some people value independence because they want to avoid accountability. These are the workers who skip steps when no one's looking, hide mistakes, or shrug off problems until someone else discovers them.

To check this blind spot, look for proof of ownership. Ask candidates to describe a time they caught an issue on their own and made sure it was handled. Find out what they did when they made a mistake that no one else noticed. Pay attention to how they talk about responsibility. Do they say: "I made sure," or, "I stayed late to finish it." Or do they shift focus with phrases like: "That wasn't my job," or, "No one told me?"

Accountability shows up in how they describe their role in past situations, especially when things went wrong.

VAGUE STANDARDS, VAGUE RESULTS

Another common blind spot is the assumption that everyone understands what quality work or safety-first actually look like. Business owners often explain roles using broad terms like "stay on schedule," "maintain standards," or "be efficient." These phrases feel clear to the person saying them, but they can be interpreted in dozens of ways by the person hearing them.

This is especially dangerous when bringing someone new into your company. Without clearly defined expectations, even well-meaning workers can underperform simply because they're following a different mental rulebook.

The fix here is to turn general goals into specific actions. Instead of telling someone to "follow safety procedures," explain what that means on your jobsites. Maybe it's performing a daily safety walkthrough, checking all PPE compliance before work begins, and stopping work if weather conditions change. Instead of saying "work efficiently," you might say that means completing tasks within the estimated timeframe while communicating potential delays as soon as they arise.

Clarity gives people the structure they need to succeed.

FROM GUESSING TO SYSTEMATIZING

Construction owners who want reliable crews and predictable performance need to shift from reactive hiring to proactive hiring. That means building a system that works every time you use it.

These three blind spots actually feed into each other. You hire someone likable without testing their skills, then assume they'll be accountable because they work independently, then wonder why they're not meeting your implicit expectations. Breaking this cycle requires a systematic approach.

Start by identifying what success looks like for each role. Don't just rely on titles like project manager or superintendent. Instead, describe what successful outcomes look like. Maybe it's finishing 90% of jobs on time and within 5% of budget. Maybe it's receiving zero callbacks in the first 90 days. These success markers form the foundation for better hiring conversations.

Next, design interviews that are structured and consistent. Ask every candidate the same scenario-based questions that relate directly to job performance. Include questions about safety, communication, and problem solving. Instead of asking: "Are you safety-conscious?" try, "Walk me through your process when you notice a potential hazard on a jobsite." Instead of: "How do you handle pressure?" ask, "Describe a time when equipment failure threatened a deadline. What did you do?"

Use their answers to evaluate whether they actually know how to handle the situations you deal with every week.

After interviews, compare candidates using a consistent method. Don't rely on gut feelings. Rate them based on the specific competencies you identified for the role. This approach levels the playing field and helps you make confident, informed hiring decisions.

Finally, follow up after the hire. Check in at 30, 60, and 90 days. Are they meeting the expectations you set? Does their performance reflect their interview answers? Use this information to refine your hiring system over time.


BETTER HIRING LEADS TO BETTER BUSINESS

Companies that take the time to structure their hiring see the benefits show up everywhere. Crew morale increases and the

word spreads when your company runs a jobsite the right way.

When you remove guesswork from hiring, you reduce your risk and increase your control. You gain the confidence that comes from knowing each team member was chosen for their fit, not just their charm or availability. And that confidence lets you delegate more, scale smarter, and take on bigger, better projects.

Hiring blind spots are a natural part of running a business, but leaving them unchecked creates problems that multiply over time. The good news is that checking them doesn't take much more time. With the right system, you can spot issues early and avoid costly mistakes down the line.

The same way you check site plans and safety gear before work starts, it's time to check your hiring process before making your next move. A few extra steps now can save you thousands of dollars later. 



About the Author

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