

NATK

The First Step in Assuring Performance and Role Excellence

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A philosopher once said: If you put the *first* button wrong, your shirt won't be in shape.

The first button in assuring performance and role excellence in a work place is the selection of the person for the role.

This assumes job performance and role excellence are primary and the rest are secondary.

If the job is a berth, a patronage or a false act of pity, the selection procedure is not an action but a motion. The job is filled; the man or woman is 'happy'; but the purpose for which the job is meant remains unmet or the opposite of the purpose obtains. If the wrong person is on a job, he can do a lot of harm.

Filling a job is an onerous responsibility.

The will and the skill

When I am invited to help in the selection of a person for a job, I spend time in ascertaining the purpose of the job or the role.

Of the several people who apply for the job, I have to select one.

I describe to the candidates my understanding of the role or the purpose of the job; and I observe him.

The non-verbal and verbal signals answer the question: Is he willing to play the role ?

Our people are fairly intelligent; and they can learn the skills of most jobs.

During the Second World War an RAF Officer told me:

“Your people are potentially capable. Men taken literally from the jungle, after six months of training in the Air Force, were able to handle some of the most sophisticated equipment. This is unbelievable.”

It is certainly a help if the person has special qualification and training for the job in question. And in certain cases, this is a must. For example, I will not hire a pilot if he does not have the training and the proved skill to fly.

In most jobs, however, the will to do becomes more important than the skill to do, though both are important from the job performance point of view.

Qualification and class no help

Our education does not prepare a person either for life or for work. It is, for one thing, knowledge-oriented, not even understanding-oriented. A person is tested on the basis of timed-recall. If one can recall a piece of information asked for on the day of the examination, he has “achieved” ! He is ranked on that basis.

With that ranking as his passport, the person says: I have done my part. Let the society do its part by giving me a job.

The organs of the society oblige.

What may be described as the minimum condition is considered and treated as the maximum condition.

Is he *willing* to apply what he says he has learnt ? Is he *able* to apply and in an acceptable way ? Is he willing to *learn* what he needs to learn to do a fair job of his ? Has he *learnt to learn* ? Has he the supreme ability—*the learn-ability* ?

These are the questions for which the selector has to find answers in the course of the interview.

Time and skill needed

To find satisfactory answers takes time and skill.

Depending upon the nature of the job, the time required ranges from one hour to three hours. A single meeting may not be sufficient.

When I mention the above ideas, I am told that we are a democracy and therefore they cannot be given effect to !

United States of America, I point out to them, is surely a democracy. The elected

President employs a professional recruiter and arranges to screen at least ten men and women for every person he needs on his team. According to 'the spoil system', the President can use his 'quota' to appoint 'any' person to any job. Apart from reasons of public scrutiny, the President is keen he gets men and women who will assure the performance level of his tenure.

If we are happy with sub-standard performance, we can take a casual or conventional approach to selection. If we mean business, there is no option except being exacting at the stage of recruiting and selecting a person for a job, however humble.

If we are for positive

Selection is not enough; many things have to follow for— example, proper orientation and systematic training.

In respect of crucial jobs, selection is all important. If we want a race horse, we have to make sure we are getting the right colt. This cannot come about by wish, hope or prayer. This needs systematic, disciplined work.

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