



# *The Effective Organization*

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## *Becoming a Talent Magnet*

The process of finding top talent seems to follow a very predictable pattern for a great many companies. First, the company posts a series of job ads. Second, people at the company complain about how no one is applying for jobs at their company. The most common solution is to blame the economy. While the economy may be a factor, blaming it tends not to be very helpful. Option two, blaming the competition, is not much better. After all, if your competitors are finding and hiring top people, then they must be out there. Why aren't they coming to you? This brings us to option three, the mirror.

Quite simply, if you are failing to attract top talent you need to look at what you are doing and how you are presenting yourself. People look for jobs that meet their needs; you need to ask yourself if you are meeting the actual needs of potential applicants, the needs you wish they had, or your own needs. The point is not "do you know what you're looking for and how to recognize them when you see them?" although that is important. Rather, the point is that you need to craft your message to address the needs of your target audience and create a compelling

opportunity that will attract them to your company.

Since you don't know who they are, this may seem a daunting task; fortunately, there are some key elements common to almost everyone. If you've done your job analysis, you'll probably have a good sense of how your ideal employee rates on each factor.

The biggest need is safety. People look for a job in which they will feel safe. This can mean a lot of different things: for some, it means working for a company that is too big to go out of business. For others, it means having a set of transferable skills and the opportunity to develop and hone those skills. Since many people find the job hunting process stressful and unpleasant, part of safety usually includes "will last for a while." Understand what sort of safety you offer and communicate that.

Related to safety is risk. I am often told that people don't want to take risks. Actually, many people are perfectly happy to take risks. What they don't like is unquantifiable risk. People like to feel in control and to feel the rewards are worth the risk. The perception of control and the belief that they understand and

## *Upcoming Events*

*Gifted Kids and Sports*, online class sponsored by the Davidson Institute. August 25-29.

For more information, please visit [www.7stepsahead.com](http://www.7stepsahead.com).

## *Publications*

*The Success Mind* in the Worcester Business Journal

*Seven Habits of Pointy Haired Bosses* in ByThePeople.org

*Great Follies in American Business -- The "Great-Uncle" Technique* in ByThePeople.org.

can manage the risks are often enough to convince someone to take a chance. Make clear the risks you are asking people to take, demonstrate how you are prepared to help them manage that risk, and illustrate the potential rewards.

Next is growth. Job satisfaction and the opportunity to perform a variety of tasks and learn new skills go hand-in-hand. Most people enjoy the opportunity grow and develop in their jobs; the side-effect is that they will become steadily more capable of

handling increasingly difficult tasks. Growth also increases perceived safety because the person becomes more capable of finding another job. What growth opportunities do you offer?

It's not enough to do a variety of different tasks. It's also critical that those tasks matter to the organization. After all, it's hard to take pride in your work if your work is irrelevant. In recruiting for a position, be sure to demonstrate the relevance of the job.

For many people, being part of a larger organization is extremely important and a powerful motivating factor. The job is not just a source of money, but a source of connection to other people. Are you looking for team players or individual performers? Will they be part of a bigger vision or just making money for the company? The former is far more appealing than the latter.

It turns out that a key element of attracting top talent is the prestige of the company. People want to take pride in their job; after all, work is a huge part of their lives. Some companies, such as Google or IBM, have prestige associated with them. Other companies need to create the image. Understand how people view you and tailor your message accordingly.

No one can guarantee that a particular person will choose to work for a particular company. However, the better you understand which needs you can meet and how you can meet them, the better your odds of attracting and retaining top performers.

Good luck!

## *About 7 Steps Ahead*



Stephen R. Balzac is the president of 7 Steps Ahead, a consulting firm specializing in increasing individual, team, and organizational performance.

Steve has over twenty years of experience in the high tech industry and is the former Director of Operations for Silicon Genetics, in Redwood City, CA.

He serves on the boards of the New England Society of Applied Psychology (NESAP) and the Society of Professional Consultants (SPC). Steve is a member of the Operations Committee of the American Judo & Jujitsu Federation. No stranger to the challenges of achieving peak performance under competitive and stressful conditions, he holds a fourth degree black belt in jujitsu and is a former nationally ranked competitive fencer. Steve is an adjunct professor of Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Wentworth Institute of Technology and has guest lectured at MIT and WPI.

Building effective development organizations, improving team morale, focus, and enthusiasm, developing effective communications between team members, reducing employee turnover, helping businesses identify and attain strategic targets, and applying sport psychology techniques to business have been some of his most successful projects.

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