

## TALENT

### 92. Hiring: Do You Approach It with Unabashed Fanaticism?

"Hiring is the most important aspect of business—and yet remains woefully misunderstood."—  
Geoff Smart and Randy Street, *Who: The A Method for Hiring*

"Development can help great people become even better—but if I had a dollar to spend, I'd spend ...70 cents ... getting the right person in the door."— Paul Russell, Director of Leadership & Development, Google

We *are* seriously concerned with hiring, no doubt of it. *But ...* do we treat it ... *strategically ...* as the "*most important aspect of business*"—4-person auto body shop or Siemens? My constant refrain concerning such topics: Are we ... "*professional students of*" ... hiring??? As I see it (again!): Effective *hiring* = Effective *offshore motorboat racing* = A craft, a profession with a body of knowledge to be *mastered*.

(FYI, give Geoff Smart and Randy Street's *Who: The A Method for Hiring* a try.)

**93. Promotion: Are You Building a "Two Per Year" Legacy?** Suppose you hold one of your organization's top jobs for five years, about average. Suppose, and this is typically about right, that you have two key promotion decisions per year. Then it stands to reason that just *ten* decisions in five years *determine* (not "contribute to," but "determine") your legacy!

Once more, I'm hardly accusing you of being a slacker. I have ... ZERO ... doubt about the seriousness with which you attend promotion decisions. But once more I *am* asking: *Do you give the promotion decision, if you are, say, BigCo CEO, exactly the same attention you give a major acquisition?* That's the level of importance in terms of impact—hence it's a pretty decent yardstick of "attention deserved." Most of us, obviously, are not "CEO of BigCo," but the idea is precisely the same in *any* boss selection process.

Promotion decision?  
*Fanaticism* rules!

### 94. Development: Are You Finding and Cultivating First-Rate First-Line Supervisors?

Success in the marketplace is a great thing!  
Top quality products you can be proud of are great things!  
Integrity and transparency are great things!

But none of the three is the *principal determinant* of worker satisfaction. That honor goes, hands down, to ... whether or not the employee gets along with/works well with his or her first-line supervisor! So, for example:

- (1) Are you, Big Boss, a ... *f-o-r-m-a-l student of front-line supervisor behavioral excellence?*\*  
(\*Yes, again, damn it, this sort of thing can be formally studied.)
- (2) Do you spend ... *gobs and gobs (and then more and more gobs and gobs) of time ...* selecting the first-line supervisors?

- (3) Do you have the ... *best training program in the industry (best = best)* for first-line supervisors?
- (4) Do you Formally & Rigorously ... *mentor* ... first-line supervisors?
- (5) Are you willing, pain notwithstanding, to ... *leave a first-line supervisor slot open* ... until you can fill the slot with somebody *spectacular*? (And are you willing to use some word like ... "*spectacular*" ... in judging applicants for the job?)

I am, again, absolutely ... *not* ... suggesting that you aren't serious about first-line supervisor selection, care, and feeding. I absolutely ... *am* ... suggesting, in pretty much no uncertain terms, that you probably don't take it as seriously as you might if you saw it as precisely what it is ... a first-order ... *strategic* ... decision.

Fact (unequivocal): *The single most significant/#1 determinant of your outfit's product-service quality and productivity is the quality of your "portfolio" of first-line supervisors.*

Summary: The last three items (#92, #93, #94) constitute HR's "Big Three"/the "Talent Trio":

- (1) Hiring = Most important business decisions.
- (2) Two promotion decisions per year = Legacy.
- (3) First-line supervisors = Keystone to employee morale and satisfaction and productivity.

Followed in each instance by my "Big Two" queries:

- (1) Are you an avid student of the three issues/opportunities?
- (2) Do you spend an appropriate (that is, "insane") amount of time on these three issues-opportunities-strategic watersheds?

To stretch a little further:

*Hiring + Two promotions/year + First-line supervisor development = Business strategy + Personal leadership effectiveness.*

**95. People Who Develop People: What's Your Track Record?** In New Delhi in the spring of 2009, I had a senior General Officer in the Indian Army in the front row of the meeting room. I don't recall the details, but evaluating senior officers for promotion came up. I ventured, boldly, that there "was ... *one* ... issue [in the promotion evaluation] that stood head and shoulders above the rest." Namely: What is this candidate's track record—in *exacting detail*—in developing people. Though hardly locked in concrete, I posited that "the ONE question" might go something like this:

*"In the last year [3 years, say, duration of the current assignment], name the 3 people whose growth you've most contributed to. Please explain in significant detail where each was at the beginning of the year, where he or she is today, and where each is heading in the next 12 and 24 and 60 months. Please explain in detail your development strategy in each case. Please tell me your biggest development disappointment this past year—looking back, could you or would you have done anything differently? Please tell me about your greatest development triumph—and disaster—in the last ten years. What are the 'three big things' you've learned about 'people development' along the way?"*

For starters, give yourself a soul-searching/soul-searing exam:

Please list.

5 people.

Whose development you have contributed to.

Directly & Profoundly.

In the last 24 months.

This document is #28 in a series of 48 highlights from Tom Peters' *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence* (HarperStudio, 2010). For more information, visit [tompeters.com](http://tompeters.com).

