

The Human Capitalist

June 2010 Edition



Remembering John Wooden and His Pyramid of Success



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Just last week my parents were visiting for my eldest daughter's wedding. While showing my father my new office, he stopped at an autographed copy of John Wooden's Pyramid of Success on my wall. My father who was a sales executive his entire career commented on the artifact and we read it bottom to top together. I showed him a copy of a book and business card Coach Wooden signed for me. My 67 year old dad said, "that's pretty cool". I agreed.

The next morning on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, I read that John Wooden had passed. As far as I'm concerned, there is no finer person in the world than this former UCLA basketball coach. If you're not familiar with his [Pyramid of Success](#), you might want to check it out. It starts with his definition of success:

"Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming." From this, he builds a foundation of success based on 15 core traits, including factors such as skills, team spirit, loyalty, cooperation, and enthusiasm. The key is that all of the traits are required to achieve competitive greatness, not just a few. And that's the point of this article which another mentor of mine named Lou Adler crafted and taught me five years ago. It's a small tribute to Coach Wooden to apply his timeless principles when evaluating candidates.

How many recruiters, hiring managers, or members of the interviewing team think they can determine a candidate's total suitability for a job based on some quick measure of just one or two core traits in just a few minutes? For one thing, it takes much more than just one or two traits to determine competency and motivation to do the work. For another, if just one of these partial predictor traits is assessed incorrectly, a good candidate can be inadvertently excluded too early in the process. Even worse, since it only takes one or two "NO"s from anyone on the

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Welcome to the June 2010 edition of "The Human Capitalist".

As a Consumer Goods and/or Life Sciences Executive it's important to keep up with the ever changing challenges in today's work environment. The Human Capitalist offers many insights on how to meet those challenges.

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hiring team to eliminate a person from consideration, the chance of making the correct hiring decision is statistically very low. This is the fundamental cause of the most pervasive of all hiring problems. And it's not hiring someone who falls short of expectations - it's not hiring someone who could far exceed expectations.

Lack of assessment standards is also the real reason why it takes so long to find good people and why most assessments are flawed. Without good standards, we strive to find the common "perfect" candidate acceptable to everyone. This seems absurd to me, especially since most people are looking at the wrong criteria and then they make a superficial assessment while they're doing it. Unfortunately, this is what most companies actually do.

We suggest as an alternative a comparable John Wooden "Pyramid of Success" for hiring based on the ten traits that best predict success.

Then, why not train everyone on the interviewing team to accurately assess these traits? And finally, rather than using the traditional up vs. down voting system, why not instead conduct a deliberative assessment with everyone on the hiring team ranking these ten traits on a 1-5 scale? This way, consensus is reached by giving everyone enough of the correct information before they vote. Collectively, this type of hiring process would have a profound impact on eliminating a number of core hiring mistakes - not hiring the best person, for one; or hiring someone who is only narrowly competent, for another.

Following is my suggested "Pyramid of Hiring Success." We got the initial idea to develop this from John Wooden, but it's totally different. It's based on over 25 years of assessing candidates for positions as varied as when I started placing entry-level sales reps at consumer packaged goods clients to the C-Suite and executive management spots for multinational companies now. While it differs somewhat from the Pyramid of Success, you'll notice the common core principles of performance and personal responsibility.

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The 10 Best Factors for Predicting On-the-Job Performance

1. **Ability to do the work.** This includes technical ability and the potential to learn new related skills.
2. **Motivation to do the work.** This is the most important trait of them all. It doesn't matter how much talent a person has - without motivation to do the required work, little gets done.
3. **Collaborative team skills and working with others.** Few people get ahead if they can't collaborate and work closely with others. For managers, add "developing people" to this factor.
4. **Job-related problem solving and thinking skills.** Good thinking and problem-solving skills are essential to planning, optimizing results, creating a vision, persuading others, and leadership. However, without the ability to execute or deliver results this can be a wasted skill.

5. **Managerial Fit.** The candidate/manager relationship is often overlooked when assessing a candidate's ability to perform. Yet problems here are one of the primary reasons new hires don't do as well as expected.
6. **Consistency in achieving comparable results.** You want to observe a consistent pattern of achieving comparable success. Once is not enough when hiring someone for the long term.
7. **Organizing and planning comparable work.** This is an important trait that often gets overlooked. It doesn't matter if you're hiring a call center rep, an engineer, a manager, or an executive - the ability to organize and plan work and execute it properly is a foundational skill.
8. **Trend of growth and personal development.** The best people constantly improve themselves. Look for a pattern of consistent personal development and a track record of increasing responsibility over time, as a result. If you probe you'll find many of [Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success](#) factors embedded in this catch-all factor.
9. **Environmental and cultural fit.** You must get this part right. Look at the environment in which the person has excelled. Then compare this to your job and your environment and culture. A mismatch here could spell trouble.
10. **Overall potential to grow.** You'll need to combine all of the above together, look at the trend lines, add in leadership, assess the depth of the person's thinking skills, throw in Coach Wooden's success factors, and then adjust everything for the quality of the manager to come up with a ranking for this one.

Which of these factors would you ignore when hiring someone? They are all essential. Feel free to contact me if you'd like to review the complete list and how they can be used to increase assessment accuracy. Once you use it a few times with your hiring team when comparing candidates, you'll quickly know what John Wooden meant when he wrote these words: "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming." Look for this in yourself and in everyone you recommend to be hired. You can't go wrong with this advice.

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In closing we would like to thank you for your time in reading our newsletter. Please enjoy and apply the wisdom in the Human Capitalist. We welcome and appreciate any and all feedback and requests

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