Are You Hiring the Right People?

In the words of Jack Welch-

"If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings and put compensation as a carrier behind it you almost don't have to manage them."

Now you have to admit, that it is a pretty exciting thought!

As a consultant and executive with my formative background and education in human resources management, I typically have a semi facetious response to executives who ask me what differentiates great companies from "good companies". My response is "It is the people, stupid!" The organizations with the best people aligned in the best way always win.

So how do we define the best people? I have a couple of recommendations for my clients.

- Identify Key Attribute for Success and Hire "Right"
- Incorporate Responsibilities Into All Job Descriptions
- Provide Appropriate Training
  "Retrofit" Skills and Attributes of Existing Staff
- Coach and Mentor

So what do I mean by all that "HR stuff"? Very simple, I want everybody on my team to share some common attributes:

- Commitment To The Team
- Ability To See The Big Picture
- Ability To Learn And Share New Skills
- Listening For Key Information

If they can't or won't do these things or lack these attributes, I don't want them on my team – period.

There are reasons why I have focused on attributes rather than skills. You have probably heard some of these before but they bear repetition.

- You can teach smart people to do almost anything!
- It is hard to teach people to be smart!
- People who are committed to your mission will reflect it!
- Changing people's core values is very hard!

Again, in my sarcastic way, I have compared trying to violate these "truths" to trying to teach your dog to sing. It just exhausts you and it pisses the dog off. People who know me would tell you that patience is not always one of my most noticeable virtues. However, when I have been called in to "retrofit" a number of cultures, I believe there is a very respectful way to go about doing that – a way that requires patience to bring about the desired changes. I believe that companies have the right to define their cultures as long as they do so within the context of the law and are respectful to all employees.

While businesses and most organizations are not democracies, I do suggest to all business owners and leaders that, beyond the attributes that I mention above, they need to ensure that everyone in a leadership role either possesses or is trained in some key skill sets:

- Establishing Clear Performance Expectations
- Giving Periodic, Constructive, and Clear Feedback
- Taking Appropriate Corrective Action

I can honestly tell you that, if 90% of management had mastered and demonstrated these skills on a consistent basis, at least half of the management consultants in the world would be unemployed. You will notice that none of these skill sets address technical skills like financial analysis, marketing, etc. That is not an oversight. Technical skills are task competencies and can be taught. You can have excellent technical skills and be an awful manager. If you don't believe me, ask staff if they would rather work for a manager who consistently performs my list or a manager who is technically "gifted."

I believe that employees have an absolute entitlement to four and only four things-

- Respect For Individuals
- Clear Expectations
- Meaningful, Balanced Feedback.
- Equitable , Clear Reward System

People have said to me "What about empowerment and development, and mentoring?" I think those things are awesome and contribute to growing organizations and reinforcing commitment, but the first four are absolute entitlements that form the basis for the others.
I also encourage clients to "re-recruit" existing staff using the following model:

- Train Current Staff Must On New Competencies And Expectations
- Compliance Works Short Term But Commitment Is Essential For The Long Term
- Retrain, Re-Assign, or……..
- Remember WIIFM (What's in it for me!)

In the long term, you simply cannot tolerate performance that won't or can't meet your expectations. Asking or forcing people to leave your organization is hard on them, on you and on their colleagues, but leaving them in a role where they are not thriving or happy is worse. That's why I suggest we hire right up front. If you do you reap the rewards.