Luke Carlson - Discover Strength's Hiring and Interview Process

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Introduction

The purpose of this checklist is not to suggest that you copy exactly what Discover Strength do. It's purpose is to give you a template to create your own hiring system and strategy that aligns with your culture and goals.

"Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless and add what is specifically your own"

- Bruce Lee

Hiring Mindset & Principles

"You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want."

- Zig Ziglar

1. Discover Strength is built around the personal trainer.
2. The personal trainer is the star of the show.
3. Make the personal trainer successful and the business will be successful.
4. Discover Strength adapt a "first WHO then WHAT" mindset.
5. Hiring is the most important decision in your business (especially in HIT as we're, typically, selling interactions with a new hire.)

6. Discover Strength was never about Luke Carlson. It's about the trainer. Not about working for Luke Carlson.

7. Discover Strength's customer service principle says the team member comes first. The customer comes second.

8. Discover Strength do face-to-face interviews for 2-hours every Thursday.

9. The hiring team does all of the interviewing. The same people ask same questions over and over and get very skilled at it. The hiring team is made up of concierge staff, managers, personal trainers, and Luke.

10. Be efficient and set a goal for your interview process timescale, but don't rush it.

"Hire slow, fire fast"

- Brian Tracy

4 Stage Interview Process

First Interview

1. Always a group interview (2-12 candidates per week)

2. Describe core values first. Read core values speech, e.g:
   - How Discover Strength is built around the personal trainer “first who then what”.
   - “Who we spend our time with really defines the experiences in our lives.”
   - “We’re looking for people who believe what we believe.”
   - “If you believe what we believe, you should come work with us. If you don’t, you should not come and work with us.”

3. By telling the story around your core values you will define the hiring fit upfront and smoke out any in-congruency and prevent wasting time on inappropriate candidates. This is the most important interview in the process.

4. Discover Strength provide candidates 48-hours to report if they want to move forward to the next step in the process.

5. Failure to comply with this deadline will mean the candidate is instantly removed from the process. This is an effective litmus test to identify inappropriate candidates who fail to follow basic instructions.

6. This interview process communicates that Discover Strength do everything in a purposeful way and care about how they do things, which will help attract the right candidates who want to progress through the process.

7. See **Candidate Review Process** for review steps following each interview.

Second Interview

1. Email instructions to candidate to submit YouTube video (max 7-minutes) answering 5 questions:

    1. What position are you applying for?

    2. Tell us what each of our core values means to you and provide examples of how you lived them in your career and life?

    3. Tell us about your passion for strength training?

    4. How will you help us become the best customer service company in the world?

    5. How will you make Discover Strength a great company?

See **Candidate Review Process** for review steps following each interview.

Third Interview (The WHO Interview)

Whatever the role, a key consideration for any new candidate is “have they achieved what I’m asking them to achieve when they are here?” The only exception to this rule is if they are applying for an entry level role and have no direct experience.

1. Why Discover Strength?

2. How would you describe who you are in the core of your DNA in one word?

3. What stands out most for me about the company, purpose and values?

4. What’s your natural strength?

5. What’s the biggest misperception people have about you?

6. What’s the toughest feedback you’ve ever received? How did you learn from it?

7. What are you most proud of in your life?

8. Tell me about a time you found yourself in an ethical dilemma and what happened?

9. Give an example of when you’ve gone the extra mile?

10. (Key for personal trainers) One of our core values is learning and one is science based. If the preponderance of scientific research suggested that the majority of what you were personally doing in terms of your strength training workouts before you started at Discover Strength, was wrong, meaning it wasn’t supported by the research, would you be comfortable abandoning all of it and re-learning everything you know about strength training?

11. If yes, how can you be so sure?

12. Give me an example of a customer who you turned around from a position of unhappiness to sheer joy?

13. What’s your greatest weakness? What are you not good at? Tell me something where you just made a huge mistake?

14. Tell me about someone who is better than you are in an area that really matters?

15. What's the hardest you've ever worked on something in your life?

16. What do you like to do when you're not working?

17. How would you describe your personality?

18. Can you give example of where you've demonstrated empathy to a team mate?

19. Work history:
    1. What were you hired to do?
    2. What accomplishments were you most proud of?
    3. What were some low points during that job? When did you not perform?
    4. Who did you work with specifically?
    5. What was your boss's name? How do you spell that? (threat of reference check)
    6. What was it like working with that person?
    7. What would they say your biggest strengths and areas for improvement are?
    8. Why did you leave that job?

See **Candidate Review Process** for review steps following each interview.

Fourth Interview (The Workout Interview)

1. Candidate has a workout scheduled with one member of the hiring team.

2. Hiring team member will look for how the candidate interacts with the concierge, introduces themselves to others, make eye contact, etc.

3. The purpose of the workout is to demonstrate the intensity of high intensity training. Otherwise, when candidates see machines and an older training population, they might assume it's low intensity / ineffective.

4. The hiring team will take a maximum of 1 week after this interview, to decide if they are going to hire the candidate.

Candidate Review Process

1. This process happens at every interview stage.

2. 20-40% of candidates are weeded out after 2nd interview, using these criteria:

    1. Is this the right person?

- Are they aligned with core values
    2. Are they in the right seat?

- Job function / key roles:
    1. Do they get it?
    2. Do they want it?
    3. Do they have time, emotional and physical capacity? e.g. Can they physically lift 100lb plates to load the leg press?

3. Selection criteria must be concrete. None of this is abstract.

4. The hiring team communicate via Slack after each interview phase with:
    1. RPRS (right person, right seat)
    2. WPRS (wrong person, right seat)
    3. RPWS (right person, wrong seat)
    4. WPWS (wrong person, wrong seat)

5. If anyone says anything but RPRS, they are not hiring the candidate.

6. Luke enjoys using the binary principle “Hell yes or hell no” when making decisions. If it’s not a “hell yes” it’s a hell no. “Maybes” don’t cut it.

7. Do we see this person becoming one of the top 5 personal trainers in the company? If no, Discover Strength will not hire. They are always looking to upgrade their people. Otherwise, it could be the death of Discover Strength over the long term.

8. If there is one area they’re concerned about, Discover Strength will go deeper and call the candidate, and ask more questions.

Interviewer Skills

Great interviewers ask follow up questions that force the candidate to go deeper.

Here are 5 master tactics:

1. Interrupting (if candidate gets off track with their answer or talking about something irrelevant).

2. Push vs pull - was the candidate pushed out or were they pulled by another company?

3. Paint mental picture - can we see this person executing in the key role?

4. Never stop at stop signs - go deeper on short / abrupt answers.

5. Not looking for good interviewees, looking for the right person and right seat.

Each interview phase allows Discover Strength to learn more about the candidate:
- Can they meet deadlines?
- Can they follow instructions to upload a video to YouTube?
- Can they complete home work assignments?
- Do they prepare for interviews?
- Did they review the company website?
- How do they dress for the interview?

How to find candidates?

1. Build relationships with local colleges and universities and submit job posts to their job boards.

2. Connect to faculty within colleges and universities and develop relationships with those responsible for the exercise science programs. You want to have the ability to build a connection with the potential candidates in their class.

3. Create an internship program twice a year:
    1. interact with a college student who looks like a good candidate further down the road.
    2. Cannot bore the the intern. The intern must be excited.
    3. Intern is not here to provide value. You must engage, teach, and work out with them. Interns are then much more likely to love to work for you.
    4. Many of Discover Strength's best hires have come from their internship program - SIIP (Summer Intensive Internship Program) and WIIP (Winter Intensive Internship Program).
    5. Internship is 6 weeks long.
    6. During the 6 weeks, all interns come together once per week for a classroom session (6-7pm) and then from 7 till 9pm, they are back on the studio floor to run through some training techniques.
    7. Layer on more concepts over time. Once a week they have to train a Discover Strength personal trainer and be trained by a Discover Strength personal trainer.
    8. Interns do not train clients.

4. Recruitment is a marketing function. Hire / acquire marketing skills to bring in the best people as well as attract prospective clients. Discover Strength consider this on their website.

5. If Discover Strength are behind their goal in terms of number of candidates in the interview process (annual goal is 150 candidates in first interview, last

updated: 2018), they will invest in paid adverts on Facebook and Instagram to increase numbers.

Full-Time vs Part-Time

All of Discover Strength's trainers are full-time. This allows Discover Strength to immerse their team in the organisation, and keep them up-to-speed with everything that is happening. Discover Strength only want people who treat it as a career and not something on the side.

How do you compensate your personal trainers?

- Discover Strength provide a Core Growth Plan of 1-4 Tiers

- Discover Strength provide internal/external education/development opportunities and set home work to upgrade trainers and allow them to earn raises like:
  - HITuni certifications
  - Read Body By Science and The New High Intensity Training (quiz in books)
  - Complete an ACSM certification

- Discover Strength treat all employees fairly but not the same e.g. will grandfather some experienced people in to tier 2 or 3 on a higher commission rate.

- Discover Strength pay personal trainers on commission e.g. Tier 1, 32-38% of all revenue generated (grows over tiers). This, typically, more than exceeds minimum wage to meet legal requirements.

- Create a pay structure that makes trainers want to train clients. This is win-win-win for the trainer, the client, and your organisation. Regular salaries may not incentivise a trainer to work later / earlier to fit in more client workouts. By paying personal trainers on commission this incentivises them to work extra hours to train more clients at, potentially, unsociable times.

- Discover Strength ask "how do we pay trainers as much as possible whilst maintaining a gross margin that supports business?"

- Discover Strength use MINDBODY to calculate trainer pay out based on the number of personal training sessions during a pay period.

- Discover Strength personal trainers do not sell to new prospects. Discover Strength have a dedicated sales team made up of 7 personal trainers, which has

- proven to convert much higher. The sales team get bonuses for bringing on new clients. If you're a smaller business, and you are the best sales person, you may want to start off by taking the role of the sales person in your business and do all introductory workouts.

- Discover Strength pay a percentage on auto-pay (monthly) revenue the new client initial signed (could first few months of sessions). Discover Strength pay this bonus upfront and take calculated risk that they will keep client over the first few months.

- Discover Strength have a New Client Experience Director who educates and liaises with clients during their first 22 workouts. If they a retain a client past 22 workouts, they will receive a bonus. You could task the same person with the initial sale and retention and bonus them twice.

- Discover Strength have discovered that once a client passes 22 workouts, they will stay a client for 7 years on average.

Employees vs Contractors

Discover Strength only have employees. There are no independent contractors. This is because they cannot set rules or standards for contractors. It's hard to build a brand around contractors.

Hiring with Multiple Locations

- By using a video task for the second interview, Discover Strength are able to reduce the requirement for face-to-face interaction and the investment in travel.

- Regardless of size and number of locations, you still have to be very committed to your interview process. This IS your business.

Final Points

- You may still occasionally hire the wrong person, but if you have set the expectations properly from the outset, have the right culture, and systems, they will get ejected fast, like a virus.

- When making a hard firing decision, prepare for 36-hours of pain. It's brutal for 36-hours. Instead of enduring this 36-hour pain, many operators / hiring

- managers will not make a decision and experience weeks, months, even years of pain. Many business owners have reported that one of their biggest business regrets was not firing an individual sooner.

- Your first responsibility to your team is give them great team mates to work with. Therefore, you must be ruthless in removing the wrong person from the wrong seat.

- Create hiring standard operating procedures (SOPs) from day 1. These are working documents that you refine and optimise over time for greater effectiveness. Every mistake should have it's process reviewed to prevent the same problems from recurring.

- Building a business with systems and processes enables you to outsource tasks, take time off, sell the business, and multiply your efficiency and effectiveness.

- Name all of your processes using acronyms to make them easier for you and your team to remember. You could use a tool like G-Suite to create Google Docs for your systems.

- Once a quarter, Discover Strength hold a party to welcome new employees.

- One of the first, and most important executive hires to make is someone to own the marketing function for your business. They should use their skills to attract new prospects, retain existing clients and attract new trainers.

- If you're interested in learning about cutting-edge HIT science and business, networking with your colleagues in HIT business and taking your business to the next level, I highly recommend you attend the Resistance Exercise Conference here

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