

The People Thing

The human component in marketing innovation.

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February 24, 2010

In a workshop held by my entrepreneur's group, one of my colleagues, [Seth Flowerman](#), founder and owner of Career Explorations, revealed his approach to finding talent. At first, I was exhausted just listening to the elaborate process. It rivaled Google's intricate hiring methodology (which [some](#) now claim is seriously flawed), and in-depth [interview questions](#).

But I had been struggling finding the "right" people for my ever-morphing marketing business, so I figured I would give Seth's approach a try, adapting the parts of it that I felt worked best. The result? Two of the best hires I may have ever made. Thank you Seth!

A common lament from many small business owners has long been that finding "the right people" is always a challenge. And clearly, finding them is just the first step in building an effective team. I certainly don't purport to be a human resources expert. In fact, many would say I don't come anywhere close. But I have come to realize that attracting and motivating the right people in a small business is both an art and a science.

Part of Seth's approach involves really knowing from the beginning the qualities and skills that will correlate with success in your organization - beyond just the ability to get a job done. Although I don't ask things like Google's "Why are manhole covers round?" I now seed my interviews with queries and test exercises that will really get to the core of someone's creative thinking and problem-solving capabilities. I involved the rest of the team in shaping the questions too.

However, marketing innovation doesn't result just because you've made the right hire. Building a culture of creativity and game-change is an ongoing challenge. One must inspire his team to seek new and novel ways of solving old problems, rewarding risk-taking, and celebrating those solutions and people who prove themselves capable of innovation and action that delivers results.

Finding that perfect balance between getting the day-to-day work accomplished and taking a business to the next level may also be difficult. Make sure you have the right mix of those people who know how to "make the doughnuts" and those who will realize that some people are growing weary of doughnuts and that coffee and bagels might result in new growth. Hiring outsiders on a project basis is a great way to infuse an organization with new thinking, but make sure you are embracing these "new thinkers" and not merely dismissing their ideas because they feel uncomfortable to you or your team.

And what happens when people are really resisting change and cannot move past "the way things were done in the past?" Coaching, training, and support can help these folks transform themselves along with the organization. I sometimes hear managers say, "I know [name of employee] just doesn't "fit" in my organization any longer, but I don't have the heart (or time or compelling reason now) to make a change." Alas, making those tough decisions comes with the territory of management. It's never easy, but can be better for everyone in the long run.

So, as I've come to realize, people are fundamentally at the core of marketing and business effectiveness. And only by hiring, inspiring, listening (I mean REALLY listening), and being able to make internal change can businesses really start to innovate.

This article was originally published in the New York Enterprise Report.