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Hiring, training and managing employees for outstanding results

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Although most business owners recognize that success depends in great measure on their employees, many do not fully understand how to hire the right team members and train and empower them to perform at their peak.

If you want to build a world-class company that will last, and you rely on human assets to achieve success, it's important for you to correlate your business goals to the types of team members you need to help you succeed. For example, this means much more than employing accountants at your accounting firm — it requires identifying your key performance indicators, the quantifiable values and skills that rise and fall with your business success, and making strategic hiring decisions based on these considerations. If your customers spend more in months when you're receiving high customer service satisfaction ratings, then



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you should be hiring team members with phenomenal customer service skills as well as technical knowledge.

In most cases it will not be so obvious, and even when it is, how do you gauge customer service skills based on résumés and interviews? You may be better served to rely on tools such as skills and aptitude tests. There are many to choose from.

For example, Publix is widely renowned for its customer service, and that's no mistake — when applying for a job there, applicants complete aptitude tests that assess how they might react in different customer service situations. This process determines those applicants who already have certain predilections that correlate with strong service.

For more active or specialized recruiting efforts, keep in mind that your prospects' personal lives should be compatible with the professional lives they're expected to maintain. When recruiting managers, directors and C-level executives, watch closely: personal demeanor can typically reveal a good deal about what type of professionals they are. You might consider having dinner with prospects to observe how they treat their spouses or significant others.

Curious about how a potential executive might manage your team? Pay attention to how he or she treats the waiter or his or her significant other in a restaurant. A condescending or overbearing guest in a restaurant is not likely to behave much differently at work, and those kinds of personalities can poison employee sentiment. All it takes is one rude or self-absorbed person with an inch of authority over other team members to create a toxic atmosphere. This rule of thumb has been vouched for by so many CEOs that it's become known as the Waiter Observation.

Furthermore, create a positive work environment with rewards and incentives that are customized to your team members. Some associates respond best to monetary incentives, and there's nothing wrong with that. It doesn't necessarily mean they only care about money, or that they care about what they earn more than they care about doing a good job; in most cases, employees and managers included, salary is correlated with one's sense of worth on the job. That's not to say that there are not a variety of ways to incent performance, such as better job titles, internal or external recognition,

and gifts. Find out what best motivates your team members to keep them fully engaged.

Pushing for results is not the only way to glean top results. People are most energized when they are able to apply their skills and flourish doing something they know they're good at and enjoy doing. Training as well as coaching can be worth the time and expenditure. This shows that you care enough to invest in the team's future.

You need to be in tune with these kinds of aptitudes in order to recognize hidden opportunities to empower your associates. This applies to all roles, from the bottom to the top. An excellent creative director might not necessarily be the best person to manage client relations, to supervise the team or run the whole agency.

Don't confuse exceptional, role-specific aptitudes with the duties of adjacent roles.

Finally, people work differently. Some are myopic and others are better at multitasking. Some can take a task from start to finish with very little oversight. Others pace when they're thinking, and others listen to music while they work. Remember, they are all people first, so don't assume they will all take the same course of actions to get the same results. Even Google Maps and MapQuest diverge on some routes, but they'll both get you to your destination.

One last point. A mis-hire or bad team member needs to go. You do no favor for the team member or your company by procrastinating the termination.

The bottom line is that there are serious dividends to be had from investing the necessary time and resources to more strategically acquire, train and manage what in many businesses is the biggest asset, your team members. While it begins with hiring the right people, internal success depends on how well you manage them over time. If you want your team members to bring more to the table, you owe them more personal consideration than your typical annual review. If they lack the perspective to see how they fit into the big picture, let them know. They will thank you for it, and you will be laying the foundation of a powerful, more potent team capable of supporting your goals.

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