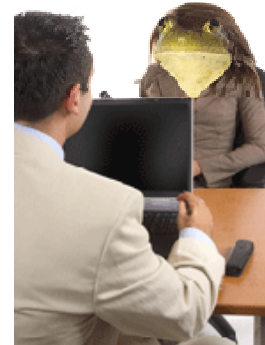


## Interviewing and Hiring Great People

### Kissing the frogs to find our prince or princess

For most of us, hiring people isn't something that's one of our favorite things to do. It takes a lot of time and much is at stake. We may have to kiss a lot of frogs until we find our prince or princess. Who we hire has a direct impact on our team and the overall business. Clearly, it isn't a task to be taken lightly.



Through the years I have made some great hires. I've hired some real stinkers, too. Not that they weren't nice people, but they were a wrong fit for the job or organization. Here are a few lessons I've learned along the way.

**Hire a person, not a resume.** I can look back and see that I hired many of the people who turned out to be frogs because I was infatuated with where they used to work. I see now that I was hoping to gain and learn from what those retailers were doing well, without stopping to fully understand whether or not the person had the skills to do that. If an applicant comes to you from a company you like and respect then by all means move them to the top of the pile, but hire them on their own merit.

**Don't make an offer until you've found a candidate you are so excited about you can barely contain yourself.** Okay, that might be a tad extreme -- but not much. Singer John Prine has a lyric that goes "much to my surprise when I opened my eyes I was a victim of the great compromise." I think he was singing about some of my hires. This was especially true when I was hiring part-timers at the store level. A few times, instead of looking harder I just chose the best of the bunch I had. Only hire great people you're really excited about.

**Include active role playing in a real-world situation as part of the interview process.** Take the candidate out onto the floor and role-play sales associate and customer. Don't just reach across your desk to hand them one of your products and say "sell it to me." When I was at Bose I was interviewing a candidate and I just wasn't connecting with him. I wasn't going to bother to do the role play but decided at the last minute that I'd try it. When I got him out on the floor and we started the role play, it was as if he went from Clark Kent to Superman. The guy was unbelievable. I realized that sitting in an office talking about himself wasn't his strong point, and for most of us it isn't, but engaging and selling customers is what he did extremely well. I also remember the time I was interviewing a young woman for a cashier's position. We were talking out on the floor and I was called away for a moment. When I came back she was cleaning the store! Needless to say, I hired both of these people. Get out of the office and get your candidates into their world.

**When hiring managers it is even more important to hire someone you're excited about.** One of the best rules of thumb is to ask yourself if you would want to work for the person.

Obviously, understanding what type of manager a person is (or will be) is difficult to do in what is rarely more than a few hours worth of interviewing. My favorite way to learn as much as I can about a candidate's style is to ask them, "Tell me who your favorite manager of all time was and why?" Their answer will tell you the type of manager they aspire to be. You'll learn if they're controlling and a gatekeeper or someone who loves to empower their people. I always follow that question up by asking them to tell me three things this person taught them and how they've put them into practice. I'm hoping to hear more examples of how this person will manage. More than once I've heard a big disconnect between what they said about the person and how they put it into practice.

**Don't be afraid to hire someone who is better or more experienced than you.** When I finally did that, I discovered someone who was able to help me grow as an individual and I was able to help them develop as well. Someone once said "When you hire people that are smarter than you are, you prove you are smarter than they are."

One of our clients is incredibly patient and disciplined in his hiring. The result is that with every hire they've made their team has gotten better as well as they have improved upon the experience they deliver to their customers. What a great reward for that patience and discipline.

**About the author:** Doug Fleener is founder of the Dynamic Experiences Group. He is a veteran retailer with more than 25 years of hands-on retail experience with world-class retailers including Bose Corporation and The Sharper Image. He has also owned and operated his own specialty stores. His new book, *The Profitable Retailer: 56 surprisingly simple and effective lessons to boost your sales and profits* published by Acanthus Publishing is available at [www.theprofitableretailer.com](http://www.theprofitableretailer.com) or at Amazon.

Doug is now president and managing partner of Dynamic Experiences Group LLC, a Lexington based retail consulting firm dedicated to helping retailers create unique customer experiences that results in higher sales and profits. Learn more at [www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com](http://www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com) or call Doug at 866-535-6331.

Fleener also shares his knowledge of experience based retailing in a series of custom key notes and workshops designed for stores, businesses, corporations, non-profits, and trade associations of all sizes. His casual style and quick wit make him not just a crowd pleaser but also an incredible motivator, encouraging people to take action and deliver extraordinary experiences to customers and employees alike. Learn more at [www.dougfleener.com](http://www.dougfleener.com).