

Leadership: Hire the Last One Percenters

I can remember clearly, it was just a couple of days ago, my great hobby in life is brush-cutting and landscaping on my farm in Vermont. What I can remember is coming back from about three hours' worth of work and I have never been so exhausted in my life. I was sick at my stomach, I was so exhausted.

So, look, I was doing part of this project, it's a piece of a project that I really think is a cool project. I worked and I worked, I was sweating, I was exhausted, I was cutting things, I was pulling things. And I'd finished the thing up, and I've got a little four-wheeler, a Kubota, and I got in the Kubota and I turned on the ignition key and turned around and started to pull out. And there was just a little bit of stuff to finish off. But *I* was finished off. I just couldn't do any more.

And so, I reached down and I turned the damn key and I turned the Kubota off. I got out of the Kubota, and I went back to where I'd been working, and I worked for another 15 minutes. Now, sure, I'm tooting my horn here, but what I'm talking about is what I call "the last one percent." And I'm talking about a class of people I call "the last one percenters." They are worth their weight in gold (which is not to say that I am).

Finishing the job is one thing. Really, really, really, really, really finishing the job is another. I wrote a book about project management, the people side of it, a few years ago. I had 50 items on a list of things that are associated with project management. And one of my 50, it was actually in the top 10, was "find, hire, love, and promote the last one percenters." You're exhausted, but go back and do that last one percent. You, somebody on your project team—I cannot underscore, after years and years of doing projects—that last one percent is worth its weight in gold times 10.