

FINDING TALENT: KEY

People are the key to organizational success, outweighing strategy, marketing plans, product mix, and pretty much everything else. That may seem a bit bold, but considering that people formulate and implement strategy, marketing plans, etc., the relationship is clear. The right people adjust to new opportunities and threats, working the strategy rather than being a slave to a plan. The wrong people don't.

The best organizations recognize the keys to recruiting the right team. These principles include:

1. TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IS A BASELINE, NOT THE PRIMARY DECISION FACTOR IN HIRING.

There is always a baseline level of technical knowledge and experience necessary for any position, without which one will not succeed. Successful organizations don't ignore that, but focus heavily on factors that go beyond the minimum criteria, such as those below.

2. WHO A PERSON IS MEANS MORE THAN WHAT THEY KNOW.

The best people can—and more importantly, will—learn and adapt, and have an intrinsic motivation to succeed. They are smart, but resilience and resolve wins over intelligence every time. They also exercise emotional intelligence (EQ) as much as IQ. Don't settle for just knowledge and experience.

3. CULTURE IS THE COLLECTIVE BEHAVIORS AND VALUES OF AN ORGANIZATION. THE RIGHT PERSON WILL FIT THE CULTURE.

Finding people that fit the desired culture of an organization is just as important as a mechanic installing a Ford carburetor on a Ford engine. The part must work with the whole.

4. THE BEST INDICATION OF FUTURE BEHAVIOR IS PAST BEHAVIOR.

If a person has experienced success in a particular area in the past, they are more likely to duplicate that success in other contexts. Interviewing should include a behavioral focus. Ask candidates to share the particulars of real life experiences, and don't be scared off by the occasional failure. As Will Rogers is quoted to have said, "Good judgement comes from experience, and experience from bad judgement."

5. THE BEST CANDIDATE MAY ALREADY WORK FOR YOU.

Every job opening provides an opportunity to take a fresh look inward. As job analysis improves the organization's understanding regarding their needs and the search uncovers the available talent pool, it may be that the best person is already part of the organization.

There's more to it of course, but these five factors can significantly increase your chance of making the right choice. In a tight market, as is the case now for many fields, it can be tempting to take shortcuts in the interest of filling a vacancy quickly, but the wrong hire is much more costly than taking the time for the right fit.

The featured organizations to the right have experienced success in recruiting while facing a variety of challenges.



WHITNEY WARREN RANCH is a long-time family-owned walnut and pear farming operation with prominent name recognition and historical significance in the Sacramento Valley, and a Board of Directors and related East Coast family organization providing oversight. Needing to fill a Board vacancy, the owners desired a director with a unique combination of grower experience, deep understanding of California agriculture, a strong finance background, and who would be adept at interfacing with those in the East Coast business context. Due to Morrison's high-level relationships throughout California agriculture, Whitney Warren Ranch engaged Morrison to direct the recruitment. Working closely with the Board to design specific criteria for the search, Morrison conducted discrete searches for board-level persons, reaching out to its extensive network, and utilizing LinkedIn and other resources. Morrison provided several highly qualified individuals to the Board. The Board selected Dan Cummings, a third generation Sacramento Valley farmer and Harvard M.B.A. who serves as the chairman of board of Blue Diamond Growers, the world's largest almond marketer. This important placement has helped to further strengthen the leadership and legacy of Whitney Warren Ranch in California agriculture.



SUNFOODS, LLC is a subsidiary of one of the world's largest branded rice companies, Australia's SunRice Group. Based in Woodland, California, SunFoods produces and markets Hinode brand rice, which is sold into U.S. wholesale and retail distribution markets (including Walmart, Safeway, WinCo, and Kroger) and to wholesale customers in Asia. To maintain its national accounts and build new relationships in the Asian wholesale and third party label retail segments, SunFoods needed a Senior Sales and Marketing Manager with the ability to grow and sustain business relationships in the U.S., Asia, Australia, and elsewhere. Also critical were extensive product supply chain knowledge, strong communication skills, and the ability to manage and develop people. The skillset and cultural fit needs for this position led SunFoods to engage Morrison, which then worked to find candidates with this unique combination of experience and attributes. The search led to a new Senior Sales and Marketing Manager with 16+ years' experience in food sales and in developing Asian markets, who is also fluent in Mandarin and Cantonese. He has been in the position for more than a year and is excelling in this important role.

S TO THE RIGHT FIT



Headquartered in Medford, Oregon, **GRANGE CO-OP** is a large grower-owned feed and supply organization. The co-op operates the only certified organic feed mill in Southern Oregon, produces Rogue branded bulk fertilizer and other products, and operates seven retail stores in Southern Oregon and Northern California that are also open to the public. When their long-time CEO retired, Grange had a highly qualified internal candidate but the Board wanted an open search to ensure the best choice for their future. The successful candidate needed experience interfacing with co-op boards, high-level leadership experience, retail experience, and familiarity with typical supply co-op activities. Morrison was engaged to perform the search based on our experience with cooperatives, agriculture, and other ag-related businesses. Morrison worked closely with the Board to define the search criteria, then reached out to our database, posted the position on key job boards, and conducted searches for passive (not actively looking) candidates. Morrison found 20+ qualified candidates; through the screening and interview process, the field was narrowed to four highly qualified individuals including the internal candidate. In Grange's case, the top candidate already worked for the organization and Morrison's process gave the board confidence in that decision. Morrison's unique approach and billing model allowed us to work as an extension of Grange's interests rather than focusing only on candidates we located and provided.



CALIFORNIA HERITAGE MILLS is a grower-owned rice sales, marketing, milling, and packing operation in the Sacramento Valley. Founded in 2011, the company built and now operates state of the art facilities. Along with its branded products, the company is known for consistently processing orders to specific quality specifications and packaging requirements. Having lost their controller unexpectedly, the company needed to quickly find a replacement to provide accounting, human resources, and other support to the management team and CEO. Additionally, this person needed to be willing to commute or re-locate to the rural location. With a tight timeframe and the constraint of its location, California Heritage Mills engaged Morrison's recruiting services. After determining the skill and culture fit priorities, Morrison reached out to its extensive database to find fitting candidates. With a long history in food processing, Morrison tapped into the breadth of its relationships to present candidates with the right skills, experience, and cultural fit. Within a week, Morrison provided an excellent candidate who was able to assume the position faster than anticipated. The controller remains a key staff member at California Heritage Mills today.



OMEGA WALNUT, INC. is a premier grower-owned walnut marketer in Glenn County, California. The company was established to maximize grower returns through an extraordinary commitment to quality at its recently constructed state-of-the-art facility featuring a fully automated packing line, laser sorting and grading, mechanical carton stacking and shrink wrapping, real-time vacuum packing, onsite cold storage, and other capabilities. Morrison's expertise was sought when the company faced replacing its CEO for the second time in just over a year due to their recently hired CEO leaving unexpectedly due to unforeseen personal circumstances. While needing someone who could continue to build the right team, Omega's board and ownership also desired to grow its commitment to quality, its growers, and its buyers. Morrison reached out to our network, including a top candidate who is well known in the West Coast nut industry. In addition to strong qualifications, this candidate was known to Morrison and had been through much of our screening process. The new CEO quickly developed solid relationships with Omega's board, growers, customers, and the employees. He is effectively leading the charge to grow and expand the company's business.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Principal Shawn Miller (pictured second from right) manages Morrison's People Solutions service line. Shawn specializes in executive recruiting, leadership training, organizational development, strategic planning, HR compliance and best practices, and other people related services. You can contact Shawn directly at smiller@morrisonco.net or (530) 809-4680.