

Key Practices for Interviewing and Selecting the Right Leaders

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Hiring the right people

The Philosophy:

- In “Good to Great,” author Jim Collins noted that 14 newly-appointed CEOs of companies they took from good to great first assembled their “A” teams, then launched new strategic initiatives.
- **At the end of the day, you bet on people not strategies!**

The Steps:

- Have a Process and Plan
- Identify the Interviewing Team
- How to Screen Candidates
- Create Your Interview Questions
- Scoring the Interview
- Selecting

Top Grading* is focused on finding “A Players”

- Enables an organization to make good decisions regarding people.
- Represents one of the last reliable sources of competitive advantage
 - Very few organizations are good at hiring.....it's hard
- A players represent about 10% of talent pool, B players are the next 25%, and C players makeup the last 65%.

**Smart, Bradford. Topgrading. New York, NY, Penguin Group, 2005*

Top grading recruiting and the interview process

- Hiring manager has primary accountability to improve A Player hiring success rate.
- Defined interview structure.
- Helps you build your 5 to 7 key priorities for new hires.
- Requires a higher time commitment initially than traditional interviewing, but provides a higher ROI.

5 critical steps to hiring more “A” players

- **Step 1: Create Job Scorecards**
 - Create a Mission Statement for the position.
 - Identify measurable job outcomes or accountabilities for the first-year. (Balanced Scorecard)
 - Identify key competencies.
- **Step 2: Phone Screening Interview**
- **Step 3: Top Grading Interviews**
- **Step 4: Reference Check**
- **Step 5: Simulation**

Step 1: the job scorecard

- Identify the Mission of the position:
 - What key company results would this position support?
 - What role does this position take in achieving those results?
 - Who else is this position aligned with (cross functionally as well as subordinates)?
- Identify Measurable Job Outcomes or Accountabilities:
 - These are the actions that will support the achievement of your key results. These are transferrable to the balanced scorecard for this position.
 - What will success look like 1 year from the hire date
 - MUST BE SMART OBJECTIVES! i.e. Specific, Motivating, Attainable, Relevant, Time bound.
- Identify Key Competencies linked to Job Outcomes and/or Accountabilities
 - Refer to the list of competencies and their definitions.
 - Choose one or two from each section. You can choose more from one section if the position requires it. Keep it laser focused!

Competencies		
Competencies	Definitions	
Green = Relatively easy to change	Yellow = Hard to change but doable	Red = Very difficult to change

Intellectual	
Intelligence	Ability to acquire understanding and absorb information through study.
Analysis Skills	Identifies significant problems and opportunities. Analyzes people in depth. Sorts the wheat from the chaff, detects the real issues.
Judgement/ Decision Making	Consistent logic, rationality and objectivity in decision making. Not indecisive nor hip-shooter.
Conceptual Ability	Deals effectively with not just concrete, tangible issues but also conceptual matters.
Creativity	Generates new approaches to problems or innovation practices. Shows imagination.
Strategic Skills	Determines opportunities and threats through comprehensive analysis of current and future trends. Comprehends the big picture.
Pragmatism	Generates sensible, realistic, practical solutions to problems.
Risk Taking	Takes calculated risks, with generally favorable outcomes. "Don't farm".
Leading Edge	Constantly benchmarks best practices and expects others to do better.
Education	Meets formal and informal educational requirements. Loves learning.
Experience	Job specific.
Track Record	Successful career history. Generally earns performance "excellent."
Integrity	Ironclad. Does not ethically cut corners. Earns trust of organization above self-interest.
Resourcefulness/initiative	Passionately finds ways over, around, or through barriers. Achieves results despite lack of resources. Goes beyond the call of duty. Shows bias for action. A results-oriented "doer."

Personal	
Organization/Planning	Plans, organizes, schedules and budgets in a timely manner. Focuses on key priorities.
Excellence	Sets high stretch standards of performance. Low tolerance for mediocrity. High sense of responsibility.
Independence	Willingness to take independent stand. Not dependent on others.
Stress Management	Stable and poised under pressure.
Self-Awareness/ Feedback	Recognizes own strengths and weaknesses. Does not rationalize mistakes or blame others. Uses feedback constructively.
Adaptability	Not rigid. Copes effectively with complexity and change.
First Impression	Professional in demeanor. Creates favorable impressions through language, eye contact, posture, etc.
Likability	Puts people at ease. Shows Emotional Intelligence. Warm, sensitive, compassionate. Not arrogant. Friendly, sense of humor, genuine.
Listening	Tunes in accurately to opinions, feelings, and needs of people. Empathetic. Patient. Allows others to speak. Listens Actively.
Customer Focus	Monitors client satisfaction (internal or external). Establishes partner relationship with clients. Visible and accessible to clients.
Communications-Oral	Communicates well one-on-one, in small groups and public speaking. Fluent, quick on feet, command of language. Keeps people informed.
Communications-Written	Writes clear, precise, well-organized documents using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and word usage.
Political Savvy	Aware of political factors and hidden agendas, and acts effectively with that awareness.
Negotiation Skills	Achieves favorable outcomes in win/win negotiations.
Persuasion	Persuasive in change efforts, selling a vision. Convincing.

Management	
Selecting A Players	Topgrades through effective recruiting and selecting at least 90% A Players.
Training/ Development/ Coaching**	Actively and successfully trains people. Coaches and develops for promotion into positions where they succeed. People builder.
Goal Setting	Sets Fair stretch goals for self and others. Encourages individual initiative.
Empowerment	Pushes decision making down to lowest level. Provides authority and resources to subordinates.
Performance Management	Fosters high level of accountability through fair, hard hitting performance management system. Free with deserved praise and recognition. Constructive in criticism. Provides frequent feedback.
Redeploying B/C Players	Redeploys chronic B/Cs
Team Builder	Achieves cohesive, effective teams.
Diversity	Topgrades with diversity.
Running Meetings	Demonstrates ability to organize and run effective meetings.

Leadership	
Vision	Provides clear, credible vision and strategy.
Change Leadership	Actively intervenes to create and energize positive change. Leads by example.
Inspiring Followership	Inspires people to follow lead. Minimizes intimidation. Takes charge. Motivates by pushing appropriate hot buttons of individuals.
Conflict Management	Understands natural forces of conflict and acts to prevent or soften them. Effectively works through conflicts to optimize outcome. Does not suppress, ignore, or deny conflicts.

Motivational	
Energy/Drive	Exhibits energy, strong desire to achieve, high dedication level. 60 hours or more per week probably necessary for results expected.
Enthusiasm/Passion	Exhibits dynamism, excitement, and a positive can-do attitude.
Ambition	Desires to grow in responsibility and authority.
Compatibility of Needs	Needs that are consistent with opportunities in foreseeable future.
Balance in Life	Achieves sufficient balance among work, wellness, relationships, community involvement, professional associations, friendships, hobbies, and interests.
Tenacity	Consistent reward of passionately striving to achieve results. Conveys strong need to win. Reputation for not giving up.

Step 2: the phone screening interview

- 30-45 minute phone screening interview
- Questions for interview
 - What are your career goals?
 - What are you really good at professionally?
 - What are you not good at or not interested in doing professionally?
 - Who were your last 5 bosses and how will they rate your performance on a 1-10 scale ***when*** I talk to them?...***Not if***
- Please be consistent with your questions. Ask every candidate the same questions.
- TAKE COPIOUS NOTES!!
- Listen for red flags and dig in.
- Advise the candidate that they will have to arrange for reference calls for people they discussed in the conversation, not their set list of references.
- Let them know what the next steps in the process are.
 - Either you or someone from HR will be in contact with them.

Step 3: in person interviews

- 1 - 3 Hour Interview
 - Only your top candidates (2-3 at the most) should be brought in for this step.
 - Create behavioral based interview questions to address previously identified key competencies
- Key questions to explore from their last 3-5 positions
 - What were you hired to do?
 - What accomplishments are you most proud of?
 - What were some low points / challenges?
 - Who were the people you worked with? Specifically what were their names.
 - What was it like working with them?
 - What will they tell me were your biggest strengths and areas for improvement?
 - How would you rate the team you inherited A,B,C?
 - What changes did you make? Hire? Fire?
 - How would you rate it when you left?
 - How did you leave the job?
- Use open ended questions, ask questions that start with Describe..., Give me an example..., Tell me about..., What is..., Share....
- When interviewing, ask questions **then listen** – refrain from doing all the talking.
 - 80/20 Rule

Step 3: in person interviews

- Use the Job Scorecard in the interview – test specific capabilities you will need and ask for examples
 - Rate the candidates answers on a 1-5 scale for each competency
 - 5= Excellent
 - 4= Very Good
 - 3= Good
 - 2= Only fair
 - 1= Poor or Not Applicable
 - Take copious notes!!
- Advise candidates of the reference check!

Step 4: reference checking

- The Hiring Manager **MUST** conduct the reference check!
 - 30 minute phone call for each reference
- The goal for the reference check is to understand their strengths but more importantly where their weaknesses lie.
 - The reference check can potentially eliminate a candidate but that is not the goal.
- Proactively identifying candidate's weaknesses allows you to address and prepare for those blind spots before they even start working.

Step 5: the simulation

- Panel style interview
 - Panel made up of actual business peers
 - 3-5 Actual situational questions that are real issues the candidate will be facing
 - Questioning to evaluate:
 - Alignment with the your Culture
 - Fit with productivity of the team
 - Key Competencies.
- Candidate discussion after the simulation:
 - The most junior person should give their Job Scorecard results and feedback from the simulation first to ensure open feedback.

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appendix

Examples of interviewing questions

- If you were falling behind schedule, what would you do?
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult colleague. What did you do to communicate properly?
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a team member who constantly opposed your ideas
- How would you react if a team leader encouraged competition between team members instead of collaboration?
- Tell me about a time you took the lead when your team was in a difficult position
- What would you do if your team members disagreed with your instructions?
- Tell me about a time when a project's priorities changed suddenly and you had to adapt
- What would you do if you were assigned multiple tasks with the same deadline? Tell me about a time you had to make a decision with incomplete information
- If you spotted a mistake in a report but your manager wasn't available, what would you do?

Examples of interviewing questions

- If you discovered your supervisor was breaking the company's code of conduct, what would you do?
- Tell me about the last time a manager rejected one of your ideas. How did you react to his/her feedback?
- Tell me about the last time you had to stay late at work. Was that unusual for you?
- I see from your resume that you were the lead on the XYZ project. Tell me about your greatest challenge as lead.
- Tell me about the last project you worked on where you were made to understand you could not fail. What steps did you take to ensure success?
- Tell me about your biggest work failure. What did you learn?
- Tell me about the last time you were asked to do something that violated your personal code of ethics.
- Have you ever had to fire someone? Why?
- How do you stay on top of developments/trends in your field?

Supplemental Questions

- Describe a situation in which you initiated the implementation of a initiative, met resistance and overcame the resistance to achieve successful implementation?
- Describe a situation in which a decision was made that you disagreed with, but had to implement / support.
- What professional mistake troubled you the most?
- *****Include questions around the shared values that are most important to the candidate to make sure they are congruent with current team members, otherwise the differences will be incredibly frustrating for the team
- Describe a situation where you independently initiated an improvement for the business that was successful and one that did not deliver the desired results
- Describe two of the best and two of the worst peer to peer relationships you have had in your leadership roles. What would those 4 peers say were the best and most challenging aspects of working with you?
- When I get to speak with your last three supervisors in your leadership roles, what will they say are the best and most challenging aspects of working with you?
- What were some of the key reasons you moved from one job to another? Any changes you would make to those moves in retrospect?
- What do you do when you feel a peer is not pulling their weight?
- Discuss team recruiting / leadership of your direct functional team

How to spot red flags during the interview process

- Arrive late for the onsite interview
- Candidate is more interested in personal benefit.
- Candidate is rude and/or dishonest.
- Candidate has a bad attitude.
- Exhibiting poor body language.
- Inappropriate language.
- Not asking any questions.
- Speaking negatively about past employers and experiences.
- Treating the receptionist or any staff member disrespectfully.
- Rambling, without answering the question asked.
- Upfront demands – work schedules, (work from home, time off for outside activities)
- Unprofessional appearance, sloppily dressed for their interview

Definitions

A Player

- Consistently and frequently exceeds "A" in a measurable manner.
- Proactive - takes initiative to routinely go beyond what is asked.
- Initiates and actively works with others outside area of responsibility to achieve/exceed goals.
- Has contributed on a single or several occasion(s) in an exceptional, significant nature, of great value to the company.
- Assists others in meeting their objectives.
- Process Improvement - creates successful new processes (i.e. managing exceptions).
- Generally exhibits a high skill level, is a role model/mentor to others, is self-directed, and demonstrates high morale that positively affects others.
- Generally is challenged to perform, and is delegated to, from their supervisor.
- Consistently demonstrates all cultural values.

B Player

- Meets substantially all expectations of job description.
- Diligently applies him/herself to meeting expectations.
- Performs all critical aspects of the position as expected.
- Assists others in meeting their objectives.
- Demonstrates cultural values.

Definitions

C Player	L Learner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not meet all the critical aspects of the job expectations and/or goals.• Is improving and showing the effort to meet expectations by applying him/herself towards improvement.• An improvement plan is in effect, including learning and leadership involvement.• Attempts to demonstrate cultural values, but not yet fully competent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the learning mode, usually in a new position or new to the company, and needs more time.• Does not meet all the critical aspects of the job expectations and/or goals, but progressing to an acceptable level of competency.• An improvement plan is in effect, including learning and leadership involvement.• Attempts to demonstrate cultural values, but not yet fully competent.