

Short Tenured Employees – Is there an upside?

By Aaron Phillips

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Many of you, if not all, reading this article are making hiring decisions at organizations. The first three items many professionals evaluate when reviewing resumes are the positions held, the tenure of employment at organizations and any gaps in employment that occur after leaving an organization. Does the employee's previous work experience align with our current hiring need? Assuming the answer is yes, the next questions are: Is this employee committed to an organization? Are they consistently moving between employers just to get the next best opportunity? Does a gap in employment mean the employee was let go for poor performance? These are all questions that you are facing during the process of screening resumes.

When I began my career in Human Resources, employee tenure and gaps in employment were a huge focus on resume review. However, 2008 changed the process dramatically. Some very good employees found themselves unemployed though no fault of their own because companies were shedding jobs at record levels. "Rock star" employees were not immune. Because of this, many hiring professionals became more open to transitions in employment and gaps on resumes.

There is a similar phenomenon occurring over the last 2-3 years. Employee tenure continues to shift to shorter employment stints: supervisors and entry level managers less than 4 years and executives less than 6 years. Why is this occurring? Underemployment, millennial workforce and weak employer and employee relationships account for a good portion of the answer. The underemployed are very portable as economic conditions have improved, the millennial workforce is not as concerned by transitions on a resume and the broken trust relationships with employer and employees has led to commitment issues.

All of this transition has forced employers to begin to shift their thinking. I have begun to ask this question to our clients over the last year: If you hire an outstanding employee who makes a significant contribution over the course of the next two years and decides to leave your company, how does this make you feel? The answer in most cases has been: I would really appreciate more time in the position but if they make a significant contribution in 2 years, our organization will be stronger than it is today.

As hiring professionals, we have to adjust our thinking or we will struggle to staff our organization in this new era. The bottom line is that great employees are portable; they always have been and always will be. What is different now is that great employees know employers are becoming more comfortable overlooking short term stints.

I am not saying you should throw out your current hiring practices. Good hiring practices that include in-depth interviews with behavioral based questions, professional screening assessments of the candidate that are directly job related, reference checks and criminal background checks are all critical to a successful hiring process. I would suggest you look at resumes and conduct interviews using a different lens than many of you probably have been comfortable with in the past. Be open to the possibility of what a short tenured employee can provide. Secure good examples used during the interview process and seek out examples from their professional references that distinguish the candidate. You may be

able to turn that short tenured employee into a long-term career focused individual at your organization or you may just hire a “Rock Star” for a short stint.

If you have any questions or if you would like to learn more about how we evaluate candidates for positions, please feel free to call Aaron Phillips at (814) 528-9405 or AaronPhillips@DecisionAssociates.net