

Teaching Note

Half-Baked

George Kelly, Colorado Mesa University

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Critical Incident Overview

This critical incident describes the experience of adjunct Gerry Kennedy, a Culinary Arts Instructor at High Desert Community College, who expected promotion to a new job position available within the department. Gerry's perception of his likely promotion, the introduction of a new adjunct instructor - Diane Harvey, and Department Head Dave Klein's actions are central to the critical incident. In addition, the interface of the HR department with Department Heads in the hiring of new employees is a significant feature in the case.

This decision case is designed to show the relationship between employee expectations and managerial decision making. It also illustrates there are other considerations that take precedence in candidacy for employment that aren't always apparent. Gerry incorrectly assumed his qualifications were closer to the ideal candidate than the new adjunct. Even though Gerry ended up leaving his position for a better opportunity, it would appear that Dave had more obligation to explain his decision making.

Research Methods

This critical incident was based on personal experience by the author and has been tested in the classroom. The names of all participants, companies, and identifying features of the account have been changed.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this assignment students should be able to:

- 1) Explain the difference between job descriptions and employee potential.
- 2) Assess how higher management can influence performance in current and future employment?
- 3) Describe how human resources plays an important role in avoiding problems with external hiring.
- 4) Analyze the case from a career development perspective.

Critical Incident Use

This critical incident is designed for use in undergraduate Management, Human Resources, or Career Development courses and has been used in classroom settings with great success as many students had some experience with employment and promotion issues. Because of the multi-faceted protocol and ethical concerns students will likely experience a high degree of engagement in the incident. No prior coursework is required for its use as homework, discussion, or written assignments.

Discussion Questions

1. How could the hiring process be improved to insure job descriptions, skill sets, and employee expectations are more closely aligned? (LO 1)
2. Could Dave Klein have handled the hiring controversy any differently? (LO 2)
3. What important information could Gerry Kennedy have discovered by contacting HR that could have helped avoid his misunderstanding? (LO 3)
4. What assumptions did Gerry Kennedy make about his career at High Desert Community College? (LO 4)

Answers to Discussion Questions

- 1. How could the hiring process be improved to insure job descriptions, skill sets, and employee expectations are more closely aligned? (LO 1)**

Sample Student Responses

Just because you have other abilities doesn't mean they will use them at work. Some jobs are entry level and are designed to be outgrown. You don't have to take the job if you don't like doing the work. Going to college provides better opportunities for more satisfying jobs.

If Gerry didn't know more about the job description, he may have assumed that there was room to grow with the department.

The new job should have listed the changes for the qualifications to be fair. Gerry should have been given a chance to apply for the job with the new qualifications.

Discussion

Developing employee potential involves shaping an existing balance of academic, practical, and experiential knowledge applied through continuous effort from both the employee and the employer (MacRae & Furnham, 2014). This reciprocal arrangement provides for increasing the employees abilities in exchange for an opportunity for growth within the organization.

Many companies do not provide this interface and rely on employees to develop their skillsets separately from current, or future, job interests or qualifications (Parrey, 2014). Employee potential requires three aspects: a) Audit. Providing a system for knowing what talent exists, and how to recognize it, b) Act. Put processes in place to develop the potential of future leadership, c) Accelerate. Develop a culture of coaching/ mentoring that accelerates leadership development and creates a competitive advantage (Parrey, 2014).

Pato (2013) describes the 7 “R”s of job good descriptions:

- The right employee
- The right competencies
- The right conditions
- The right place
- The right time
- The right cost
- The right employer

Employers can not always make predictions about attitudes in employees based on performance and likewise cannot always make predictions about performance based on attitude (Hawkes & Weathington, 2014).

The absence of the job description at Gerry’s hiring, whether properly posted by HR or not, made it difficult for Gerry to identify the parameters of the jobs expectations for his current position. In this case, HR did not change the expectations for qualifications on the new position, they simply hired the best qualified person who applied.

2. Could Dave Klein have handled the hiring controversy any differently? (LO 2)

Sample Student Responses

The fact that Dave Klein told one employee about an opportunity and tried to deny another the same opportunity could open the Community College to potential discrimination litigation from Gerry.

It is possible that Gerry didn’t complain about the hiring process because he ended up with a better position with his recent change in education. Secondly, no one wants to work somewhere they not wanted, Gerry may have decided there was nothing to gain by fighting the decision.

Discussion

It is increasingly common for employees to become overqualified in job positions as most employers do not make provisions for employee’s jobs to grow along with employee’s personal development (Frei & Sousa-Poza, 2012). While many employees do satisfactorily transition to jobs within their organization, most over qualifications resulting from personal development will result in a change of employers or another profession to find a suitable job description match.

In most cases, these periods of over qualification are generally short. About half of all individuals who are overqualified will find a sufficiently improved job match within a year. Overall, 90% will find a better match within four years (Frei & Sousa-Poza, 2012). Older employees are inclined to have higher levels of personal development characteristics, but over qualification can affect employees of all ages depending on economic conditions within that industry.

Dave Klein had no obligation to provide changes to Gerry Kennedy's job description to accommodate his changing skill set. But, he did have an obligation to be fair in the interview and hiring protocol that was already in place. If Gerry had been encouraged to apply, he would have been given an interview, as well. Even if the outcome was the same, Gerry would have felt he was given more due process in the hiring.

3. What important information could Gerry Kennedy have discovered by contacting HR that could have helped avoid his misunderstanding? (LO 3)

Sample Student Responses

HR could do a better job of posting jobs and their qualifications for being hired. Make sure the process is fair. Job descriptions should be posted outside of the HR department to make sure everyone can see them.

If Dave didn't tell Gerry about the changes in the qualifications while allowing another employee to apply for the job, then Dave acted unethically regarding his position.

The HR regulations not being followed are only half of the problem in this case. The other problem is the relationship between Gerry and Dave and what happened to cause Dave, not the HR department, to act the way he did.

Discussion

The concern for Human Resources in regard to external hiring is threefold: a) the need for firm specific skills and abilities, b) to modify variations in existing employee performance, and c) the availability of suitable internal candidates (Bidwell & Keller, 2014). HR departments are obligated to provide equal opportunity in both application and process to all qualified candidates internal or externally.

In addition, it is the function of HR to qualify candidacy by insuring their qualifications match the job description. Selection in hiring may be influenced by the size of the jobs expansion, availability of qualified candidates, and internal protocols for hiring. For example, State of Colorado has specific requirements for the posting and selecting of candidates. Availability when unemployment is high usually results in employees staying with current positions, while availability when employment is low suggests candidates may be hard to find (Bidwell & Keller, 2014).

HR had an obligation to insure the details of Gerry's employment were not interpreted solely by Dave Klein. First, a posting of the job in a public place is generally required. In this regard, having Gerry sign the job description as part of his contract would insure a better understanding of his employment. Secondly, it was HR's obligation to change the

job description to include non-CEPC qualified baking instructors. Dave Klein was directly responsible for Gerry not applying for the job as Gerry was told he didn't qualify.

4. Whatt assumptions did Gerry Kennedy make about his career at High Desert Community College? (LO 4)

Sample Student Responses

Many companies value longevity in employment and especially value personal development by employees. It was reasonable of Gerry to expect them to care about this accomplishments in education.

It was great that Gerry kept going with his education, but he never found a way for the department o benefit from it so it didn't matter. Maybe if he had asked Dave Klein to find some new responsibilities it could have created some new opportunities for Gerry.

I would think that Gerry would begin to feel the need to leave on his own after working on all of the subjects in his degree programs that were not related to his current position.

Discussion

1. Know the job market. While there is increasing pressure on instructors and teachers for continuing education, the standards for instructor qualifications have outpaced pay increases or job availability (Bayar, 2014). This results in instructors often needing to transfer from there existing positions to find more suitable and satisfying job opportunities.
2. Know the qualifications. Jobs are always about specific performance of tasks identified within a job description. Notice the content of the posting (Arms, 2014). Everything not associated with the job description and performance is not employment related. It may become necessary to change employment when job qualifications change. Gerry assumed his years at the college and his good teaching skills were a substitute for the specific pastry content that was required for the original CEPC requirement listed in the job description.
3. Know the employer. Employers may have unseen agendas requiring changes to departments that influence exterior vs. interior hiring decisions (Arms, 2014). Candidates should always apply for those positions where qualifications are close to expectations as available candidates often influence outcomes. This suggests that some qulifications may not be met in that hiring decision (Bayar, 2014). Gerry assumed his employer would be accomodating of the changes in Gerry's unique skill set when the College was under no obligation to do so.

Epilogue

Gerry Kennedy left High Dessert Community College to become an adjunct business instructor at the University. Gerry now works as a full time Instructor in the Business Department. Dave Klein and Diane Harvey still occupy their same positions at the Community College.

Suggested Student Reading

HR Departments:

<http://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/new-study-the-top-10-best-practices-of-high-impact-hr-organizations/>

JobDescriptions:

<http://hiring.monster.com/hr/hr-best-practices/recruiting-hiring-advice/job-descriptions/sample-job-descriptions.aspx>

Managing Employee Advancements:

<http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/performance-management/cycle/motivate>
<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/advancement-employee-performance-19132.html>

Retaining Employees:

<https://hr.blr.com/whitepapers/Staffing-Training/Employee-Turnover/Strategies-for-Retaining-Employees-and-Minimizing->

Additional Student Activities

Role Play: Students can take turns acting out different scenarios as Dave Kirby and Grand Kingman.

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