


Hiring for Innovation

 [linkedin.com/pulse/hiring-innovation-roberto-a-foglietta](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/hiring-innovation-roberto-a-foglietta)



Published on August 29, 2016

Premise

Mamma Beatrice Pastries Ltd is a fictional company invented for educational purposes. It is a family driven company, relatively big, mostly local with consolidated administrative procedures and a good reputation about the quality of their every-day fresh products. Nowadays, they are facing a slow decline in market share and they are losing their competitiveness. New entrants are going to leverage their weaknesses to rapidly acquire a position.

Standard hiring exercise

In this exercise, we impersonate Carla. She is the CEO and she is in charge of the company administration. Carla decide to hire a personal assistant and she had the lucky to find one very prepared, experienced and skillful personal assistant. Kelly makes a good impression in Carla and she got the job .

After four weeks that Kelly got the position, she is having problems with the other people working in administration: the team members are clearly upset and referring to Carla that Kelly started to compare their consolidated office procedures and to criticize these for not being the state of art.

A standard exercise oriented in hiring people suggests that Carla did not hire Kelly by a team panel approach but only looking at the skills and her personal feeling about Kelly. We are acknowledged that personal feeling is a must for special position like personal assistant but in general it is a bad criteria (bias) to hire people. Avoid to involve the team during the hiring process may easily drive to a bad impact in the team integration, especially when the team is a small and used to work among them by years long.

We are also acknowledged that team working is a priority for any company and the exercise suggests Carla (us) to ask for a suggestion to a forum of other managers before take an action.

Carla's advisers

Most of the feedback she received by her colleagues are focused on trying to address Kelly's team problems basically to help her accepting the current procedures and adapting her to the daily work in the new environment. Many of these comments are well balanced and sound good sense management.

However there are small and subtle signals that this approach will not solve the problem and it will drive Kelly to quit her job. Moreover, she knows pretty well the company limits about being sticky with the old-goldies-days habits and the internal resistance to adapt to the nowadays market expectations.

Carla has been trained for managing innovation and decide to face the whole team, Kelly included. She has a different idea about handling this situation compared her colleagues because:

- like them, she want to avoid the team disruption and worse;
- but she want leverage the new hired to improve the administration.

For these reasons, Carla checks the agenda of others to be sure that everybody could participate. She informed Kelly by person about the convocation and immediately after sent the pre-written short e-mail to all the team members inviting them in a same-day meeting: "*Invitation for a team briefing in the meeting room at 11:30, today. Please confirm your participation, thanks. Carla.*"

Same day meeting

Innovation and emergency management have some points in common, the worst is that if we do not properly deal with innovation, then we need to cope with emergencies. Sometimes, our actions timing is a way to communicate to the others an unequivocally message that the company has the will to make some changes. In this case, it is also good to face everybody without giving them the time to rearrange their opinions.

The Carla' speech

Carla is chairwoman at the team meeting and is going to open it with an introductory speech.

*Dear all, most of you are working in our company for a very long time. A **very** long time and I should **thank you** for all you did for this company along these years. (little pause)*

I am pretty sure that you all, like me, are interested in defending our values - I have no doubts about it. (little pause)

Someone new arrived here (Looking at Kelly) and starts to criticise our way of working. (pause and looking all the others, it makes them hope that she agree with them about Kelly wrong behaviour).

***Well**, Kelly has been hired because her great skills she matured in her past experiences in other important food and beverages companies. She is bringing to us the best practices and she is sharing with us her knowledge from others companies. (little pause)*

*We need to - **we must** - learn from her as soon as possible. (Pause and looking all the others)*

Soon, she will stop to complain about. Soon, she will stop to see the differences. Soon, she will accept our way of working. (little pause)

*Before this will happen, **we need** learn from her as much as possible. (little pause)*

*We **all** want to defend our values. The best way to do that is **to give a try** to a change every day and **to make** an improvement **every day** because trying to be better of what we were yesterday is the **only way** we will make us to successfully stay in the market for many many years coming. (pause and looking all the others).*

*I **hope**, you are going to **help me** and (looking at Kelly) Kelly in helping this great company we are working for - Mamma Beatrice - to be here at its best for the next 50 years in the future. (looking at all others for receiving their confirmation by their head nodding)*

The Carla's goal for the meeting

The best action that Carla could take is to plan regular team meetings in order to let the team listen and evaluate the Kelly opinions and leverage them to improve the Mamma Beatrice office procedures and in doing this harmonise the team up to the Kelly standards and not in the lower current ones.

Carla plans to setup the habit for a regular team meeting weekly on Friday morning, an hour before lunch time, to keep the meeting concentrated. In these meeting Kelly (and everyone else) could freely share ideas and the team could debate about how to leverage these feedback.

The habit of a regular weekly confrontation will institutionalise the idea that a big turn in a company could be driven by small changes on regular basis and cool down the fear about innovation or criticism.

Moreover, these meetings will give the opportunity to Kelly to get integrated and harmonised within the team, progressively. The whole team will move upward to the new administration standards instead of being Kelly to adapt down.

Carla knows that she should not participate in all these meetings because it is better to let the team organising by themselves but she plan to be present when strategic or hard decisions are going to be taken, only.