FACTOR III: COURAGE

CLUSTER I: MAKING TOUGH PEOPLE CALLS

25 Hiring and Staffing

Hire people who are better than you are, then leave them to get on with it. Look for people who will aim for the remarkable, who will not settle for the routine. David Ogilvy – British-American advertising executive

Section 1: Your Development Need(s)

Unskilled

☐ Doesn’t have a good track record in hiring and/or staffing
☐ May clone him/herself or focus on one or two preferred characteristics
☐ May look narrowly for people who are similar to him/her
☐ May play it safe with selections
☐ Doesn’t select much diversity
☐ May not know what competence looks like, lack criteria, or assume he/she just knows
☐ May lack the patience to wait for a better candidate

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

Substitutes: 5,17,19,20,21,23,35,39,53,56,60,64

Skilled

☐ Has a nose for talent
☐ Hires the best people available from inside or outside
☐ Is not afraid of selecting strong people
☐ Assembles talented staffs

Overused Skill

☐ May overlook slow starters
☐ May select on surface characteristics
☐ May assemble a team of individual performers who aren’t good team players
☐ May prefer currently talented people who aren’t broad enough for further growth
☐ May be too quick to replace rather than work with a person

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

Compensators: 21,30,33,41,52,56,60,64

Some Causes

☐ Fear of being shown up by a better person
☐ Inexperience with hiring people
Lack of courage to do something different
Lack of personal self-confidence
Narrow perspective on what talent looks like
Too impatient to wait for a better candidate

Leadership Architect® Factors and Clusters
This competency is in the Courage Factor (III). This competency is in the Making Tough People Calls Cluster (I) with: 56. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

The Map
The world runs on talent. The more talent you have personally and the more talented your team is the better. Talented people make big things happen. Working with and around talent is motivating and energizing. Talented people are competitive, most of the time friendly; sometimes not. Managing talented people is sometimes a challenge, albeit maybe a pleasant one. Lots of good things happen when there is talent around.

Section 2: Learning on Your Own
These self-development remedies will help you build your skill(s).

Some Remedies

1. Paying attention to the wrong things? Learn to spot talent. Look around your environment and see who others think the very talented people are and who are not very talented. Do the talented have any common characteristics? Watch out for traps—it is rarely intelligence or pure personality that spells the difference in talent. Most people are smart enough and many personality characteristics don’t matter that much for performance. Ask the second question. Look below surface descriptions of smart, approachable, technically skilled.

2. Difficulty identifying what you are looking for? Sharpen your interviewing skills. There are commonly agreed upon methods to find talent in an interview. A couple of keys: Look for evidence of rapid learning, excitement about the kinds of tasks that are critical in the role, and a penchant for going into new situations. See the Interview Architect® or ask someone in the recruiting and staffing area in your organization for guidance on how to conduct a good interview. Research indicates that structured interviewing and biodata inventories are the best selection methods.

3. Can’t tell okay from great? Identify talent differentiators. Think back over your career. Make two lists—one, of the most talented people you have worked with, and the other of those who were so-so; although they may have had reasonable talents, they didn’t really deliver. Do the people on each list have
common characteristics? Why did you say one was talented and the other less so? What’s the major difference between the two lists?

4. Trouble identifying good versus bad bosses? Conduct a boss audit. List all of the bosses you have had. Divide them into the 33% most talented and the 33% least talented. Do the bosses on the most talented list have common characteristics. Why did you say one list was talented and the other not? What’s the major difference between the two lists of bosses? Which list would you like to work for again?

5. Not sure what’s important? Pinpoint organizational keys to success. Ask your Human Resource person to share with you the success profile of successful and talented people in your organization.

6. Hiring people like yourself? Seek complementary talents. When you make a hiring decision or are deciding who to work with on a problem or project, do you think you have a tendency to clone yourself too much? Do you have a preference for people who think and act as you do? What characteristics do you value too much? What downsides do you ignore or excuse away? This is a common human tendency. The key is to seek balance, variety and diversity. Shore up your weaknesses when hiring others. People good at this competency can comfortably surround themselves with people not like them.

7. Are your standards too high or too low? Identify and set reasonable standards. Do you hire the first close candidate that comes along or do you wait for the perfect candidate and leave the position open too long? Either tendency will probably get you and the organization in trouble. Always try to wait long enough to have choices but not long enough to lose a very good candidate while you wait for the perfect one to come along. Learn how to set reasonable standards with the Interview Architect®.

8. Don’t understand the role of talent? View talent strategically. Do you have a long-term view of the talent it’s going to take to produce both current and long-term results? Do you have a replacement plan for yourself? Do you use a success profile with the competencies you know you are going to need? Have you hired someone who now has or will have in a short period of time, the ability to take your job? Have you selected someone you would sponsor for promotion to another job at your level, possibly passing you up in time? The best managers surround themselves with talent and eventually some of the talent turns out to be better than the person who hired and trained them. That’s a good thing and reason for a celebration.

9. Difficulty telling people apart? Become a student of people. Read two or three books on personality or on how people differ from one another (such as Gifts Differing by Isabel Myers) or go to a class about how people differ. Check your people assessments with others you trust to give you their real opinion.
10. Hiring B players? Surround yourself with talent. Some people feel insecure around talented people and are rightly afraid of being shown up. That’s true. You will be, because no one has all possible strengths. Chances are everyone in your unit is better at something than you are. The key is to take this natural fear and use it as a positive—hire people for different talents, study how they think, watch how they go about exercising their strengths and use this knowledge to improve yourself.

11. Overlooking red flags? Think about outsourcing background checks. You may need people expert in criminal investigation and how employers are protected from liability. They can often persuade a reluctant former employer to give out legally acceptable information. For example, they can explain that most states shield employers from liability when giving good-faith references. And the truth, of course, is always an absolute defense. When screening yourself, with all the online job services, you need to cull—use phone screening, ask prospects to supply a work sample on a task, use your Web site for assessment of prospects.

12. High turnover? Implement onboarding best practices. Half or more of new employees quit within the first seven months. Critical steps are to welcome them, communicate how their job is important, and think through all the things veterans take for granted that mystify newcomers. How do they find out about this? What are the work expectations that aren’t written down anywhere? The major reasons people quit are they feel isolated socially, left out of the stream of information, or stuck in depressing working conditions.

13. Revolving door of talent? Try working with whom you have. Before firing and hiring, are you sure the problem isn’t fixable with current staff? Perhaps the person is bored or needs a skills update. Retraining is generally cheaper and less disruptive, especially for lower-level jobs. More help? – See #19, Developing Direct Reports and Others.

Section 3: Learning from Feedback

These sources would give you the most accurate and detailed feedback on your skill(s).

1. Direct Boss

Your direct boss has important information about you, your performance, and your prospects. The challenge is to get this information. There are formal processes (e.g., performance appraisals). There are day-to-day opportunities. To help, signal your boss that you want and can handle direct and timely feedback. Many bosses have trouble giving feedback, so you will have to work at it over a period of time.
2. Human Resource Professionals

Human Resource professionals have both a formal and informal feedback role. Since they have access to unique and confidential information, they can provide the right context for feedback you’ve received. Sometimes they may be “directed” to give you feedback. Other times, they may pass on feedback just to be helpful to you.

3. Past Associates/Constituencies

When confronted with a present performance problem, some claim, “I wasn’t like that before; it must be the current situation.” When feedback is available from former associates, about 50% support that claim. In the other half of the cases, the people were like that before and probably didn’t know it. It sometimes makes sense to access the past to clearly see the present.

Section 4: Learning from Develop-in-Place Assignments

*These part-time develop-in-place assignments will help you build your skill(s).*

- Go to a campus as a recruiter.
- Train and work as an assessor in an assessment center.
- Work on a team that’s deciding whom to keep and whom to let go in a layoff, shutdown, delayering, or merger.
- Work on a team looking at a reorganization plan where there will be more people than positions.
- Build a multifunctional project team to tackle a common business issue or problem.
- Construct a success and derailment profile for a unit or the entire organization, and present it to decision makers for adoption.
- Do a study of successful executives in your organization, and report the findings to top management.
- Run (chair) a task force on a pressing problem.
- Serve on the board or operating committee of a credit union.
- Assemble a team of diverse people to accomplish a difficult task.

Section 5: Learning from Full-Time Jobs

*These full-time jobs offer the opportunity to build your skill(s).*

1. Fix-Its/Turnarounds

The core demands to qualify as a Fix-it or Turnaround assignment are: (1) Clean-ing up a mess. (2) Serious people issues/problems like credibility/performance/morale. (3) Tight deadline. (4) Serious business performance failure. (5) Last chance to fix. Four types of Fix-its/Turnarounds: (1) Fixing a failed business/unit involving taking control, stopping losses, managing damage, planning the turnaround, dealing
with people problems, installing new processes and systems, and rebuilding the spirit and performance of the unit. (2) Managing sizable disasters like mishandled labor negotiations and strikes, thefts, history of significant business losses, poor staff, failed leadership, hidden problems, fraud, public relations nightmares, etc. (3) Significant reorganization and restructuring (e.g., stabilizing the business, re-forming unit, introducing new systems, making people changes, resetting strategy and tactics). (4) Significant system/process breakdown (e.g., MIS, financial coordination processes, audits, standards, etc.) across units requiring working from a distant position to change something, providing advice and counsel, and installing or implementing a major process improvement or system change outside your own unit and/or with customers outside the organization.

2. Significant People Demands
Core demands required to qualify as a Significant People Demands assignment are: (1) A sizable increase in either the number of people managed and/or the complexity of the challenges involved. (2) Longer-term assignment (two or more years). (3) Quality of people management is critical to achieving results. (4) Involves groups not worked with before (e.g., union, new technical areas, nationalities). Examples of Significant People Demands jobs would be: (1) Downsizing a department—making staff changes. (2) Leading an organization through a reorganization or restructuring. (3) Managing a newly merged business unit comprised of people from disparate units/cultures. (4) Rebuilding a team that has a history of conflict or hardship. (5) Mentoring and coaching inexperienced people. (6) Leading geographically distributed teams. (7) Absorbing a new team/unit into an existing structure. (8) Leading a company or function with a rapidly growing employee base.

3. Small Entrepreneurial
The core demands for qualifying as a Small Entrepreneurial assignment are: (1) Founder or core team member of a company or brand. (2) Personal financial stake in the business’s success or failure. (3) Success and failure will be evident. (4) Build business case and secure funding from investors. (5) Chart new market strategy for new product line. (6) Manage all aspects of the business—from product design/development, supply chain, marketing, sales, finance, HR. Examples of Small Entrepreneurial jobs would be: (1) Small business owner. (2) Among the first employees of a growing company. (3) Starting an incubator business or a new business line. (4) Launching a new brand or new product line. (5) Entering a new market. (6) Responsible for a new product/system through entire cycle.

4. Start-Ups
The core demands to qualify as a start from scratch are: (1) Starting something new for you and/or for the organization. (2) Forging a new team. (3) Creating new systems/facilities/staffs/programs/procedures. (4) Contextual adversity (e.g., uncertainty, government regulation, unions, difficult environment). Seven types
of start from scratches: (1) Planning, building, hiring, and managing (e.g., building a new facility, opening up a new location, moving a unit or company). (2) Heading something new (e.g., new product, new service, new line of business, new department/function, major new program). (3) Taking over a group/product/service/program that had existed for less than a year and was off to a fast start. (4) Establishing overseas operations. (5) Implementing major new designs for existing systems. (6) Moving a successful program from one unit to another. (7) Installing a new organization-wide process as a full-time job like Total Work Systems (e.g., TQM/ISO/Six Sigma).

Section 6: Learning from Your Plan

These additional remedies will help make this development plan more effective for you.

Learning to Learn Better

☐ 1. Use Objective Data When Judging Others
Practice studying other people more than judging or evaluating them. Get the facts, the data, how they think, why they do things—without classifying them into your internal like/dislike or agree/disagree boxes, categories, or buckets. Try to project or predict how they would act/react in various situations, and follow up to see how accurate you are.

☐ 2. Examine Why You Judge People the Way You Do
List the people you like and those you dislike and try to find out why. What do those you like have in common with each other and with you? What do those you dislike have in common with each other and how do they differ from you? Are your “people buckets” logical and productive or do they interfere? Could you be more effective without putting people into buckets?

Learning from Experience, Feedback, and Other People

☐ 3. Learning from Bosses
Bosses can be an excellent and ready source for learning. All bosses do some things exceptionally well and other things poorly. Distance your feelings from the boss/direct report relationship and study things that work and things that don’t work for your boss. What would you have done? What could you use and what should you avoid?

☐ 4. Learning from Mentors and Tutors
Mentors and tutors offer a special case for learning since the relationship is specifically formed for learning. You need to be open and nondefensive. You need to solicit and accept feedback. This is a unique opportunity for you to get low-risk, honest, and direct feedback on what you do well and not so well.
5. Learning from Interviewing Others
Interview others. Ask not only what they do, but how and why they do it. What do they think are the rules of thumb they are following? Where did they learn the behaviors? How do they keep them current? How do they monitor the effect they have on others?

6. Consolidating What You Learn from People
After using any source and/or method of learning from others, write down or mentally note the new rules of thumb and the principles involved. How will you remind yourself of the new behaviors in similar situations? How will you prevent yourself from reacting on “autopilot”? How could you share what you have learned from others?

7. Getting Feedback from Bosses and Superiors
Many bosses are reluctant to give negative feedback. They lack the managerial courage to face people directly with criticism. You can help by soliciting feedback and setting the tone. Show them you can handle criticism and that you are willing to work on issues they see as important.

8. Learning from Limited Staff
Most managers either inherit or hire staff from time to time who are inexperienced, incompetent, not up to the task, resistant, or dispirited. Any of these may create a hardship for you. The lessons to be learned are how to get things done with limited resources and how to fix the people situation. In the short term, this hardship is best addressed by assessing the combined strengths of the team and deploying the best you have against the problem. Almost everyone can do something well. Also, the team can contribute more than the combined individuals can. How can you empower and motivate the team? If you hired the troublesome staff, why did you err? What can you learn from your hiring mistakes? What wasn’t there that you thought was present? What led you astray? How can you prevent that same hiring error in the future? What do you need to do to fix the situation? Quick development? Start over? If you inherited the problem, how can you fix it? Can you implement a program of accelerated development? Do you have to start over and get new people? What did the prior manager do or not do that led to this situation in the first place? What can you learn from that? What will you do differently? How does the staff feel? What can you learn from their frustrations over not being able to do the job? How can you be a positive force under negative circumstances? How can you rally them to perform? What lasting lessons can you learn from someone in distress and trouble? If you’re going to try accelerated development, how can you get a quick assessment? How can you give the staff motivating feedback? How can you construct and implement development plans that will work? How can you get people on-line feedback for maximum growth? Do you know when to stop trying and start over? If you’re going to turn over some staff, how can you do it both rapidly and with the...
least damage? How can you deliver the message in a constructive way? What can you learn from having to take negative actions against people? How can you prevent this from happening again?

Learning from Courses

9. Supervisory Courses

Most new supervisors go through an “Introduction to Supervision” type course. They are designed to teach the common practices a first-line supervisor needs to know to be effective. The content of most of those courses is standard. There is general agreement on the principles of effective supervision. There are two common problems: (1) Do the students have a strong motivation to learn? Do they know what they don’t know? Is there any pain? Because motivated students with a need for the knowledge learn best, participants should have had some trying experiences and some supervisory pain and hardships before attending. (2) Are the instructors experienced supervisors? Have they practiced what they preach? Can they share powerful anecdotes to make key points? Can they answer questions credibly? If possible, select supervisory courses based on the instructors, since the content seems to be much the same for all such courses. Lastly, does the course offer the opportunity for practicing each skill? Does it contain simulations? Are there case studies you could easily identify with? Are there breakout groups? Is there opportunity for action learning? Search for the most interactive course.

*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.* Larry Bossidy – American author and former CEO of Allied Signal
Suggested Readings


