



The Thaw

The economy is moving in tiny steps toward recovery. Businesses are experiencing small increases in orders of goods and services. The employment freeze is beginning to thaw, not the massive break through-the-ice kind of thaw but rather a shimmering layer of water on the ice.

If hiring at your company has been frozen, how should you begin the thaw? First and foremost be absolutely positive that the increase you are experiencing is long term and can sustain a new hire. You don't want a freeze-thaw-freeze situation. If you think that's hard on pavement and gardens you can't believe how that hope/false hope scenario will decimate your work force. If you are not sure that the increase is sustainable, bring in temps to help with the process until you know that your business is able to support new people.

When you've determined that the new business is here to stay, being aware of how you approach hiring will determine your success in achieving your ultimate goal of a perfect hire. Unemployment is at an all time 26 year high of 9.50%. In the best economy there is usually about a 3% unemployment rate that accounts for individuals collecting unemployment, individuals choosing not to work and people unable to work.

We're looking realistically at an increase of 6.50% of unemployed candidates. A small percentage, about 1%, has taken a package and voluntarily left the work place as a full time employee. Another 2% are seasonal employees who never got called back for whichever particular industry, (retail, building maintenance, hospitality, amusement parks, food, etc.) froze hiring and made do with existing staff.

Who is in the 3.50% that makes up the balance of our current unemployment figure? Before you look to them, look to the people you may have let go before the hiring freeze and look to the people you were thinking of hiring before the freeze.

In the first scenario don't respond to the knee-jerk reaction of bringing back the person you laid off unless three statements are true:

1. Circumstances beyond your control made that layoff necessary.
2. The department/company has suffered without that person in the mix.
3. If you could have you would have let someone else go.

If those statements are true, rush to bring that person back into the fold. I'd even suggest a welcome back banner and treats in the break room.

However, if in your heart of hearts (the thoughts you don't always share with HR) you know that you let the person go because everyone else was a better performer, had a brighter demeanor, and projected a nicer personality, **DO NOT** bring back that person.

You may argue that they already know the job, the routine, and the customers. It may take you more time to train a new hire but you won't know how much time you may lose with a person who you let go without a backward glance. Convenience or expediency are never good reasons to rehire an under performer.

If you had interviewed a stellar possibility but had to put hiring on hold, seek out that candidate, determine their status and bring them in for another interview. Make sure to ask what they had been doing to find employment. Beyond sending resumes and making interviews have they joined a networking group or job club? Have they followed up with transition services if provided by a previous employer? You are looking for the person who took charge and worked their plan to find a new job. That's the personality you want-the one that doesn't fold, look for pity or develop an unpleasant attitude. No victims or bullies need apply!

If neither scenario fits your situation then you have hundreds of candidates from which to choose, or **do you?** What about the under performer you released that you don't want back? Do you think a few companies may have used the same criteria for making the choice of who would go and who would stay? You bet they did! What about the candidates you talked to with attitudes that made you steer clear. Do you think you saw the only few who hadn't been able to weather the storm with grace and tact? Hardly!

Beware the plethora of unemployed people. Be slow to hire and if you do feel you've hired the wrong person be quick to fire. Have more than one interview and search beneath the surface of the "lost my job due to the recession" explanation. Consider using a basic personality/potential assessment tool or consider hiring a project recruiter to facilitate that hire.

A slow thaw, as the economy and markets heat up, is coming. When it comes to hiring be sure you don't end up in hot water.

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