



Six Steps for Hiring the Best Database Marketers

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How do you ensure you find, attract and hire the best database marketer/analyst for the job? Here are tips based on more than 300 placements over the past 17 years:

1. Understand your need. Too often, hiring managers formulate only the vaguest of job descriptions. This is probably the key reason most employers fail to hire the right person.

The description needs to specify the primary skills required. These are the skills that ensure that the candidate can hit the ground running with little down time. For example: five or more years experience in statistical modeling techniques, or three years in an agency or consulting environment.

Specify the secondary skills required. These ensure that candidates can leverage other experiences as they enhance their primary skills. And specify what technical environment a candidate should be experienced in, such as SAS, SQL or ORACLE.

Describe precisely the jobs duties and responsibilities. This is critical. You want a candidate who has been there, done that, allowing a manager to quickly identify candidates who will need minimal ramp up.

Finally, indicate what most recent work experience an ideal candidate would need. This lets you quickly screen out candidates who may have the primary or even secondary and technical environment skills, but most likely will be unable to hit the ground running.

2. Validate the candidate's qualifications by asking the right questions. The difference between finding the right person and an almost right person is asking the right questions, then reformulating the same questions to check your answers. In this way, you have a better chance to identify a potential candidates real skills, not just give them a slow pitch that they can easily hit and allow them to tell you what you obviously want to hear.

Multi-pass screening is easier described than done. But the best way to get to the core of a persons skills and qualifications is to ask the same question from three or four angles

and compare responses. The goal of multi-pass screening is nailing down a more exact understanding of the candidates skill sets.

3. Understand the HR/marketing communication gap. If you don't think your organization has a communication problem, that may be the problem. It is my experience that in one of every five larger companies, the HR staff lacks a clear picture of the needs of the marketing department in general, and database marketing in particular. There are many cases where database marketers are hired by managers who almost completely bypass HR in the interview process, thinking they can get what they need faster and more accurately by themselves because HR doesn't understand what they really need.

The problem arises because HR often focuses on the candidates list of skills while failing to match what the candidate has accomplished and what the manager expects the candidate to accomplish.

This is not a job at HR, and it works both ways. Sometimes marketers are so overwhelmed with other responsibilities and the lack of qualified staff that they don't spend adequate time assisting HR in finding the right talent.

4. Check references. Always! This step sounds so basic, but it's a low-tech safeguard that often is overlooked. Say you have a candidate for a data mining position who has the analytical and direct marketing skills you seek. Looks good on the resume. Sounds confident on the telephone, comes across well in-person. But what do his former employers say?

Contrary to popular belief, you'll find most former employers willing to give their honest recommendations or concerns. It is important to go back several years, including at least one former manager. A good manager reference will let you feel confident about a candidate's performance.

5. Remember the importance of chemistry. You can't underestimate this issue when it comes to hiring. It accounts for as much as 50 percent of the reason one candidate is hired and another is passed up. Sometimes the differences are very subtle, and if you're a small company you especially can't afford to hire a mistake.

Key questions to ask include those that focus on the candidate's previous company culture, facility layout, office hours, dress code, even special events or weekly perks that became a part of their working routine. This is the soft stuff. You must thoroughly understand where the candidate has come from to know whether he will fit within your company's culture.

6. Make your job easier. Choose the right people for the job. Don't rush through it. Check your instincts by asking a peer to interview the candidate. Remember, your success as a decision maker is determined largely by the quality of the people your surround yourself with.