

PROFILES OF BAD HIRES:

Some Amusingly Disturbing Stories, and How To Avoid Them

I was in the mood to write something a little lighter than the usual, so I decided to check around the 'net. It turns out there are a million posts on a million different sites where amusing "bad manager" stories abound. But guess what? There seem to be even more posts about hilarious, jaw-dropping examples of employee incompetence and flat-out disturbing behavior.

If the following stories don't demonstrate the need to have a highly competent background investigation firm like The Hire Authority (508- 230-5901; www.hireauth.com), on board then I don't know what will:

1. On The Road Again...

The Problem: One manager reported that an employee called in sick for two weeks. Each day he would email HR with an update of his condition. It turned out the employee was on the road with his band the whole time. The employer found out only because the employee kept posting photos and updates on Facebook about the tour.

The Solution: Aside from a thorough background check to establish good (or bad) attendance habits, it wouldn't have hurt to get a baseline on this employee's hobbies and/or part-time employment during the interview, then make very clear that time off due to extracurricular activities will not be tolerated without permission.

2. Hot Enough For Ya?

The Problem: A restaurant manager reported that one of his cooks decided to use a questionable method for finding out if a grill was hot enough: He put his hand on it. Apparently

the grill was hot enough, because the cook suffered major burns. Afterward, he proceeded to sue the employer for failing to post a warning that putting your hand on a hot grill could burn you. Incidentally, he lost the lawsuit.

The Solution: There's no perfectly bombproof way to weed out plain stupidity (not to mention chutzpah), but it can show up in a properly conducted background check. Expert interviews of past employers and personal references may smoke out some information that raises a red flag. Dredging up any past incidents pointing to "accident proneness" could raise a red flag, too. And if, after the interview, your gut feeling is that something just doesn't feel right . . . go with your gut.

3. They'll Never Find Out

The Problem: One manager at an order fulfillment center reported that an agent stole a customer's American Express black card number, and went on some kind of spending spree to the tune of \$250,000.00 over the course of *two days*! Another manager described how an employee stole several credit card numbers from customers and used them for luncheons with her friends. She only got caught when she racked up a rather large bill for a birthday party for herself.

The Solution: There are several ways to weed out potential thieves. First, a criminal background check; second a credit check; third, an interview of former employers and references. All of these checks should be done by a professional – especially the interviews, as they must be conducted in a sensitive and thorough manner that best protects the employer.

4. But You Said I Get A Mulligan!

A manager updated the company's employee manual. He set copies out in the break room so every employee could read it at his/her leisure. Later that day, an employee who had been

arguing with another employee punched that employee's lights out in the presence of several others. He then casually went back to his job like it was no big deal. He was quite surprised when the employer fired him, pointing out that the employee manual said when there's a problem with an employee, a first offense would result in a reprimand, a second offense in suspension, and only a third offense would result in firing.

The Solution: Clearly, this employee has a number of personality shortcomings. A thorough background investigation could have turned up past incidents of anger management problems, or just plain antisocial behavior in the workplace. (Not to mention stupidity and chutzpah.)

5. Show Me the Way to Go Home:

The Problem: A security supervisor came in one morning to find his nightshift guard fast asleep with a bottle of hard cider beside him. For over an hour the guard went on snoring, while the supervisor worked at his own post filling out paperwork, drinking coffee and waiting for a company rep to come and escort the man away. When the guard received the bad news and went to clear out his locker, a bunch of empty bottles fell out.

The Solution: Discovering you've hired an alcoholic guard is about as scary as it gets. If someone with bad intent knew this man got drunk on the job and even passed out, who knows what damage they might have done? A thorough and professional background check should be conducted for sensitive jobs like this to determine any criminal history or substance abuse hospitalizations.

6. How Could You Let Us Do This?

[Note: This last one is almost impossible to believe, unless you've been around the modern legal system a bit.]

The Problem: Office romances are generally frowned upon, but seldom do they (ahem) rise to this level. A human resources professional reported that she had to deal with a case involving a

little more than flirting in the office: it seems two employees had sex on the back of a forklift. Worse, Employee B got pregnant. Worse still . . . (wait for it) . . . she sued her employer for suffering a workplace accident.

The Solution: Okay, I think we can all agree these employees deserve the stupidity/chutzpah award as well, but I think the person who hired them gets a pass. It's hard to weed out randy job candidates. Yet poor judgment in general can be spotted with a professional background investigation. The poor judgment doesn't have to be limited to the use of heavy equipment; any incident of poor judgment can be an indicator of future problems, including a problem of this nature.

[Post Script: No, I don't know how the lawsuit turned out. I'm guessing it was thrown out for lack of contraception.]

These are just a few incidents of bad employees who somehow got on the payroll. Admittedly, they're some of the more outrageous examples. But the point is clear: every effort should be made to weed out bad hires before they wreak havoc with your company. Start by calling The Hire Authority at (508) 230-5901, or visiting their website at www.hireauth.com today.

The foregoing should not be construed as legal advice. Employers should always consult their own legal counsel for advice on labor and employment matters.