

Michael Patterson

SIT.

STAY.

SUCCEED!

Management

Lessons *from*

Man's

Best

Friend



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118 West Allen Street

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Choosing the Right Breed

The American Kennel Club recognizes over 150 different breeds of dogs which are separated into eight breed groups depending on size, traits, function, and other characteristics.*

Choosing the right dog for your family is not as simple as picking out the cutest puppy behind the window. First, you need to know what role you want the dog to play in your home—you need to have a job description just like the job descriptions you create at work. Do you want the dog to be big, small, playful, or intimidating? Do you expect him to be a guard dog or lap dog?

When we chose our first dog, I kept in mind that my wife never had a dog before. A big, strong dog may have been too much to handle as a first dog. Neither of us wanted a small, yappy dog either. We wanted a medium-sized dog who would be both playful and affectionate. Baleigh is playful, and cuddles beside Ann every chance she gets. We were told Baleigh would get to be around 50 pounds, and that's what she is. Baleigh was the perfect fit for a first dog.

* www.akc.org/breeds

When we were looking for a companion for Baleigh, we had a different set of requirements. This time we wanted a larger, more protective dog. I wanted a male dog, as I was feeling a little overrun by females in the house. Of course, whatever we chose had to interact well with Baleigh. After doing a lot of research online, we narrowed our pool to just a few breeds. When we went to the pet store and found Kimba, we knew he was a great dog for us, but we were not the only ones he needed to impress. We knew we had to bring Baleigh to see how the two of them would interact. You could consider that to be Kimba's second interview!

Managers need to choose the right candidate for the job based on personality, qualifications, expectations, skill sets, and previous work experience. Each job at your organization requires different skills, so you are looking for different types of employees to fill those roles. Sometimes managers make the mistake of hiring or promoting the wrong employee for those positions. By not matching the right employee with the right role, managers are creating a skill gap from the beginning, which will require coaching and training more quickly than you may have anticipated.

The first step in the hiring process is to assess the need for your department. Assessing the need will help you determine the type of individual who would be the perfect fit for the vacant position. Evaluate the culture of your company; consider your vision, mission, and core values. Keep in mind it is much easier to train for skills than it is for values and attitudes.

You can always train a new employee to perform a task, but hiring an employee who doesn't possess the same values as you or your organization will be problematic in the long run. After aligning your values and attitudes, then focus on the individual's skills and abilities. Consider the following factors that will impact your success in finding the perfect fit.

Ensure there is an updated job description for the position.

A current and accurate job description will help you identify the skills, competencies, and characteristics necessary to fill the position. Competencies to look for include reading comprehension, math skills, computer skills, decision making, flexibility, and interpersonal skills. Consider which skills are essential, which tasks are performed occasionally, and which are not necessary for the job.

Determine the working conditions the position has to offer (work schedule, dress, expectations, accountabilities, sales requirements).

Don't ignore anything just because you think it might paint your organization in a negative light. In our credit union the branches are open seven days a week. Full-time branch employees are expected to work one or two weekends each month. This may be a deal-breaker for them, but at least we are all aware of the candidate's ability and willingness to work the schedule before we invest too much time on the interview process.

Determine how much experience and education is needed to fill the position and to address specific needs.

Some jobs can allow for a training period, while others require the employee to ‘hit the ground running’ almost from day one. Understand that even the employee with the best credentials will need a period of time to get adjusted to your organization’s specific culture.

Determine the appropriate compensation for the position.

In larger companies, this is usually handled by the payroll or human resources department. Many companies have a salary structure which includes a minimum and maximum pay for each position. Employees with no prior experience are usually brought in at the minimum, and those with experience are brought in at a higher pay. Also keep in mind you are looking to pay for the job the employee is performing and not necessarily the skills or expertise the employee possesses. If an individual with 15 years of banking experience who has been a branch manager applies for a teller position, that person is going to be paid within the scale of a teller, not a manager.

Choosing the wrong individual for a job can lead to the same frustrating, disastrous results as choosing the wrong dog for a family. After seeing the live-action *101 Dalmatians*, my friends Frank and Allison brought home a new Dalmatian puppy. They loved the dog and agreed to name him Elvis after one of

Frank's favorite singers. Unfortunately, Frank and Alison didn't do their proper homework on the breed. They didn't realize that, while cute, these dogs tend to be extremely hyper as puppies and need a lot of play and interaction. The family wasn't able to be as attentive to Elvis as he needed them to be. As a result, Elvis chewed everything. He started with shoes, and graduated to a chair, a sofa, and eventually the drywall! Elvis wasn't necessarily a bad dog. This was more a case of a bad match between dog and family that led to bad results.

In the business world, a bad match between employee and job duties can create bad results as well. In banking, a teller is an entry-level position. To be a good teller, the employee needs to be good at cash handling and interacting with customers. He or she needs to develop speed to perform transactions quickly, while still maintaining accuracy. We sometimes hire new tellers with prior banking experience, and other times we hire them with prior customer service or cash handling experience in another field. When we hire new tellers without any type of prior experience, we look for individuals who have friendly personalities. Tellers are the front-line employee; customers see them more than they do any other employee in the bank. If a teller has a negative personality or is not engaging, it may create a negative experience for the customer. Since our profession is all about service and trust, a few negative experiences may cause customers to take their money elsewhere.

Your profession also has front-line employees.

Perhaps your company has receptionists, cashiers, salespeople, or telephone operators. These are the individuals who are the first point of contact for your customers, and with whom your customers interact the most. If you fill these positions with people who do not have a positive personality and a service-first mentality, you could impact customer relations. Competition for the consumer dollar is fierce. People are willing to pay more for better service. Bad customer relations will affect your company's bottom line.

Duties, responsibilities, and expectations often change. Our dogs love to run around and chase each other outside. Summer temperatures in our area can approach 100 degrees. When it gets this hot, we limit how much time our dogs spend outside. Just because we limit their time outside doesn't mean their desire to play is limited too. Of course, they can't run around in the house the same way they do outside without crashing into tables and breaking something. Our dogs need extra monitoring and different boundaries to play inside. Of course, accidents will still happen, but we need to limit the frequency and severity of those accidents. We changed their routine, environment, and expectations, and we need to make sure our dogs can adapt.

We've already distinguished a teller as an entry-level position. The next level up from a teller is a customer sales/service representative. This employee is responsible for opening new accounts, solving customer problems, taking loan applications, and discussing and selling additional products. The average

transaction with this employee could last ten minutes or more compared to an average teller transaction of less than a minute.

Sometimes the employee who once excelled as a teller now struggles in his or her new position. This is the same, hard-working, devoted employee as before. Nothing has changed regarding attitude, determination, or intelligence. It's the job requirements that have changed. The fact is the skill sets required to be an effective and successful teller are not the same skills needed for the new job. When managers promote based on past successes, and neglect to consider the new job requirements, they inadvertently may set the employee up for failure.

The one area of the KIMBA principle we didn't discuss in the opening chapter is *ability*. When selecting someone for a position, managers need to measure if the individual has the ability to perform the job.

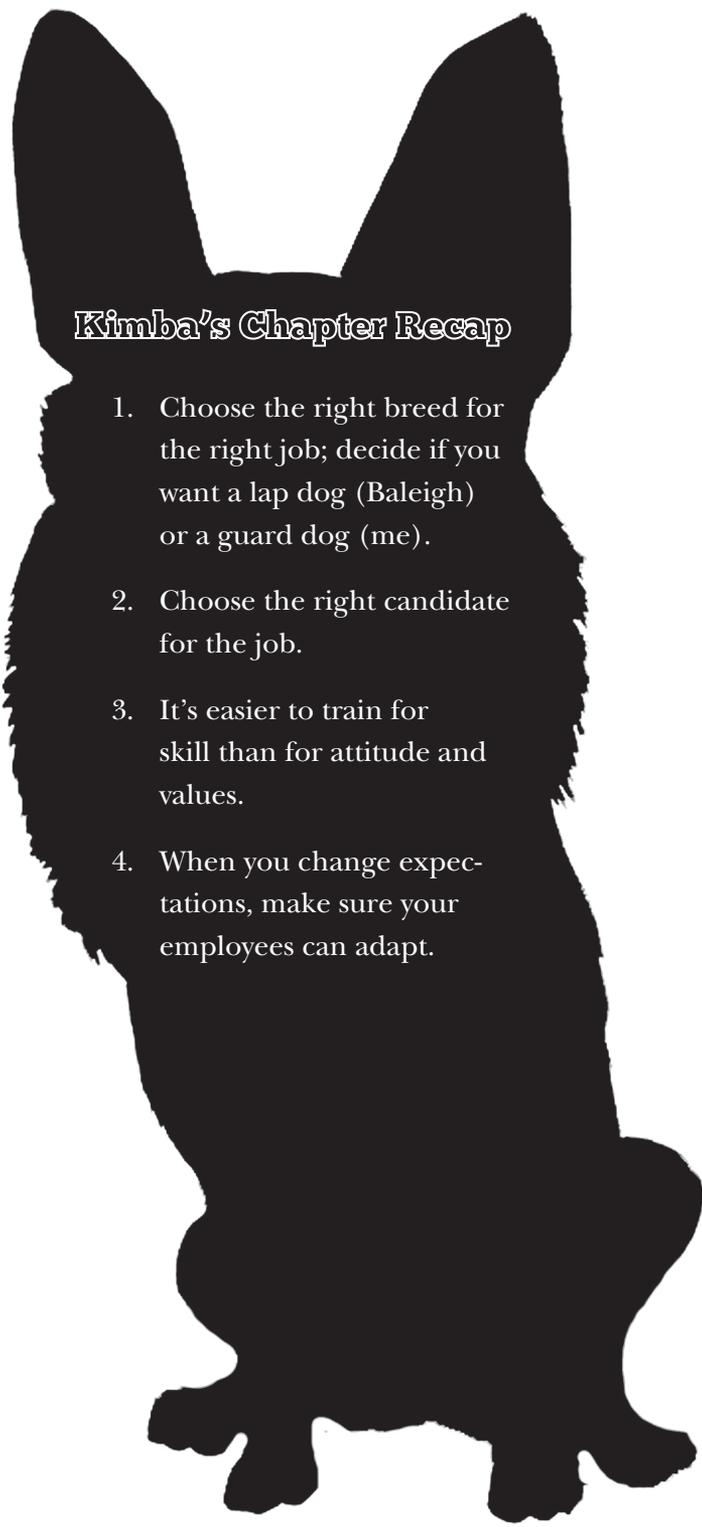
Many abilities can be trained; it depends on how much time and resources the organization is willing to spend to get new hires up to speed. Employees are expected to possess certain basic skills and most businesses understand that new hires may need trained on a specific computer system, but they shouldn't have to show someone how to use a mouse and keyboard.

During the hiring process, many organizations utilize tools such as pre-screening tests and assessments to measure a candidate's ability to perform the job. At our organization, we use an online teller

test to measure candidates' abilities in math, member service skills, and following directions. We use another test to gauge their attitudes toward attendance, punctuality, and quality of work. These assessments allow us to look at the candidates' abilities in ways that wouldn't be uncovered during a routine job interview.

John Caspole is president of Assessment Specialists, a company that administers employee assessment tests on behalf of Profiles International. Caspole believes that an assessment is vital to an organization's hiring practices because "gut-feel hiring works far less than 50% of the time. Getting an unbiased scientific measure of the candidate and how they fit the job helps employers avoid costly hiring mistakes. Interviewing candidates can be like seeing an iceberg in the ocean. You only see what is on the surface. Good job-fit tools allow you to see what is hidden during the interview but will assure or impede success on the job! Hiring the right person at the right time is a competitive advantage saving companies thousands of dollars while adding to the top line, especially within key business development situations."

Putting someone in the right job is the first step to creating a productive employee. Some people were made to be accountants, some to be salespeople, and others to work with their hands. Putting people in a position which is not the right fit for their skills, abilities, and personalities is sure to create coaching needs in the future.



Kimba's Chapter Recap

1. Choose the right breed for the right job; decide if you want a lap dog (Baleigh) or a guard dog (me).
2. Choose the right candidate for the job.
3. It's easier to train for skill than for attitude and values.
4. When you change expectations, make sure your employees can adapt.

Mike Patterson, Partner in Learning

www.mikepat.com