



# BOOK REVIEW

Prepared exclusively for REX Roundtable Members

## ***Hiring Smart: How to Predict Winners and Losers in the Incredibly Expensive People-Reading Game***

By Dr. Pierre Mornell  
Ten Speed Press  
Review by Will Phillips

If you hire the right people, everything else in your business becomes easier; if you hire people who are even marginally the wrong people, everything else in your business becomes excruciatingly harder. In fact, if throughout the history of organizations, people had hired right, and managed right, there would be little need for the extraordinary mechanisms that organizations have created to get people to do the right things. We would no longer need job descriptions, incentive systems, performance review, motivational seminars, and the list goes on and on. Hiring right begins with your ability to penetrate beyond the exterior of how someone looks, their resume, and their experience, and to discern what is in their heart i.e. their values, attitudes, and character.

Before you can begin hiring right, you must know what is in your company's heart. By this I mean you should know what the purpose of your business is, and what handful of values are critical to your company's success. Invariably these are the values that exist in the leader's heart. They cannot be shopped for and picked off a shelf because they are strategic or nice; they must be true.

Of course, if you are a valueless leader, which is highly doubtful, then you cannot hire people to match your values. Even if

your values focused on selfishness, greed, and ego, you would want to hire people who could be supportive of those.

In most cases, the fewer values an organization has, the better; ideally, a half dozen or less. When the list gets larger than that, I suspect they may not have been thought through, or may have been tacked on to satisfy an unfocused set of values on the leadership team. REX Roundtables has developed several simple values tools that may be helpful in your hiring. Send an email to me with "Hiring Values" as the subject to receive these.

### *Culture vs. Values*

Values are what you hold in your heart and strive to live up to on a daily basis. When a company is truly values driven, it means that its values are used to make all decisions of all types always, and every decision is held up to the values to judge the quality of the decision. It also means that these values eventually innately shape all behavior by all employees all the time. On the other hand, your organization culture is not what you aspire to, it's what you are. This is where the understanding of organizational culture has power.

Culture is not a wish. Culture is reality. Culture is the explanation of why your business behaves the way it does; why



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individuals and departments behave the way they do; why decisions are made the way they are.

Some of you may have heard of the idea of the formal and informal organization. The formal organization is everything that is on paper and in the manuals about the business, whereas the informal organization is the reality of how things really are. Particularly in large organizations, as they become bureaucratic in their aging process, the formal and informal organizations are significantly different. The cartoon *Dilbert* illustrates this, because nothing that occurs in the cartoon would ever appear in the organization's policy and procedures manuals, yet everyone who reads *Dilbert* knows that what they talk about in the cartoon is the truth about how the organization really operates.

In many organizations, it is extremely difficult to access the organization's culture in a public way because the leaders are unwilling to look at the reality of the culture. As an organization truly implements its values, its cultural reality and its values (commitment) become closer and closer.

## *Hiring Smart*

Pierre Mornell has written a fabulous book because it breaks from the usual procedure-focused, bureaucratic, legally-bound hiring tools and systems that almost all companies use.

This is a Ten Speed Press book, the publishers of *What Color Is Your Parachute?* The result is an extremely pleasant, well laid

out, and easy to read book with a superb index. This is the book where I first learned about one-minute, behavioral litmus tests in the hiring process. For instance:

- The car test. When you finish the interview, walk to the person's car. It is likely that the way they take care of the car is the way they will take care of the job.
- The chair test. Bring the candidate into the interview room and then tell them "Oh, just remembered, there's a meeting next door and they're going to need some chairs." Then start picking up chairs and carrying them out in the hallway. If no one moves to help, tell them the interview is over.
- The beauty and order test. As you lead them into the interview room, make sure that there is a crumpled ball of paper that did not hit the waste basket, a picture that is crooked, and so forth. The best response I heard is when the candidate went down to the front desk, asked for a piece of tape, and re-hung the poster correctly.

Over and over again, these short tests tell who the person is, as opposed to elaborate interview questions and resumes. The book is divided into five useful sections to help you redesign your hiring process:

- Pre Interview Strategies
- Interview Strategies
- Post Interview Strategies
- Checking References (If you want a



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unique reference-checking resource  
email me with "Reference Checking"  
in the subject line.

- Final Strategies

At the end, there are eight "Nuts and Bolts" sections on interview curveballs, word pictures and puzzles, legal release forms, pre-employment legal guidelines, and ten "Unusual Interview Experiences."

**Get this book.** Particularly if you want to improve your hiring process.

## *About the Author*

Pierre Mornell is psychiatrist who helps large and small companies evaluate and select key people. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of UCLA and *summa cum laude* in English Literature. He has an MD from UC Medical School. For the last 35 years, he has lectured on better hiring at the IBM Management Center. As the Dean of the university faculty for Young Presidents Organization, Stanford and Harvard Business Schools, Intuit, Kinkos, American Golf Corporation, etc., he's uniquely qualified to speak about the hiring process and does so with great praise from the many companies he has helped.

Will Phillips welcomes your questions and comments at [Will@RexRoundtables.com](mailto:Will@RexRoundtables.com). He is the founder of REX Roundtables for Club Executives, the premier Best Practices sharing network for health clubs with 150 of the world's leading clubs, Contact him about joining the NEHRSA-REX Club Roundtable for owners and executives.