

Hire talent. Success guaranteed, right?

Some recent articles on hiring talent reveal differences on opinion as to what can be expected. To be clear: these articles all were about hiring business talents, the value they add and the level of attention to be given to their development. Be it in business, sports or art, talent is undeniably a prerequisite to succeed and claim a place in the spotlights.

Contrary to sports or art, for the business talents there's more discussion as to whether all the business talents are worth the money and the attention. According to William Taylor of Fastcompany (<http://www.fastcompany.com/1761925/great-people-are-overrated>) too much money (and expectations) are invested in so-called supertalents whereas more balanced teams can operate for far less money, work together as a great team and deliver great results. So what is it that makes a talent perform accordingly? Taylor sees a solution in optimizing the external stimuli via organizational structure, colleagues and management attention.

Supertalents are not only over-rated but a majority of the employers do not dedicate sufficient attention to these talents to fully exploit their competencies. Only 11% of the interviewed organisations claim to have a talent management policy installed, 60% admit they have not such a policy and the remainder leaves it up to HR to take care of it. (<http://www.managersonline.nl/nieuws/11488/merendeel-werkgevers-heeft-geen-talentbeleid.html>)

So the obvious questions remains. Should we (continue to) hire talents? I'm sure your HR department and team leaders can answer that.

My question digs somewhat deeper: once a talent is identified, how can we screen him or her to make sure this talent fits in our teams, make sure these talents intrinsically can deliver on expectations? In sports, for which I can claim to have some experience, I would identify the other important factors to be passion, physical fit and work ethic.



The relative importance of each factor within the person might vary along the kind of sport – technical, endurance, tactical, ... - but should undeniably be there. It is then up to coaches and trainers to define the right balance and screen talented athletes on the fit. I am not alone on this: Jacques Borlée (European coach of the year) claimed talent only represents 20% of a 400m runner ability to excel. Probably true for 400m, I would even bring that down to less than 10% for anything above 5000m running.

Same methodology applies for business talents: what are the key intrinsic qualities a business person should dispose of besides talent? Work ethic for sure. Passion? Obviously. Physical or mental fit? Definitely. That being laid down, what's the ratio in which the components need to be present in each talent? Just as for sports I would argue that talent might probably be the least important factor of all. I have seen so many people deliver extraordinary performances based on passion, sweat and tears that I would argue these elements are at least equally important if not more.

What's the difference between Usain Bolt and Kim Collins? Anyone? Usain Bolt (Jamaica) is world ranking leader 2011 with 9.76sec on 100m, Kim Collins (Saint Kitts and Nevis) performed an outstanding 10.01sec in Zagreb. That's a 2.5% difference with Bolt. And you know, there's only one Usain Bolt but quite some (not a lot) of Kim's alike.

Do you screen for qualities beyond talent in your company? How do you find the Kim Collins's of this world? I'd be very interested to hear.

