

# The Human Capitalist

July 2010 Edition

## Performance Topgrading Basics



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It's been said you're only as good as the people you have around you. The most important competency any successful executive has to develop is their ability to get the right people on the bus, and in the right seats. For some of you this article will serve as a reminder of the Performance Topgrading hiring process we teach and espouse. For others, this could serve as a template to individual and organizational success.

It's as simple as 1-2-3. The 3 most important practices any manager can use to hire better, help determine who the A, B, and C players are, and can help triple the success promoting people.

The Performance Topgrading hiring advice that follows may seem like common sense but it's *not* common practice, even in many Global 100 companies. Hundreds of companies and thousands of managers have doubled and tripled their hiring success following these methods

#### **1. Use the Performance Topgrading "Truth Serum," the TORC Technique.**

TORC stands for Threat of Reference Check. At *every* step in the hiring process, let candidates know that just prior to a job offer *they* will have to arrange personal reference calls with supervisors and others *you* choose.

C players, who probably fudged their resumes, *don't* want you talking to their former supervisors, and they know they can't get

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

As a Consumer Goods, Specialty Chemical 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.

If we can be of service in

them to talk anyway, so they drop out of the hiring process. Great! A players, whose resumes are accurate and complete, *want* to arrange calls with former supervisors.

## **2. No matter what hiring methods you currently use, add the Performance Topgrading Interview.**

I'm not taking the credit for inventing this process. Drs. Brad Smart and his son Geoff Smart mentored me extensively and I simply packaged it and validated the fact 1,000 times over, that it's the best practice for all "A-Player" hiring. Several books have been written on this interviewing method and every manager we know of who achieves 90%+ *high* performers hired uses this interview. I highly recommend the books Topgrading and the New York Times best seller in 2009, Who: The Method for Hiring, written by Geoff.

Here is the essence of a Performance Topgrading Interview in a nutshell:

Starting with the first fulltime job and coming forward to the present job, ask 7 basic questions plus follow-up questions:

1. What were your responsibilities?
2. What were your successes and how did you achieve them?
3. What were your mistakes -- what do you wish you'd done differently and what lessons were learned?
4. What was your supervisor's name and what did you like and dislike about him/her?
5. What's your best guess as to what that supervisor would say, in a personal reference call you would arrange, were your strengths, weaker points, and overall performance?
6. Of your direct reports, how many A, B, and C players did you inherit, how many in each category did you end up with, and what did you do with respect to coaching, hiring, and firing?
7. Why did you leave that job?

What's so brilliant about a thorough chronological interview? It's the *patterns* that are revealed about literally dozens of competencies. Those patterns reveal what a candidate is really like today and you don't have to have a Ph.D. in Psychology to get it.

For example, suppose a candidate, taking the TORC "truth serum," admits that her supervisor 10 years ago would criticize her for being disorganized, and she admits that her biggest mistake was lacking a follow-up system; so, she missed due dates and went over budget on 3 of 8 projects.

any way, please give us a call or write to us at:

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Okay, that's useful, but the *pattern* is most revealing and as you discuss her performance in the past decade you will learn if she got organized or not. Those patterns give you extremely deep and accurate insights into *all* key competencies.

### **3. Ask finalists to arrange personal reference calls with supervisors and others you choose.**

The TORC Technique is not an idle threat; you absolutely should talk with supervisors and others, but make the candidate do the work of arranging them. After you have gotten descriptions of all supervisors (and others), *you* choose which ones you'd like to talk with.

Chances are you want to talk with all supervisors in the past 10 years (if the candidate doesn't want you to talk with the current supervisor, okay, but ask the candidate to arrange a call with someone at the supervisor's level who left the company).

## **THE WORLD'S BEST PRACTICES FOR AUDITING TALENT AND PROMOTING PEOPLE**

Performance Topgraders usually learn hiring methods first and find that with just a small tweak, they can promote with much greater success and they can audit their people to learn who is the most talented.

Performance Topgrading projects at P&G, 3M, GE, Nestle, Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Unilever and General Mills who have been ranked by business week as the "Best Companies for Leadership" was not to improve hiring, but to improve their success promoting people. And it worked!

When dozens of leading Human Resource executives at Global 100 companies were surveyed, they said only 25% of the people they promoted into management turned out to be high performers, except for the Performance Topgraders in the group, who reported they doubled or tripled their promoting success using the Performance Topgrading methods.

How did these best in class companies and others do it? Simple - train managers in Performance Topgrading methods and instead of using external reference calls, arrange internal interviews with boss(es), peers, and subordinates. GE improved to over 90% of those promoted turning out to be high performers.

Finally, do you need deeper insights into your current managers? In these problematic times former high performers slip and it's common to wonder if they still have what it takes. Or do you simply want to know who your A, B, and C players are?

The Performance Topgrading audit methodology is exactly the same as the promoting methods just described with one tweak: in promoting people you have one job in mind, and

in the audit you look broadly at where someone can be an A player.

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

If you use the Performance Topgrading 1 - 2 - 3 punch, you may not achieve 90% high performers hired and promoted, but you will know you've been far more thorough, and you've gotten much deeper insights into candidates, than ever before. By simply using internal vs. external "references," you can use the same basic methods to audit your talent and get much deeper insights into who really are the high potentials.

We are experts in the Performance Topgrading process and you can be too. It's time consuming upfront, but investing a little more time at the beginning will save you a great deal of time later. There simply is no better process or assessment tool to give you the insight into people's behaviors, motivations, skills and competencies. Not to mention your skill as a Performance Topgrader could make or break your career.

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### **About Hunt Executive Search, Inc.**

Hunt Executive Search, Inc. is the preeminent supplier of "A-Player" human capital to the Consumer Products, Specialty Chemicals and Life Sciences industries. Our clients include large publicly traded multi-nationals, mid-cap, family, and/or private equity-owned companies, wholesalers, and retailers. Our individual industry based practices include consumer goods companies in food and beverage, personal care, household products, over-the-counter pharmaceutical, consumer durables, and packaging services. Our specialty chemicals practice includes companies in coatings, plastics, industrials and adhesives. Our life sciences practice serves companies in bio-technology, medical device, generic, and brand name pharmaceuticals. For these clients we have placed executives in top-level positions at C- Suite General Management, Sales, Marketing, Product Supply, Manufacturing, R&D, Finance and Human Resources.

Website: <http://www.huntsearch.com>

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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