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Dynamic Duos

Why you need a great second-in-command -- and how to find one

By Dale Buss

Article excerpt

Hiring a deputy is one of the most important decisions a business owner makes, but few give it the attention it deserves. Of course, that can be a lot harder than it sounds. And it isn't unusual for business owners to get a pit in their stomachs soon after a new deputy starts. To make the relationship work, you'll need to explain the new hire's responsibilities clearly and communicate them to all employees.

Imagine the ideal candidate: What skills does that person have? What personality traits? Those answers will help you profile the person who will best mesh with your style and needs.

Entrepreneurs tend to choose either a person with similar traits – a clone – or a complement who fills in their weak spots. In most cases, the complement is the better choice. "I've never seen a situation where hiring a clone works – because owners almost always need to hire someone to do certain tasks they don't like to do," says Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of Trilogy Ventures Search, a Burlingame (Calif.) executive search firm. However, if you expect your hire to take over the company one day, Pappalardo suggests finding someone who shares some of your own traits to provide continuity to the business.

You may also want leading candidates to meet with everyone at your company, at least in groups. That can minimize any resentment employees may have about adding another layer of management between you and them. "The injection of a new person above all the rest of the employees creates a whole new cultural dynamic, and you don't know right away how that's going to work out," says Pappalardo.

For the full article, please visit: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_49/b3962401.htm

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