

Bradshaw, Toms, O'Neal, and Delahoussaye – A Good Fit!

Preface: This is the second in a series of eight articles on issues of importance to the management of organizations and the leadership of people. The first article created a Management “Jambalaya” using various ingredients - “leftover” ideas that still have application in the world of people and work. The articles that follow will use the same ingredients and a “fresh” approach to create an entrée – nutritious food for thought.

Disclaimer: I don't often use sports analogies but on occasion these are the best way to create a visual (a picture is worth a thousand words) that crosses language, cultural, and other barriers. I believe this example warrants their usage.

The Ingredient / Entrée – How to Attract and Retain Valuable Employees?

You're accountable for results; you need talent. You want the best people you can find – ready, willing, and able to get the job done.

David Toms (Golfer – LSU), Shaquille O'Neal (Basketball – LSU), Eddie Delahoussaye (Jockey – New Iberia, LA) and Terry Bradshaw (Quarterback – Louisiana Tech / Pittsburgh Steelers) in addition to being “home boys” – are all talented. At the top of their game, they are as good as it gets. They are winners!

If you were responsible for creating a dynasty – you'd jump at the chance to “draft” these type folks. Obviously the games they play are as different as their expertise but no one can doubt that they are great athletes. Properly matched in the right organization and the right role, they will pay dividends on any investment needed to acquire them.

Talent is the want and the need. The secret to success is the proper recruiting, placement / positioning (matching the talent to the organizational need), development, motivation, and perpetuation of talent. To apply this Sports analogy to the business world, let's talk about talent and the proper fit in an organization.

David Toms is the sole proprietor. He's not a team player. He's a technician. He doesn't compete against other players – he competes against himself – his best score.

Eddie Delahoussaye is in a partnership. He and his partner (the horse – his ride) are “connected at the hip”. They are totally dependent upon each other. Together they have often won; without an excellent performance by both they are just “also rans.”

Shaquille O'Neal is a critical part of a team. Some have called him the most dominant player of all time. As a practical matter, he is very important to the team and may be the inspirational leader on the court but he is not the boss. He is dependent upon his teammates for “assists” in order to maximize his potential to

score. On defense he is an awesome presence in the key but to win his teammates must cover the majority of the court.

Terry Bradshaw is the Organizational Man. His organization includes 3 distinct units – offense, defense, and special teams. On the field he “calls the shots” – off the field his presence, performance, and influence significantly impact how the other units perform and the outcome of the game!

Before we get too enthusiastic about our talent pool, let’s address one obvious assumption - proper placement. With the names mentioned, each of us visualized David on a tee box, Eddie in the saddle, Shaq in the center, and Terry under the center. How ridiculous would it be to have Eddie trying to see over the butt of the Center, David elbowing his way to the hoop, Shaq forcing his feet in the stirrups and Terry “chattering” at the tee box and the marshals whispering “quiet please”.

Watching these great athletes misfit for their jobs, we would see a dead horse, no passes thrown, only donuts being dunked, and Mr. Bradshaw being forced to play with a sock in his mouth. The results would be disastrous – an incredible waste of talent and opportunity.

Enough about Sports – let’s get back to work TODAY.

Today, in your organization do you have the right “talent”?

Is this “talent” in the right role?

Is the role needed in the future?

Can you develop the people you have in place to be the talent that you need?

How’s your team aging? Is it time to develop some “rookies” or do the veterans have enough years left in their (work) life or enough life left in their (work) years?

Can you motivate them?

Does the person possessing this “talent” fit into the culture of your team?

What is the structure of your business – a sole proprietorship, a partnership, a team, or an organization? Is it right for what you do? Are the members of the team right for this structure?

Enough about TODAY - what about TOMORROW, the future.

From The Essential Drucker (Harper Business © 2001) – ask yourself, “what our business is, what it will be, and what it should be?” (Remember some great dynasties of the past, could not compete with average teams of today!)

Do you have a chance to win the Championship this year or should you start working on the future today?

Look at your organization today - is it right for tomorrow - for day after tomorrow?

Forget the past – let’s look to the future. If you’re serious about building a dynasty, answer Mr. Drucker’s question – “what should your business be?”

Based upon that answer, who is the customer? What do these customers want and need? How do you profitably deliver this at a price they are willing to pay?

What functions must be performed? What infrastructure established to support these functions? What type of talent will be needed to best perform these functions and most efficiently and effectively deliver the results demanded?

Do you have this talent internally? Can it be developed or must it be recruited? Do you have the development programs in place to teach / develop the skills needed? Do you have the incentives in place to assure an environment where each employee is motivated to perform? If employees are unwilling or unable to perform can / will you “cut” them from the team? Will your employee work together as a team?

Now that you’ve voiced your opinions / feelings – SCOUT YOUR OWN TEAM THROUGH THE COLD AND OBJECTIVE EYES OF YOUR COMPETITORS AND THE MARKETPLACE.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of your current organization? What will these be in the future? Will today’s greatest strength be tomorrow’s weakness? You brag about the experience in your team. Does each employee have many years of experience or one year of experience many times? Are they “people” people unwilling to embrace technology? Are they “techies” unwilling or unable to embrace people? Can or will they change? Does the market like, respect, or tolerate you?

Do you have the right mix of rookies and veterans? Do you have the experience you need blended with the enthusiasm and new ideas of youth? Do your team members sufficiently respect their own diversity to become stronger through it or is your team polarized because of internal issues?

Are the team members team players or do each of them have their own agenda? As coach, are you in charge? Has the Peter Principle (everyone rises to their own highest level of incompetence) taken hold in your organization?

Is your organization a team or do you have a group of people “beholden” to one superstar? Do you have a replacement for that superstar on the bench or do you have him / her insured? Does the superstar have respect for his / her teammates?

Do they respect him / her? Will they continue to support the star or will they sabotage him / her?

Can your team get up for the big game? Is emotion an existing talent inside of your system or do you operate in a sterile, technical environment where what you do is more important than who you and your customers are?

REMEMBER WE ARE EMOTIONAL BEINGS – REASON IS IMPORTANT BUT IN REALLY TOUGH GAMES YOU WIN ON EMOTION. (If you need evidence of this – look in the sports section of the paper and seek out the word UPSET – this is clear evidence of emotion over reason.)

Are you winning? Are the fans (customers) still coming to the game? Are they paying for tickets? Are you making a profit as a team? Are you reinvesting these profits (seed corn – as described by Drucker) into the future of your organization?

Now for a 10 question (not an all-inclusive list) Game Plan for the future, try this:

- 1. Who will be your customers?**
- 2. What do they want and need?**
- 3. What will your business be (what do you sell to meet these wants and needs)?**
- 4. What is the price the customers / prospects are willing to pay?**
- 5. How do you profitably deliver these products and services?**
- 6. What organizational architecture is needed to support profitable delivery?**
- 7. Who are the best people for each role?**
- 8. How do you recruit, develop, retain, reward, rehabilitate and retire them?**
- 9. Can they work as a team?**
- 10. What is your two-minute drill?**

Zig Ziglar mentions in on of his presentations the importance of preparation and consistency. He asks if you've ever hit the perfect serve in tennis or the perfect T-shot in golf (or any hole in one). He then explains correctly that this proves your ability – now you just need to do this consistently. Can your organization compete in the future - at the next level - consistently?

You are the owner / coach and probably a player in your organization. All too often in such roles we get so caught up in the urgent that we lose sight of the important.

Stop – take a deep breath – call time out – wait for half time – review the game films BUT AT SOME POINT TAKE A HONEST LOOK AT YOUR ORGANIZATION AND ITS PERFORMANCE. Is this what your business should be? If yes, congratulations. If no, get back to the practice field and the drawing board and the basics – “blocking and tackling”.

Wait till next year!

