



# Sharing Best Practices Knowledge

TO MEET THE EXTRAORDINARY CHALLENGES YOU ARE FACING TODAY  
YOU MUST DEMONSTRATE EXTRAORDINARY BUSINESS PRACTICES:

## **Confusing the Terms: Talent, Skill, Competency, Ability, Attributes, Behaviors, Attitudes, Styles, Experience, IQ, EQ etc.**

People have a natural tendency to confuse, misinterpret or misuse the above terms without the recognition that there is a distinct difference in each.

Talent is best defined as...

*The natural and spontaneous patterns of thought, feelings, behaviors and actions that contribute to a person's ability to perform at a defined level of excellence."*

**Talent** is truly an innate ability that a person can enhance but only to a certain degree.

In contrast...

**Skill** is defined as a developed, learned or acquired ability.

A person's overall **Competency** or total capability is best defined as the combination of both Talent (natural patterns) and Skills (learned ability).

Quite simply, we need to recognize and agree that Talent is more of a natural endowment or special aptitude (i.e., the way you are hardwired). A skill is something you have developed to a greater degree over time (a learned ability).

**Example #1:** Take the ability to be structured with a detail orientation. If a person is naturally spontaneous and tends to live their life without any real structure, there are tools (time management and prioritization disciplines) that will help them improve their organizational skills but the natural hardwiring of structure is difficult to inject (especially at a later age in life). There will be improvement but never to the level of excellence of someone who is hardwired that way. Unfortunately, people can spend a lot of time and money trying to develop a natural, spontaneous talent that they don't have but regardless of their efforts, they will never perform at the level of a person who more naturally does it.

Another example is the competency of 'Business Acumen'. It may best be described as the combination of the Talent

to see and predict business patterns with the knowledge of financial literacy or understanding of a business model or industry. The evidence of Open Book Management cultures illustrates that everyone can learn about “the numbers” and how their personal efforts contribute to the success of an entire organization. Not everyone has the unique natural talent (ability) to “see the patterns” quickly and instinctively.

**Jack Stack:** Once he used the practice discipline to learn about the financials, it was obvious that Jack had the natural gift to see the patterns. He also has this ability in competitive Bass fishing where recognizing the patterns that the fish are feeding on are everything to be successful.

**Michael Milken:** He once told me that he had the unique ability to multiply four digit numbers in his head while in grade school (which came in handy in his role on Wall St.) but he couldn’t safely navigate driving a car down the road because he couldn’t concentrate on the road without having his mind and focus shift.

**Example #2: Salespeople Who Don’t Sell (we shouldn’t ask if they can sell, we should ask if they do sell).**

Let’s set the stage with a baseball analogy. Virtually everyone can stand beside home plate with a baseball bat in their hand and swing it in an accelerated motion across the plate. It clearly is not a difficult skill for even a non athlete. Now let’s apply the next variable of the baseball being thrown

by a pitcher across the plate at 90+ miles per hour. It’s actually possible (but highly unlikely) for anyone to swing the bat as hard as they can and connect with the ball and drive it into the outfield (provided the timing and swing plane are perfectly aligned). Done with enough force, applied at the right moment within the perfect swing plane, it’s even possible for a person to “hit a home run.”

So it’s not a question of if someone can physically do it. It is a question of how well they do it and how often. Hitting a round ball with a round bat while both objects are moving - that my friends, is a very difficult thing to do for even a talented athlete. The final challenge is how well someone can hit the ball to the exact location as to get a base hit and avoid the defensive alignment of the people in the field. How often does that happen? The best professional players of all time only achieve that 33% of the time (in their careers).

### **Now Back to the Salesperson.**

Remember, we shouldn’t look at whether a person can sell (or has the potential to sell), we need to evaluate if they do sell (or have consistently sold). When hiring salespeople it may be more effective to actually look at their annual tax returns rather than their resume. Why? Because we want to see if they actually hit the numbers by selling for a living (consistently in the top quartile of their respective peer group) versus telling us (or selling us) that they can sell.

**Example #3: Service Orientation vs. Results Focus:**

You cannot give people or inject into people a yearning to serve others. Either you are wired that way or you're not. You also cannot really expect people become results focused if they have never really been. Finally, you cannot inject responsibility or ownership as an extrinsic motivation; it must be intrinsic with an innate obligation to deliver on a commitment.

**Example #4: Leadership and Management Ability**

Nowhere on a resume can you actually distinguish if someone is a talented or effective leader or manager. A resume is limited to describing or listing a person's education level (academic record), list of milestone accomplishments, their employment history, their degree of experience and the positions they have been employed over time. You cannot determine their dominant behavioral style, personality, degree of results focus, level of emotional intelligence (EQ -people skills) or how they will respond in the face of adversity or difficult challenges.

The validation of an outside candidate's ability is usually limited to third party feedback (references from a variety of sources) and the interview process where the candidate has the opportunity to describe how they handled specific circumstances (or how they would handle a given circumstance).

Most interviews for front-line manager positions are ineffective - filled with variance, bias and unsophisticated methodologies. In layman's terms, people "wing it" with whatever questions come to mind that are not coordinated with the other interviewers and not designed as a structured interview to reveal specific/natural tendencies of the applicant. A structured interview on the other hand, reveals not only what people say but how they respond with their passion, language and body language. Skilled interviewers know exactly what to look for where a person cannot help but telegraph their exact behavioral wiring and style.

**Benefits of "The Known" About an Internal Candidate:**

If a leader is going to appoint someone who currently works within their organization to a new position, there is an "advantage of the known" about them to evaluate the persons "demonstrated leadership ability." What's available in the due diligence process is the direct observations of the individual (by multiple people) in leadership circumstances. Some of the qualifiers to consider would be: This person has....

1. Has consistently created a healthy culture of high performance and results
2. Has hired, groomed and "graduated" other people over time
3. Has led a department (business unit etc.) in a through a challenging situation with positive results (possibly a "turn-around")

## **Common Denominators of Success: Leadership Attributes, Competencies, Demonstrated Ability**

Our research with thousands of leaders has proven that...“Any 5-7 valid and reliable attributes of proven leadership ability, when applied to the same population of leaders, will produce the same performance distribution (or rank order).”

### **The 7 Habits of Highly Successful Leaders and Managers:**

Success Profiles has had the opportunity to measure the performance of thousands of leaders at all levels or positions. The leader we are evaluating...

1. Has an optimistic and forward-looking orientation
2. Has a high EQ (emotional intelligence) and demonstrates good communication and people skills.
3. Has an open-minded perspective, is willing to change, and is seen as a "change agent"
4. Is respected by his/her leaders, peers, physicians, and staff.
5. Is focused on results and outcomes, is achievement oriented, and sets goals.
6. Has a high capacity and ability to perform in a fast-paced work environment.
7. Is humble, has a sense of humor, and has the ability to handle high levels of stress very well.

Once a person has matured their hardwiring as an adult, it's not that it's impossible to change; it's just that it requires enormous effort, repetition and time to establish a new pattern of hardwired behavior. In other words, what's at stake must be meaningful enough, compelling enough or imperative enough to cause a person to get so far out of their comfort and confidence zone.

In corporate America, it is odd how we somehow believe that we can somehow fundamentally change people to become something they are naturally not

*You don't so much teach leadership as much as you teach people how to enhance the leadership ability they already have.*

Those that have more natural-spontaneous talent, acquired skill and developed capability at the earliest age (aka competency), are most often the ones that improve the most (think leverage and ROI).

People who start with the natural talent will grow exponentially with a multiplier effect (in essence going with the flow vs. against it).

*“A person with no natural talent surely has the ability to improve. However, their dedicated efforts will eventually hit a point of diminishing returns when their performance is compared to others with more natural-developed ability.”*

If throughout your life, you have never been naturally good at something (with repeated efforts), it's not that you can't improve, it's just that it's unlikely." One must also recognize that there is a far greater ROI achieved when the multiplier effect takes place when working with someone who has the right, natural, talent DNA to begin with.

**Is it likely that there are some things/activities that we are best designed to do professionally?**

Like the Real Estate concept of "highest and best use", there is probably a best fit for everyone in some endeavor. A role where their natural ability (**Talent**) aligns with their passion (**Drive**) and focus (**Practice discipline**). The real questions are: what is it and where is it for each and every person?

How many people today have the perfect alignment of?

- Their natural spontaneous ability (**Talent**)
- Their passion and desire (**Drive**) and
- Their focus and curiosity to learn and grow (**Practice discipline**)

Research has proven that it's about 15% of the population (interesting that it's the same percentage as the Second Standard Deviation **S<sup>2</sup>**). It's possible that many people are not exposed to the opportunity early enough in their life to create that alignment. It's also possible that many people cannot make a career out of what

they do best, or have a passion for. Finally, it's also possible that some people get trapped in a professional career and can't make the transition to do with they were best aligned to do.

**My advice has always been for people to try and get perfect alignment with the following:**

1. Decide where you what to live with your family
2. Decide what you want to do professionally (career and calling)
3. Decide who you want to work with (as partners, associates or colleagues)

There are thousands of leadership books that take inventory in the Leadership Competencies to be effective in various positions of management. One of the most comprehensive lists of Leadership Competencies, attributes and/or traits that I have found is compiled in the Book "Top Grading." The 50 competencies are listed below in six major categories.

**Keep in mind that the majority of these are really defined as skills not talents.**

**Intellectual competencies**

- 1 Intelligence
- 2 Analysis skills
- 3 Judgment/decision making
- 4 Conceptual ability
- 5 Creativity

- 6 Strategic skills
- 7 Pragmatism
- 8 Risk taking
- 9 Leading edge - innovation
- 10 Education
- 11 Experience
- 12 Track record

### **Personal competencies**

- 13 Integrity
- 14 Resourcefulness
- 15 Organization/planning
- 16 Excellence
- 17 Independence
- 18 Stress management
- 19 Self awareness
- 20 Adaptability

### **Interpersonal competencies**

- 21 First Impression
- 22 Likability
- 23 Listening
- 24 Customer focus
- 25 Team player
- 26 Assertiveness
- 27 Communication skills - written
- 28 Communication skills - oral
- 29 Political savvies
- 30 Negotiation

- 31 Persuasion

### **Management competencies**

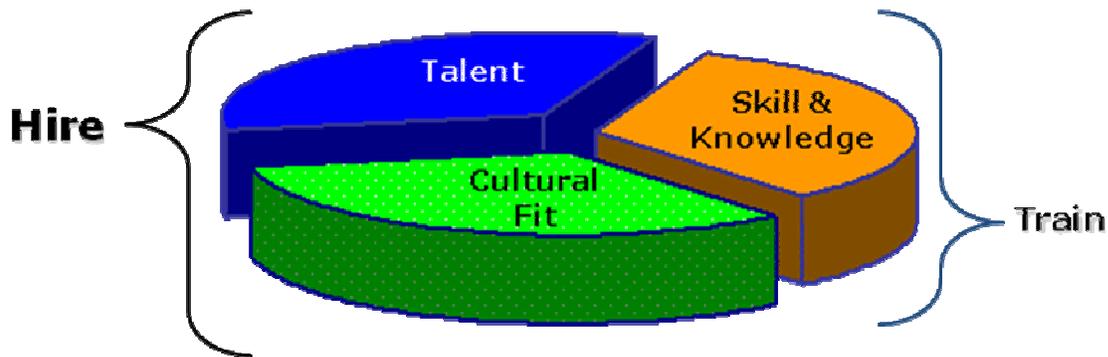
- 32 Selecting 'A' players
- 33 Coaching
- 34 Goal setting
- 35 Empowerment
- 36 Accountability
- 37 Redeployment of B/C players
- 38 Team building
- 39 Diversity
- 40 Running meetings

### **Additional competencies**

- 41 Vision
- 42 Change leadership
- 43 Inspiration fellowship
- 44 Conflict management

### **Motivational competencies**

- 45 Energy
- 46 Passion
- 47 Ambition
- 48 Compatibility of needs
- 49 Balance in life
- 50 Tenacity



### Hiring the Right People for the Right Roles

Finally, leaders need to remind themselves of the 2/3 and 1/3 equation for assuring alignment with their key people. Organizations need to hire for talent and cultural fit (66% of the weighting) and train for skill and knowledge (33% of the weighting). When the cultural fit or values of people are out of alignment, everything

seems to become difficult to impossible. When the fit is in alignment everything is easier and natural.

When people match their natural – hardwired talents with the professional role that is the “best fit” for them, they are far more likely to; add more value, become more successful and ultimately feel more gratified and fulfilled every day.

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