

# **STYBEL PEABODY & ASSOCIATES, INC.**



Laurence Stybel, Ed.D., and Maryanne Peabody, MBA, founded Stybel Peabody Associates, Inc.

## **THREE IDEAS TO HIRE PEOPLE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS.**

**Below are three suggestions when hiring talent: (1) Design your job descriptions to appeal to people open to new ideas (2) Ask specific questions in the interview (3) Ask specific questions of references.**

Hire people who are Open to New Experiences.

Loannis Nikolaou is a researcher in the Department of Science and Technology at the Athens University of Economics in Business in Greece. He had 227 employees complete Big Five personality measures.

The Big Five is a common way to think about key personality characteristics and the elements of Big Five Personality Factors can be easily looked up in [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com) or any web search engine.

One of the Big Five factors is Open to New Experiences.

Supervisors assessed overall job performance of these employees. Openness to new experience was significantly associated with high levels of job performance when jobs required getting work accomplished through others. (2003).

Most of the people you will hire this year will be in jobs that whose success requires working with and through people.

How can you avoid hiring people who are closed to new experiences?

Candidates' first interactions with your company are often through published job descriptions. If you want hire people open to new experiences, design job descriptions to attract such people and job descriptions to "turn off" people closed to new ideas.

### **1. Design Your Job Descriptions to Appeal to People Open to New Ideas.**

Below are two job descriptions. The first comes from American Airlines, a public aviation company with headquarters in Dallas-Ft. Worth.

#### **Fleet Service Clerk:**

Fleet Service Clerks perform the handling of items on and off aircraft, carts, containers, and trucks; transporting items between terminals and aircraft; receiving, delivering, weighing and documenting of cargo in a cargo specific facility (warehouse) or a loading dock area. Pick-up and delivery as indicated: mail at mail facility, baggage in bag room; cargo at the cargo facility or staging areas. Reads and fills out legibly, documents and forms necessary to the operational requirements of the airline. Includes ability to perform data entry. The cleaning and servicing of aircraft interiors, including cabin cockpit and lavatories; checking, handling, assembling, removing and installing passenger service cabin furnishings and supplies according to check list specifications. Transporting furnishings and supplies to and from aircraft interiors. External servicing of the aircraft including lavatory, potable water, external electricity, air start, and preconditioned air; includes checking all fluid levels. May be required to drive a bus. May be

required to work at heights while de-icing of aircraft. Includes filling the de-icer with measured amounts of appropriate chemicals and water as needed. Arrival and departure activities of aircraft including cleaning aircraft windshield; pushing, towing and related guide person functions. May be required to operate a forklift. May require monitoring and maintenance of aircraft fuel and oil tanks by taking stick readings and checking fuel truck meter. The filling of fuel truck from storage tanks, driving fuel truck and servicing aircraft and ground equipment as required. Operation and maintenance of fuel storage facilities including ordering and checking deliveries of fuel and oil. Assisting in loading, unloading and racking both filled and empty drums. This position may be covered under Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol testing requirements. Other required attributes include:

- High School diploma or GED
- Applicable valid drivers license as required by local authorities
- Work rotating shifts including weekends, holidays, and days-off
- Work overtime on short notice in emergencies or when operationally necessary
- Read, write, fluently speak and understand the English language
- Ability to distinguish colors, red, green and yellow
- Use simple arithmetic (Addition and subtraction of six digit numbers)
- Must have knowledge of and ability to use basic computer skills
- Must fulfill government required criminal background checks to qualify for unescorted access privileges to airport security identification display areas (SIDA)
- Must secure appropriate airport authority and/or US Customs security badges
- Handle multiple tasks simultaneously
- Must report to work on a regular and timely basis

**Notice the focus on specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. Will this job description attract someone who is open to new experiences?**

The second job description comes from Southwestern Airlines. This company also is a public aviation company with headquarters in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area.

**Appearance Technician:**

An appearance technician provides friendly service to and maintains positive relationships with all internal and external Customers. Works in a cooperative spirit to ensure the success of our Company.

The work of the Appearance Technician shall include, but not be limited to cleaning, washing, and polishing the interior and exterior of airplanes, airplane parts, maintenance equipment, shops and hangars, including replacement of aircraft seat covers and aisle rugs on service checks, turnarounds or through flights and the driving of motor vehicles when necessary in connection with the work of an Appearance Technician. Appearance Technicians will carry out safety and/or security initiatives as directed by Southwest Airlines or the FAA.

Appearance Technicians will not be permitted to perform work of higher classifications, unless all Employees within such classification have first been given the opportunity to perform such work in a timely manner and are unable to do so or the work necessary to be performed is required to maintain the schedule. When requested by Mechanics work, which only requires the use of strength and no hand tools, may be performed by Appearance Technicians. Must be able to meet any physical ability requirements listed on this description. May perform other job duties as directed by Employee's Leaders. Basic qualifications include:

- High School Diploma, GED or equivalent education required.
- Must be at least 18 years of age.
- Must have authorization to work in the United States as defined by the Immigration Reform Act of 1986.

- Must possess a valid U.S. Driver's License.
- Must be able to perform well in a fast-paced environment, subject to adverse weather conditions, including extreme heat or extreme cold and aircraft noise.
- Must be able to work well in confined areas, reach and stand for long periods of time while washing and waxing the aircraft.
- Must be able to climb, kneel, squat and sit in order to replace aircraft carpet and seat covers and perform cleaning and other duties.
- Must be able to lift and/or move items weighing up to 50 pounds on a regular basis.
- Must be able to read documents, follow instructions, learn and understand operations procedures, rules and regulations.
- Must be able to be alert to moving vehicles or aircraft and use radio equipment as needed.
- Must be able to communicate information and instructions in writing, verbally or via radio equipment as needed.
- Must be capable of being trained on as well as operate a forklift and a tug.
- Must be capable of being trained on as well as operate scissor and boom lifts at heights of up to 40 feet.
- Must be able to easily climb up and down ladders, stairs and stands while cleaning the interior and/or exterior of the aircraft including while washing and waxing aircraft.
- Must be able to work rotating shifts, holidays, and overtime.
- Must be able to comply with the Company attendance standards as described in labor agreements and/or established guidelines.
- Must maintain a well-groomed appearance.

**Did you notice that these are the same jobs?**

Like American Airlines, this Southwestern Airlines job description also focuses on specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. But there is a different title to the job. There is also more of a focus on corporate culture and personality fit. It states at the top of the description that the mission is to "provide friendly service and...positive relationships." The American Airlines job description, on the other hand, describes the mission as "the handling of items on and off aircraft..."

The differences between the two missions could not be starker. And yet these essentially are the same jobs. The crafting of the Southwestern Airlines job descriptions is designed to attract different personality types.

Perhaps it is time for your organization to review its job descriptions? If you want people who are open to new experiences, does it show in your job descriptions?

## **2. The Job Interview:**

If it is important not to hire people who are open to new ideas, consider using Flanagan's Critical Incident Technique as a tool to help you and say. (2005):

"Tell me a story you are proud of where you had to be open to new experiences?"

You are seeking candidates who can tell you specific stories with a smile and enthusiasm. You want to avoid people who provide abstractions, e.g., "I am always open to new ideas." Another way to get at the same issue would be this question:

"A pivot is when you are running in one direction and you suddenly shift to a new direction. Sometimes pivots are deliberate. And sometimes pivots are a forced on you. Tell me a story you are proud of where you had to engage in a pivot."

### **3. Reference Checks:**

It is difficult to get valid reference information, given the concern about litigation. But if you get a chance to speak on the phone or in person with a reference, consider asking one of these Critical Incident questions: "Tell me a story where the candidate had to be open to new experiences," or "Tell me a story about when the candidate had to pivot from one goal to another because circumstances changed."

The candidates you want to hire are the ones where stories come without hesitation.

#### **When Work Is Accomplished with and Through People:**

Some jobs can be accomplished in isolation. But those jobs are diminishing in number as work gets more complex.

Most of our client companies have jobs that require working with and through people. We recommend you do the following

- (1) Review job descriptions. Are they going to appeal to people open to new experiences?
- (2) Review the way you conduct job interviews. Might you gain value by asking the two questions we recommend?
- (3) When checking candidate references, consider asking the two questions we recommend.

## References

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**Stybel Peabody provides companies with “leadership and career success” for valued senior level talent.**

**Core services include retained search for leaders on Boards or whose jobs touch Boards (Board members, CEOs, COOs, CFOs), leadership coaching, and executive-level outplacement for leaders who should be networking with Board members.**

**The readers of *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* voted Stybel Peabody Associates, Inc. “Best Outplacement Firm” in 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017.**



**For a free 30-minute consult, contact:**

**Maryanne Peabody**

**Stybel Peabody Associates, Inc.**

**[peabody@stybelpeabody.com](mailto:peabody@stybelpeabody.com)**

**stybelpeabody.com**

**boardoptions.com**