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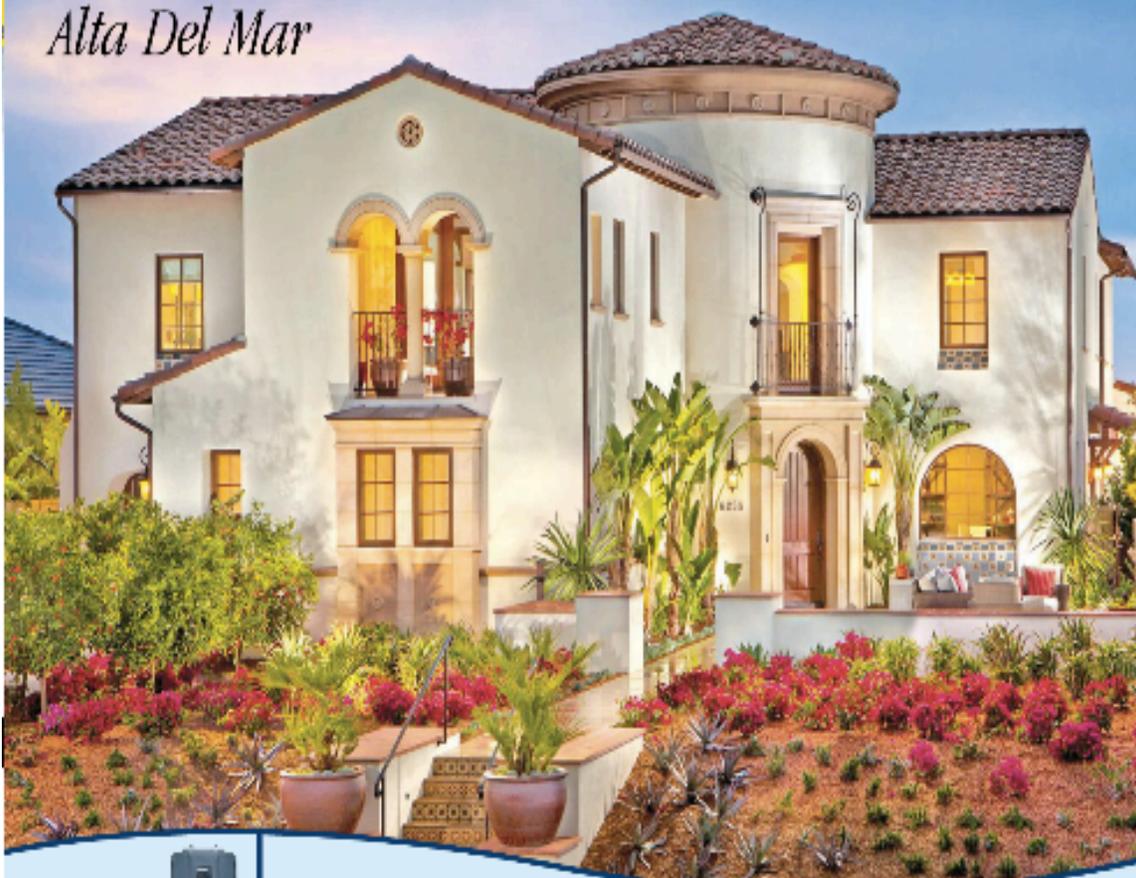
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Pardee Homes Alta Del Mar



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Hire Right: Strategies for Today's Market

A successful staff is an integral role of any business, and the hiring process is one of the most important aspects of securing a hard-working team.

By Stephanie Pearson

June 2013

The overall perception of your company in the marketplace is key when it comes to attracting first-rate candidates. A positive company culture that is pervasive across all levels can have an enormous impact on a firm, as shown by Camden Property Trust of Houston, Texas. This multifamily REIT has placed in Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" list every consecutive year since 2008. A consequential factor in the company's success is the behavior of the senior executives, who acknowledge the importance of every single person in the firm on a regular basis. This type of positive notoriety matters when attracting new employees and also retaining existing ones, as evidenced by how difficult it is to recruit talent from Camden. Conversely, companies with poor reputations have a much harder time landing prime candidates and holding on to first-rate employees.

Social media is a useful tool for screening potential hires, though reference checks remain as essential as ever. A carefully executed process that includes

reference checks is a surefire method of minimizing bad hiring decisions. Speaking with former employers about a candidate offers perhaps the biggest ROI of anything in the hiring process, as a well-executed reference check is a risk management technique and a test drive all rolled into one. Make sure to ask open-ended questions and broach tougher subjects, such as failures.

Job descriptions can set the tone for your company, as can your treatment of the candidate at the interview. It is important to remember that this potential hire is a guest to be treated with politeness and punctuality. Of utmost importance is ensuring that the proper legal guidelines are followed when conducting an interview with a candidate. The interview process can be a minefield for lawsuits due to improper questioning, so a qualified HR representative or informed manager are the only individuals who should ever conduct interviews on behalf of the company.

“An accurate job description really does set the expectation for an employee right from the beginning,” noted Gino Cesario, Vice President of Corporate and Strategic Services, Pardee Homes. “It establishes the road map by which they're going to perform their job. That's a critical piece.” As Cesario pointed out, many hiring managers assume that if a candidate has already held the same title at a previous company, he or she will already know exactly how to carry out the role, but responsibilities often differ from firm to firm.

An accurate job description is also essential from a compliance standpoint. “Job descriptions are critical to legally protecting you and maintaining accountability when properly written to include job performance expectations,” said JoAnne Williams, President and CEO of JWilliams Staffing.

There are several solid legal reasons for developing job descriptions for all positions, added Travis M. Gemoets, Partner, Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell LLP. As Gemoets explained, if an employee is no longer able or willing to perform a function of his or her position, the company will need to be able to reference a written job description that clearly outlines the responsibilities of the role. “You will need to assess if it is an essential function of the job that you hired this person to do. If you have a job description that is skeletal or outdated because the job has changed, you've got a hurdle... and you might have to explain yourself in front of the EEOC (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission),” Gemoets noted.

Details both large and small, including everything from starting the interview promptly to bringing your executive team into the interview process, can have significant impact on a candidate's perception of your firm. You might consider having a senior executive or even the CEO stop by during a crucial interview to briefly meet the candidate and explain the importance of the available position.

A favorable interview experience will also go a long way in promoting a positive impression of your organization, as the candidate is sure to recount the experience to others well after the interview ends, both in the real world and the digital sphere.

Recruitment and retention have become foremost priorities for companies across virtually every sector of the real estate industry this year, as hiring is heating up in lockstep with the continued recovery of the residential and commercial markets. Thus, organizations need to put strategic plans in place to ensure they are able to land and keep the best talent at a time when companies are increasingly vying over candidates.

About Stephanie Pearson

Stephanie Pearson is a Partner with Terra Search Partners, a retained executive search firm helping real estate companies build great teams. Terra Search Partners serves many of the country's foremost REITs, private equity firms, pension fund advisors, private developers and owners, family owned businesses and non-profits. To see additional articles written by Stephanie and others at Terra Search, click through to www.terraresearchpartners.com. Contact Stephanie Pearson at stephanie@terraresearchpartners.com or 415.433.8888.