

The Hiring Process

A broad look at industry practices

by Joshua Gabriel

When asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?," chances are only a tiny percentage would respond, "picture framer." Barring some family connection, few would expect to be working within the art and framing industry. Frame shops, galleries and suppliers must look to attract fresh, talented, motivated people into the framing business. The fact is human resources drive the day-to-day activities of business, and many companies in our industry have a set course of action when hiring to find the right fit.

How important is the correct new hire? Framera co-chairman Gene Eichner believes finding the right personnel is vital. Eichner notes, "Our fine people are the backbone of our company. We work very hard to locate, attract and retain them once they are part of the Framera family."

Companies operating in retail often place importance in specific areas. Customer interaction is high, making personality and creativity key factors to consider. Chris Sweeny of the Coconut Grove, FL-based Frameworks finds candidates by referral or through advertising in local newspapers. Sweeny notes, "Who a candidate is as a person is far more important than their skills. While framing techniques can be taught, attitude cannot."

Sweeny, who conducts interviews with her partner and their store manager, has enjoyed an excellent employee retention rate over the years. They realize their company's success is based on the dedication of employees. "We look to support our people however possible," says Sweeny. "We offer an excellent benefit program and try to adjust schedules whenever necessary."

Carol Riman of The Frame Man in Randolph, MA favors creativity over experience. Her store, which is recognized nationwide for its outstanding design capabilities, recently received its 50th contest award. Riman notes, "I look for creative people with a genuine interest in framing. We recently hired someone from an art school. Their background made it easy to gauge interest."

The more employees a company has, the more opportunity for clashing personalities, which makes it that much more important to have a plan when interviewing and training. A recent interview with Larson-Juhl president Steve McKenzie shed some light on that company's hiring practices. First and foremost, the company looks to fill an opening from within, as existing employees are often deserving of the opportunity and adept at making whatever

transition is necessary.

When asked about finding individuals from outside the company with industry experience, McKenzie notes, "While experience is a plus, it's more important to find a cultural fit."

Todd Hranicka, Framera's vice president of sales notes, "We do everything possible to create a situation where our sales team honestly pulls for one another. It starts with the interview process where every existing member of the sales force interviews candidates one-on-one."

At The Fletcher Terry Co., group interviews also play an integral role in finding the right person. "We've found that group interviews take the formality out of the process, allowing people to become more relaxed," notes Curt Brey, Fletcher's vice president of marketing. "It also allows them to feed off each other while helping the interviewee get a good feel for the group's dynamic."

Although personnel needs vary amongst companies, one general principle seems universal. It's important to find a hiring style that fits your company and allows it to consistently fill its needs. Many of the individuals contacted for this article spoke of their companies' goal of ensuring family or team like atmospheres. This can be done with a hiring process that is comfortable for your company, for those conducting the interview, and for the candidates, which will allow for a more accurate assessment.

After all, the hiring process is about people. Steven Feinsod, CEO of Graphik Dimensions Ltd. and pictureframes.com moved his corporate headquarters to North Carolina several years ago. He made hiring a human resource director his first priority. Feinsod's reasoning—"Decide what position you want to fill and find the absolute best person for the job. Then, let people do what they do best." ■

Joshua Gabriel has spent many years in the picture framing industry, the last several focused on marketing. With a bachelor's degree in business marketing, he has done extensive writing and research in the field. He can be reached via e-mail at joshgabriel@hotmail.com.

*For more about hiring, read these articles on the PFM website—
www.pictureframingmagazine.com
Bluestone's Retail Strategies, "Interviewing: How and What to Ask",
July 2001
Goltz on Business, "Square Pegs, Round Holes", October 1996*