

Hiring has never been harder. Make it easier.



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Used to be you could hire just about anyone who walked in the door. They wanted to work. Period.

Now, it's all about references, criminal records and drug tests.

References are okay. It's the other two that, in another era, would cause an employer to shake his head and ask, What's happening here?

Rick Osewalt, director of business management for New England Business Service, Inc., Groton, Mass., says hiring just one unqualified employee can nearly destroy productivity, profitability and

morale in a growing company. Those early days of the company are sensitive, and you can't be spending your time putting out employee fires when you need to be beating the bushes for customers. It's especially bad to lose good employees to a competitor.

"With each employee departure, you forfeit whatever you invested in training, and an amount of knowledge and information that even experts haven't dared calculate," says Osewalt.

Firing someone isn't as easy either, says Osewalt, thanks to increasing government and legislative involvement in labor and employment issues. So now, you must be prepared to possibly defend your decision in court.

Here's some tips from Osewalt on keeping disputes away from your office door:

1. **Demonstrate a businesslike approach** from a prospective employee's first involvement with your company, says Osewalt. Make the application simple to understand. Make job descriptions clear (and detailed), and avoid using words or expressions that denote a possible gender or age preference (salesman; Girl Friday; young).

2. **Maintain complete and up-to-date records** on each employee. Keep job performance files, and include notes on work record, changes in re-

sponsibilities or salary. Make note of warnings you issue, even if they are verbal warnings.

3. **Keep the employees well-informed**, especially when it comes to wages, overtime reporting and safety standards. Encourage open lines of communication. You can dodge many potential problems, says Osewalt, if employees feel they can talk openly about problems or concerns.

Employees aren't always looking for instant solutions to their work-related problems, but they do want to be listened to and taken seriously.

New England Business Service, a 45 year-old company, supplies small business products to more than a million customers, to help improve management, marketing and operation success. **LM**

UNIVERSITY CLIPS

How do metals bind with soil?

Dr. Lynn Katz, a visiting scientist in the **University of Delaware** plant and soil sciences department, focuses on the fate and transport of soil contaminants, with emphasis on metals.

"Soils treated with industrial wastes or sludge result in levels of metals, such as iron, uranium and chromium, which could contaminate groundwater," says Katz.

"By understanding how these metals are transported in the groundwater, we can develop applications to predict the process, thereby preventing the metals from migrating."

One key to this research is learning how metal ions are bound to soil materials.

New weed research at U.Fla.

Dr. Philip Busey, associate professor of environmental horticulture at the **University of Florida**, reports he is working on control of dollar weed in St. Augustinegrass through irrigation management.

"Dollar weed is essentially an aquatic plant," says Busey, and irrigation practices have long been a contributor to its growth. If you've got it, you can moderate it by backing off on the watering." Dr. Busey is also looking at timing of preemergent herbicides for goosegrass and crabgrass control in golf and athletic field turf.