

# Identifying Talent in Your Selection Decisions

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**T**his article discusses the need to evaluate inherent talent and strengths when making selection decisions for nurses based on organizational culture and individual values. One organization has taken the idea of selecting for talent and strengths to a new level. This discussion and the data presented will show a method-

ology and decision-making process to reflect that process in nurse selection decisions. This strength-based approach is intended to select the best fit based on key characteristics while reducing turnover rates and replacement costs for nursing. The nurse leader plays a critical role in this process and shift in thinking.

**M**ercy has a long history of working with talented, compassionate caregivers, dating back as far as the House of Mercy's opening in Ireland in 1827. Mercy now serves 7 Midwestern states and is the sixth largest Catholic healthcare system in the United States. Mercy is home to 33 acute care hospitals, nearly 700 clinic and outpatient facilities, and ministries in Laredo, New Orleans, and Vicksburg. With 40,000 coworkers and more than 2000 physicians, Mercy cares for over 3 million people each year.

Within the Mercy system is Mercy Hospital St. Louis. Mercy Hospital St. Louis houses 787 acute beds with 135 supporting clinic and outpatient locations; 7725 coworkers and 681 physicians come together to care for the 80,000 emergency room visits, 30,000 inpatient and outpatient surgeries, and more than 8400 births annually. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Mercy Hospital St. Louis number 2 in Missouri, and it is the only hospital in the state to earn a Leapfrog Top Hospital award. Mercy Hospital St. Louis is home to the only Level I trauma center in St. Louis County and the largest Level III neonatal intensive care unit in Missouri. Mercy St. Louis offers a range of services including, but not limited to, the Children's Hospital, Cancer Center, Heart and Vascular Hospital, Burn Center, Surgery Center, Birthing Center, Skilled Nursing, Behavioral Health, and Home Health and Hospice. It is the range of specialties, comprehensive technology, caring service, and continuous improvement that helps Mercy provide optimal care for its patients every year.

## WHAT IS CULTURAL FIT?

Ultimately, someone is the right culture fit when you find their beliefs, values, personality and attitude align with your organization. Although you may think you can decide from a brief interview whether someone is the right cultural fit for your organization, Mercy's People Promise Model (Figure 1) is designed to help us understand the best way to achieve our mission. If we hire the right fit and invest in these coworkers through development, competitive pay/benefits, and career acceleration, and add that to our Mercy Signature Service, responding to people's individualized needs and exceeding their expectations, we will fulfill our mission.

In order to find the right culture fit, we break it down into 3 areas: criteria fit, Mercy fit, and now, talent fit.

Criteria fit assesses a candidate's knowledge, skills, experience, and education. In other words, ensuring candidates possess the minimum qualifications we require in order to perform in the role. These are considered teachable elements.

In light of Mercy's mission, vision, and values, each leader has the privilege and responsibility to select and onboard coworkers. Leaders and physicians seek to identify those with personal values that align closely with Mercy and who bring with them a strong willingness to be part of the Mercy community. To strengthen our commitment in this area, Mercy has utilized a Mercy fit assessment tool for over a decade to ensure we select only the best coworkers to fulfill our mission of continuing the healing ministry of Jesus through compassionate care and exceptional service. The Mercy fit assessment is based on Mercy's values. These are formative if the person's desire and core beliefs align.

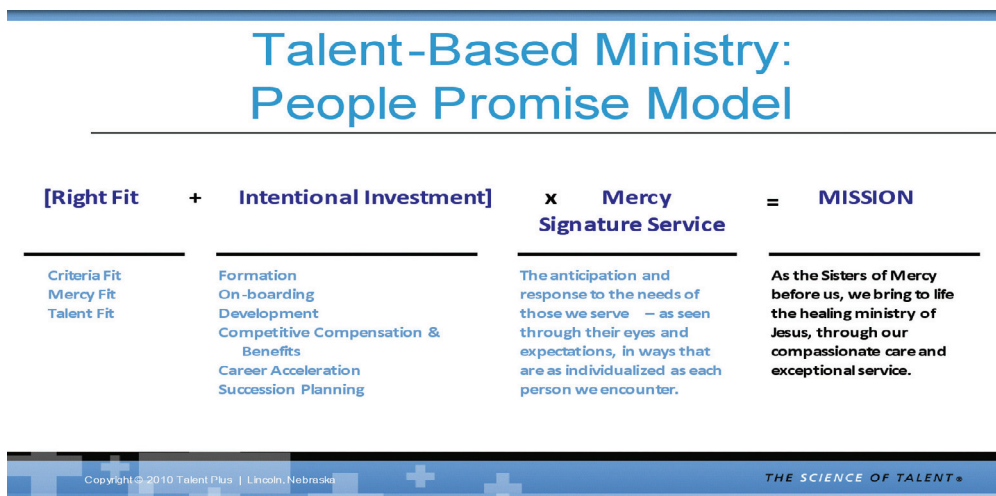
## OUR TALENT JOURNEY

Since November 2011, Mercy has implemented talent fit. This is an interview to assess a candidate's natural talents. "Talent is a person's natural ability to achieve near-perfect performance without effort. Talent represents a consistent pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Talent is not a skill that can be taught, but talent can be developed."<sup>1</sup> Talent is *not* teachable, but can be developed to reach full potential.<sup>1</sup> The selection science behind the talent fit interviews provides predictive validity and highlights the specific natural talents of our top candidates.

Through our experience, when someone meets all 3 areas of fit, we have a successful hire.

Our hospital has partnered with Talent Plus, a Nebraska-based, global management consulting firm. Their scientific approach to talent and selection has assisted many organizations to define their culture and maximize strengths of employees. Consistent with the values of Mercy, this partnership continues to grow and foster Mercy's values that demonstrate a commitment to people and their right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Figure 1. People Promise Model



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