

Leadership: Don't Use Standardized Forms

Some of my best friends are in Human Resources. And I strongly believe that the Human Resources Department should be the lead department in the organization since in particular these days we live in an age of talent. But, I have got one very, very big gripe about Human Resources people. I can overcome, or have you overcome that gripe if you will follow my order. And it is an order, even though officially I have no power over you.

As of today, if you are a serious human being, you will promise me that you will never, ever, ever, ever on penalty of death use a standardized evaluation form for people that comes from a Human Resources Department. People aren't standard. The evaluation instrument should not be standard.

I always use the example of a professional American football team. A professional American football team has 53 players on its active duty roster, 53 players. Each of them plays a very different role—room for the young, room for the old, room for the short, room for the tall. Each of those 53 players is in pursuit of a unique form of excellence relative to the state of his career, what he is supposed to do relative to this particular team. There is no standardization.

Presidents do not use standard evaluation forms to look at the eleven Vice Presidents who report to them. Symphony conductors do not use standardized forms developed by the symphony's Human Resources Department, which they don't have, to evaluate on an annual basis their musicians. And on and on the story goes. And for those of you who are parents, the definition of the wonderful teacher is the teacher who doesn't pay much attention to the standard exercises, but understands that each of the eighteen people in her classroom are totally unique human beings who are following a trajectory of growth, which is unique to them among six and a half billion people on earth.

I believe in evaluations, but I believe we evaluate every individual, whether they're working at McDonald's or NASA, on an absolute, individual basis. Never again, no standardized instruments, period. I'm cutting you no slack on this one.