

Seven Tips for Hiring “A Players”

Your business doesn't run itself. The quality of your organization depends on the quality of your team—a motivated, energized staff is the key to companywide success. You want *A Players*, those colleagues who contribute disproportionately to the advancement and profitability of the organization.

In the same way that the Pareto Principle states that 80% of results come from 20% of your employees (based on research by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto in the early 1900s), your *A Players* have a measurable impact on your bottom line.

The Pareto Principle is often used in a sales environment, but it applies equally to a variety of different industries. If you can build a team of *A Players* around you, then your job as a business leader or owner becomes much easier, as you do not have to deal with endless crises and can work more intentionally on developing the future strategy for your organization.

So how do you find *A Players* for your team?

The funny thing about *A Players* is that you can find them in the strangest of places. A few years ago, James was running a car dealership that was lacking in quality salespeople. He received a call from his wife while she was out shopping for strollers, and asked him to meet her at the store..

“I want you to meet Louise. She has a great attitude and I think you'll like her.”

Ten minutes later he was walking into the shop to meet Louise. She was a class act and spent the next half an hour asking them lots of qualifying questions about their lifestyle. Once she had all the information she needed from them, she launched into a brilliant sales demonstration of various products. She was impressive.

They ended up spending over \$1,000 in the shop that day and were absolutely thrilled with their interactions with Louise. James was particularly impressed by her enthusiasm, her energy and her ability to listen intently to their needs, and then repeating this information back when closing the sale. Too many sales people believe that selling is about talking, but in reality it is actually about the ability to listen to your customers so that you can truly understand their needs.

A few days later James went back to her store and offered her a job. He was not sure that selling cars had been on her career plan, but to her credit she took a risk and joined the team the following month.

Initially, Louise struggled a bit because she had no product knowledge, no customer base and was the only female on a sales team of 30 people. However, after continual support from James and the upper-level staff and a combination of hard work and positive attitude she began to flourish. By the end of the year she was the top sales person at the dealership.

When you are seeking *A Players* for your organization, don't just look for skills and experience but start by looking for someone with a great attitude.

Here are seven tips to help you find your own *A Players*:

1) One page plan - Have a simple one page plan that you can share with future employees. This plan highlights what you have achieved as an organization during the past year and also what your Vision is for the next 3 to 5 years. "A Players" are motivated as much by being part of an organization that has clear goals and aspirations as they are by salary and benefits. They want to be part of an organization that has a purpose.

2) Think outside the box - Don't just look in the same old places for new employees. Think about looking outside of your industry for people with the right attitude and a track record of success. You can always train skills and product knowledge.

3) Telephone screening interview - Consider having a 15 to 20 minute telephone interview with potential candidates. This can save both parties a lot of time and expense before a more formal interview is arranged.

4) Personality profiles - Use DISC or another similar personality profiling tool to make sure that you have a good fit for the role you are seeking to fill. Different fields require their own unique brand of skills, such as high-influencing personalities or levels of compliance.

5) Watch the body language - Always have another person interview with you and if possible get them to ask the questions, so that you can concentrate on listening to the answers given and also observe the body language to make sure that it is congruent with what is being said.

6) References - Always insist on speaking to a former boss for a reference. Sometimes it is not what is said about the candidate but the way in which it is said over the phone that can alert you to potential problems but also provide clues to the positive aspects of the candidate. Written references are usually very brief and not very helpful.

7) Staff referral program - Have a program in place that rewards existing members of staff if they recommend someone for a position you are trying to fill. For example, you could offer a cash bonus to your employees if their recommended candidate is taken on, and another bonus if the candidate is still with you and performing well 6 months later. This has the added benefit of ensuring that the new member of staff has a mentor looking out for them during their initial 6 months!

Try some of these tips and see what works best for you. If you can surround yourself with a team of *A Players* who have great attitudes, are motivated by achievement and are strong in areas where you are weak, then your role as a leader or business owner becomes far easier. You can concentrate on setting the future strategy for your organization while your team achieves amazing results.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Richard J. Bryan is an international speaker, executive coach and author of the forthcoming book, *Being Frank: Real Life Lessons to Grow Your Business and Yourself*. Through his experiences as the 4th Generation CEO in a family-owned business, Richard gained a wealth of knowledge and developed into a true leader. By applying his creative strategies, Richard helps businesses hire the right people, forge dynamic teams and increase their profits. For more information, please visit www.richardjbryan.com.