



## How to Avoid 10 Costly Mistakes Professional Organizers Make With Their First Hire

So, it's time. You've hit your stride in business and you're ready to employ some help. You want to grow your team so that you can leverage your time, talent and resources to serve more people in a greater way.

Good for you for taking a thoughtful approach to this process of hiring your first employee. By reading the following, you'll be positioned to avoid mistakes that others make by diving in too fast, just to fill a need. Here are 10 common mistakes that Professional Organizers make when hiring their first employee:

### Mistake #1: Not Defining the Job

As a Professional Organizer, you may love the work you do with clients and think you're ready to bring on an employee so that you can serve a greater volume (or perhaps even so that you can work less, but still have some passive income).

One mistake that Organizers make is not defining the job for which they are hiring. Many jump to hire another Organizer, but what *is* the need in your business you are trying to fill? Is it another Organizer that you need? Is it an Organizing Assistant? Is it an Administrative Assistant? A Marketing Assistant? A Sales Associate? Who do you need to help you accomplish what you want in your business? Will this person work with clients with you? Instead of you? Will they work behind the scenes so that you can work with more clients? Will they work with a particular type of client, while you serve another?

Define the need you have, create a job description that captures the duties your employee will perform to fill that position, and identify the skills, qualifications and character traits a strong candidate will have to be successful in that role. You'll also want to include the pay range.

If you don't have a proper job description, you could end up hiring the wrong person. Don't make this common mistake.



## Mistake #2: Not Getting the Word Out

Once you have defined the job, you want to cast a wide net, and not make the mistake of just hoping that the right candidate will hear about your need or find you. Craft an enticing job posting that describes your company, the opportunity and what you are looking for. Actively source talent by letting everyone in your personal and professional network know you have an opening (and sharing the posting with them). Post or publish the job on your website, social media channels, local college Career Center job boards, job search websites, Craig's List and more. Be prepared to pay to post on some of these sites. Share the posting with organizations with whom you have a membership or association such as your local NAPO chapter, your chamber, service organizations you are involved in, other networking groups, etc.

You never know from where a great candidate will come. Get the word out about your need and actively recruit good talent.

## Mistake #3: Not Asking for Help

Especially for your first hire, don't try to go it alone. The recruiting and hiring process can seem daunting, as there are a lot of details to attend to to do it right. If you cast a wide net in your search you may be flooded with resumes and inquiries. The good news is that you don't have to reinvent the wheel, be the expert in each step of the process or be the one to do all the legwork.

Consider engaging the help of a Human Resources professional to guide you in the particulars, or to help you with some or all of the process. You can outsource the posting, screening of resumes, initial interviews, reference checking, background checking and more to an HR consultant, or even to a skilled VA who has experience in this area. You can also tap into the resources of a business coach, mentor, or employment lawyer to help with aspects of hiring your first employee (or subsequent employees for that matter). It can be helpful to talk with someone who's been there, done that and gotten the t-shirt to see what lessons they learned or what value they can add to your efforts. Consider consulting with another Organizer who has built a successful team.



## Mistake #4 – Not Knowing if You Need an Independent Contractor or Employee

You want to hire an employee (as opposed to an independent contractor) if you want:

- To define their work schedule
- To define their rate of pay
- To train them (on your process, on how to do the work, etc.)
- To require a dress code or set other work policy that they need to follow

These are just a few examples of factors to consider. If you are uncertain whether you want to hire an independent contractor or employee, check out the [IRS's 20 Factor Test](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/x-26-07.pdf), found on pages 3-5 of this publication: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/x-26-07.pdf>. You will also want to talk with your tax professional and lawyer to make sure you are aware of state requirements as well as the impact that hiring may have on how your business was previously structured. This includes things like health care, retirement plans and much more.

## Mistake #5 – Not Asking Effective Interview Questions

Answers to the right interview questions can tell you a lot about the candidate in front of you and how they might perform in the job you have available.

You may want to have several sets of interview questions for the hiring process:

- a. Prescreening questions - these cover the basics of the job requirements and can be used during a phone interview or sent to the applicant in the form of a questionnaire that they return to you early in the process.
- b. An in-person interview – utilize multiple types of questions including:
  - Credential and experience verification questions – learning about the candidate's education and work experience relative to the job you have available. I.e.: "Tell me about your work history for the past 10 years – where



- did you work and for how long? What experience do you feel is most transferable to the job for which you are interviewing?"
- Behavioral based questions - understanding that a person's past behavior can help predict future behavior. I.e.: "Tell me about a time you helped someone come up with a solution to a complex problem."
  - Hypothetical questions – asking about what they would do in a situation. I.e.: "What would you do if a client began to cry during a session?"
  - Opinion or Prediction questions – learn what the applicant thinks about themselves or the future. I.e.: "What are your strengths or weaknesses?" or "Where do you see yourself 2 years from now"
- c. A follow up interview/assessment – once you have narrowed your candidate pool down to the top contenders, you will want to bring them in again to help you make a final decision. You can include:
- A demonstration of work to be performed – asking the candidate to show you how they would work through a typical task they would need to handle on the job.
  - Follow up questions to your earlier set, where you still need more information to decide between candidates
  - A personality type test or assessment to give you more information about the candidate to determine "fit" for the job opening.

## Mistake #6 – Hiring the First Person that Can Fog a Mirror

You may be very anxious to have a new employee get started. You have the work for them, could really use the help and are ready to rock and roll. However, remember the phrase "be slow to hire and quick to fire".

You want to take your time to find the right candidate. It can be costly to hire and train new employees. Make sure you find the right person for the job so that you can reduce turnover and avoid misfits.

Be clear on your criteria for the ideal candidate, but understand which skills you can train and which qualities are non-negotiable and must have. For example, you can train someone how to organize a pantry, but you cannot train them to have a strong work ethic, integrity or positive attitude. Make sure that your chosen candidate



brings those non-negotiable (whatever you define those to be) to the table and that you don't compromise on the things you feel are critical for success with your company.

Ensure that you are confident that your top candidate will not only be successful in the job, but that it is a good fit for them as well. If you have a part time opportunity and find a great person who has all of the qualifications you are looking for, but really, they need full time employment to be happy, be wary if you hear them say "well, maybe I can find a way to make part time work". Likewise, if the salary you are offering is below what someone is looking for, if they "settle" for the position and pay you have available, they may not be satisfied for long and you can find yourself with the position open again before you know it.

## Mistake #7 – Not Doing Your Due Diligence Before Extending an Offer

Just because you feel great about a candidate does not mean you can or should skip steps in the hiring process. To cover your bases, make sure you are consistent and thorough in your review of applications, cover letters, resumes, interviews, assessments, reference checks and background checks (if you use them). You may feel like you can omit reference checks or a background check if a personal acquaintance has referred the candidate to you, but again, to be consistent, treat all candidates equally. Consider using a hiring checklist to make sure you have completed each element for each candidate you are seriously considering.

If you need to extend an offer before you have had a chance to complete all steps, make your offer "contingent" on acceptable results on any aspects for which you do not have results to date (i.e.: reference check, background check, etc.). The only reason to extend an offer before you have completed your due diligence would be if the candidate is also considering an offer from another employer and you need to extend yours so that you don't lose them. However, by extending the offer "contingent", should results come back not as you expect, you have the right to rescind the offer.



## Mistake #8 – Not Setting Expectations

Congratulations! You found the right person, they've accepted the job and you're excited to have them on board. A few weeks pass and you don't understand why your new employee isn't using the email signature that you do, why they are dressing so casually for appointments and why they aren't returning phone calls on the same day they are received. Don't they know what you expect? Well, not if you didn't tell them (unless you hired for mind-reading ability).

Make sure to be clear from day one of employment about any company policies, procedures and standards that you expect of your team. While some procedures make take training, policies can be upheld from the beginning. Policies are typically principles, rules or guidelines related to general employment, communication, treatment of others, and conduct at work. Procedures are descriptions of protocols, best practices and how the work is to be done. Standards are expectations around quality or measurement of success. Employees do best when they know what is expected of them and what to strive for in regard to the work they are to perform.

Well written and thorough policy and procedure manuals, as well as performance goals and objectives can be key ingredients to employment success.

## Mistake #9 – Incomplete or Haphazard Orientation and Training

Sending a new hire out to work with a client too soon or before they are ready is setting them up to fail. This can be damaging to the employee's confidence, to the relationship you have with the client and possibly to your company's reputation.

A methodical and thorough orientation and training will set new employees up for success, bringing benefit to your clients, to you and to your company. It is worth the investment of time and resources to do this right.

Have a checklist for what you will do when you bring a new employee into the company. Know what steps to take to get them settled, integrated and trained. Give them a proper orientation to your company and the job, and equip them with the proper tool kit, resources and a training manual. Map out their training program to include reading, research, "classroom" style learning, practice, job shadowing, on-the-job training, and a way to demonstrate their competence and readiness to work alone with clients before they are asked to do so.



## Mistake #10 – Never Evaluating Performance or Sharing Feedback

If you set expectations and performance standards when the employee first joins your team (avoiding mistake #8) and have a structured employee orientation and training program (avoiding mistake #9), you're on your way to a strong employer/employee relationship. The next step in the process is to regularly review performance against the objectives so that the employee knows how they are doing, where they stand and how they can work to reach their professional goals and your goals for them in the company.

Periodically evaluate, share feedback and help the employee adjust performance to reach the next level of competence, contribution or performance within the job or within your company. You may start with a review of a probationary or introductory period 90 days after employment began. A six-month review in the first year of employment is also not uncommon. From there, annual reviews are typical, though you can review and give feedback as often as you and the employee determine is necessary for success. In fact, a monthly touch-base meeting to discuss tactical aspects of performance can also include an element of feedback so that the employee regularly hears how you feel they are doing.

Make sure to include the employee's input on their own performance, in addition to sharing your own. Let them know what they excel at, and what you would like to see them focus on for improvement, development or change. Consider showing the employee your evaluation form and defining measures of success well before the evaluation takes place, so that they will know what to expect and won't be surprised by your feedback or results.

You may also invite your employee to evaluate you as an employer or manager, so that you too receive feedback and can adjust course in your role as you see fit.



Avoiding the 10 costly mistakes Professional Organizers make with their first hire is easy by clearly defining the job, getting the word out, asking for help, understanding if you need an independent contractor or employee, being slow to hire, doing your due diligence before making an offer, setting expectations with your new employee, conducting a thorough orientation and training program and regularly reviewing your employee's performance.

At [Simply Placed](#), we've spent countless hours and thousands of dollars making these mistakes, learning from them, and have invested in properly establishing a thriving organizing company with employees. I'm passionate about helping people just like you who are trying to build a team and want to avoid the costly mistakes that I made.

If you are interested in saving time, money and effort building the foundation necessary to hire great employees, you would benefit from investing in our wisdom. Customized consulting and coaching packages available today - [contact us](#) for more information or [schedule your complimentary 15 minute consultation](#) today to learn more.