

# Get the Right People on the Bus

Who you hire is the most important business decision you'll make.

By Bryan J. Rader / *UpStream Network*

**U**pStream Network recently went on a significant hiring spree, adding to our team in the areas of business development and account management. Selecting the right people is very much an art and a science. It takes time and careful thought.

For us, hiring starts by reviewing hundreds of résumés, arranging phone interviews, checking references and scheduling in-person meetings and company office visits. Throughout the process, I spent significant time thinking about the traits and skills we should consider most important for potential new hires.

“Get the right people on the bus” was a key first step in the Jim Collins best seller, “Good To Great.” Hiring good people is key to building a strong culture, and a strong culture is key to setting priorities internally and guiding your ability to perform externally.

Once you have assembled a good team, you can work on strategy: Where should they sit? Where are you driving?

But first, get the right folks on the bus.

As I was considering who would be the best new passengers on our UpStream Network bus, I thought a lot about our choices. We determined very early what our culture would be. Through a lot of reflection, we identified a core objective of offering “concierge-quality service.” This meant building a team that was empathetic to our customers and clients, patient, proactive and willing to go the extra mile – even if it meant working without a script.

We saw this as looking for talent that might work well in the hospitality industry. We also saw a need to find people who understood the multifamily business. We believed this meant looking for candidates who could work well with property managers, homeowners association board members and property owners. This “high touch” capability was something we felt would distinguish our team from competitors and strengthen our culture.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CANDIDATE

Back to our search. We reviewed hundreds of résumés. It's always interesting to read the qualities people choose to highlight in their résumés – hobbies, extracurricular activities,

service provider experience, results from their current role, etc. We read résumés thoughtfully, but their main purpose was helping us narrow down choices to a more realistic group of applicants. Then we began phone interviews, which held more weight.

For me, it's important to listen to candidates and hear what their true passions are. I like to ask questions that help me really get to know them: What do you like most about your current situation? What books are you reading? What do you do for fun with your family and friends?

Sometimes candidates ask me personal questions, too, such as what I like to do when I'm not working. I find these discussions are most similar to the type of relationship-building they would be doing in their new roles. Having a personal conversation is a great way to gauge this skill. I also learn how well they listen and how much research and preparation they did before the appointment.

In one interview, a candidate told me he had read all my columns in *Broadband Communities* over the past five years. (Wow. Maybe too much preparation!)

Once we identified our finalists, we still wanted multiple opinions from within the company. Does she work well with others? Is he a team player? “Share the credit” is an important part of our new culture.

This ultimately led to quite a few new additions to our team, all of whom have helped transform our culture as we continue to evolve and grow.

I looked back at our process to see if there were any commonalities among the new associates. I found several. They all are very likable, empathetic people. They're team-oriented and active outside of work. And they have a good working knowledge of the multifamily industry.

If you're going through the hiring process now, how is it going? Have you been able to invite the right passengers onto your bus? ❖

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