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Hire Power

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Our Universities: Hire Power

Courage is essential when hiring. Self-confidence is required to say, *"We need people who are more knowledgeable than we are."* Impossible for a narcissist or a self-absorbed leader... and hiring in any other way dooms any organization to failure.

"Never hire someone who knows less than you do about what he's hired to do."

Malcolm Forbes, Former Publisher of Forbes

It's natural and healthy for any family unit to desire a better life for their progeny, so too it's healthy for an enterprise to desire the next generation to eclipse the present -- a positive side of human nature.

Progress is achieved by nurturing existing people, retaining the most productive, and hiring newcomers who add value. New recruits, with new ideas, are often an affront to the existing "state of affairs" -- a negative side of human nature. This perspective is troubling when held by any member of a group, but debilitating when core leadership holds it.

David Walgner, President of *Psychological Services Incorporated* says hiring has a significant impact on the effectiveness of an organization: Common sense? The consequences of weak hires: low morale, decreased productivity, higher training costs are all easy to spot. A compromised culture is the ultimate price. Walner's findings are from the hotel industry but their intuitive resilience implies wide applicability.

Career Builder's Kristen Wishon claims that 4 of 10 hires are ineffective and cost \$25,000 apiece: Twenty five percent are believed to cost over \$50,000 each. Her litany of reasons mirrors Walner's. It is difficult to "shake off" a bad hire, nearly impossible in the public sector. Good hiring at any level of the organizational chart is powerful -- poor hiring disastrous -- especially at the apex.

Here are five thoughts for higher power hiring.

First, never hire a person who lacks simple, your-mother-told-you-so, integrity. People of integrity are revealed by their own history. Integrity doesn't mean blind loyalty, or thick-skulled agreement with every corporate edict. Integrity liberates wholeness and completeness in personal thought and deed and it is revealed in action. Integrity missing? Leave the person on the curb... he or she will contribute to organizational ruination... from plumbers to presidents.

Second, Steve Jobs declares in **Steve Jobs**, *"You need to have a collaborative hiring process."* The process of sharing hiring insights and ideas with a wide variety of people within the organization is a form of shared governance. And it's fundamental. If you hire an accountant, technicians, executives, and clerical staff should weigh in too, not just other accountants. Well-hired people understand what's important, and spot it in others. It is a common cultural process that makes a strong culture stronger.

Third, if the leader is the smartest person in the room, the organization will fail...it is only a matter of time. Lee Iacocca, former chief of Chrysler, echoed Malcolm Forbes' advice, and added a twist: *"I hire people brighter than me [here comes the caveat] and then I get out of their way."*

Fourth, people who value the organization's mission are to be coveted. Vision is critical and needs to be clearly expressed to attract motivated people. Lawrence Bossidy, former Chief Operating Officer of GE said it this way, *"I am convinced that nothing we do is more important than hiring and developing people. At the end of the day you bet on people, not on strategies."*

Fifth, Henry David Thoreau warned in ***Life Without Principle***, *"Do not hire a man (or woman) who does your work for money, but him (or her) who does it for the love of it."* This is difficult to assess but absolutely essential. Hire people whose work is a ministration, not administration, self-service, or self-aggrandizement.

Our universities, and all successful enterprises from churches to seats of commerce, hospitals to manufacturers, should hire with power. The future of any enterprise depends on every hire, at every level, from the executive suite to the machine shop.