

Using a Recruiting Playbook to Find Winning Staff

How do football teams that advance the furthest accomplish their goals? How do they find exceptional players to execute at a championship level? Some teams are home grown; that is, management uses the draft wisely and develops players straight from college who fit the team's culture. In contrast, some teams acquire seasoned players who performed well on other teams for several years and now present the right fit. Many opt for a mixed approach to achieve success. Teams that don't make it to the top simply do a poor job recruiting.



By Stephen F. McCarthy, CPA
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Businesses often utilize hiring strategies similar to professional sports teams. Some companies successfully recruit directly from colleges, while others prefer to hire experienced talent with proven track records. Others may use a mixed approach, depending on job level and business needs.

Signing Free Agents

The pharmaceutical company, Wyeth, mirrors sports teams that prefer to focus recruiting efforts on established talent. Wyeth establishes a pipeline of financial talent that has industry experience, with less emphasis on college recruiting, according to Andrew Davidson, Vice President of Internal Audit.

Davidson hires experienced auditors from major accounting firms because those firms have great identification, as well as hiring and training programs, so he knows what he is getting. Internal audit at Wyeth is the primary recruiting area for financial talent, the first step in the Wyeth career path.

Davidson adds that Wyeth hires for the career, not the position. He can demonstrate career progression from internal audit, which is normally a three-year stint, to senior management positions. During the first three years, the employee is exposed to all facets of the Wyeth business, so these employees can better match personal and career goals. Davidson states that employees manage their own careers, but management is an active advocate in career development.

Draft Picks

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) resembles sports teams that build through the draft. PwC hires entry-level positions, mostly from college campuses. Todd Bialick, who is the client service partner at PwC and the firm relationship partner for Lehigh University, said PwC will hire nearly 600 college graduates this year for its New York/New Jersey metro market.

Bialick believes PwC's well-developed hiring process provides it with students most likely to succeed. He finds that students fear the uncertainty of the business world, thus college candidates are looking for an organization with

a proven track record of developing new hires. According to Bialick, approximately 70 percent of these recruits will have served an internship at PwC while in college. During the internship, students are in the same real-life situations as a first-year associate, giving PwC great insight into future performance.

When asked to describe the perfect recruit, Bialick said everyone hired must have partnership potential.

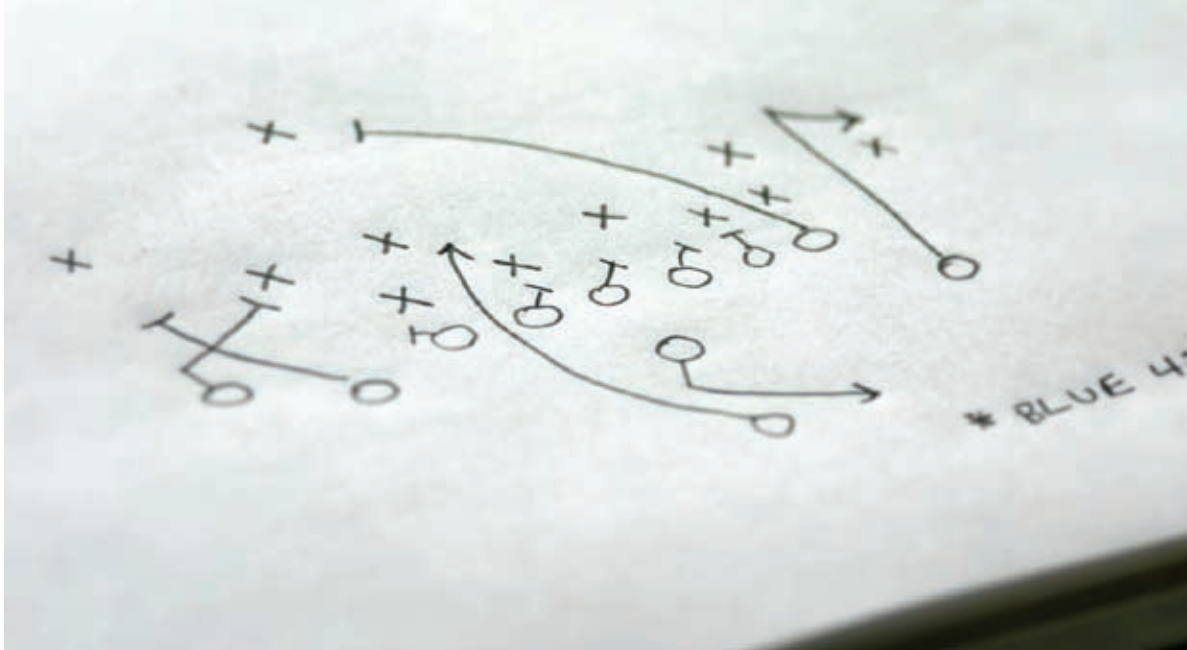
Employees who do eventually become partners at PwC tend to share common characteristics, which include a well-rounded resume, high grade point average, strong academic leadership and good interpersonal skills.

PwC is successful for several reasons, including developing relationships with colleges and utilizing internships, both of which help identify potential candidates. Wyeth is successful in attracting financial talent from major accounting firms and offering further career opportunities. Both organizations have recruiting practices that match the organization's overall strategies and goals.

Xs and Os

Certainly, recruiting successfully for sports teams is different than for businesses. One important distinction for businesses to remember is that in today's job market well-qualified candidates must often be enticed or convinced to join a company. The job interview is often a two-way process for the savvy job applicant who is scoping out the prospective employer during any interview. Considering a candidate's needs is critical in successful recruiting.

Spherion/Todays conducted a survey with Harris Interactive which illustrates this point. Human resource professionals were asked to list three things they believe are important to employees. The top answers were management climate, supervisor relationship and work environment. They asked employees



the same question, and their responses were benefits and compensation, growth and earning potential. As you can see, there was a significant mismatch. All companies must address these points if they expect to recruit and retain top talent.

Playing the Position

It is also critical for any hiring organization, whether business or sports team, to carefully profile and match the requirements of the job with the characteristics and skills of the candidates. Herb Greenberg, Ph.D, President and CEO of Princeton-based Caliper, has assisted both corporations and sports teams in assessing applicants and developing talent. Greenberg uses personality assessments to uncover defining qualities that set applicants apart – qualities that drive success. He also uses the term “misemployed” to describe those individuals working in the wrong place at the wrong time. Through the “Caliper Profile,” he creates an ideal profile of top performers that helps match people with the critical success factors of the position. The candidate must match both the job and the organization.

The Winning Formula

Any successful recruiting and hiring process will display similar characteristics. Here, business and sports can learn much from each another in developing best practices in hiring and retaining critical talent.

Some of the common attributes a successful recruiting program utilizes are:

- A formal position profile to define the required characteristics and skills in a successful candidate.
- A recruiting process and methodology that fits the organization's strategy, whether it is recruiting entry-level college graduates, using internships, recruiting from other established organizations or some combination.
- A thorough process for the interviewing, vetting and hiring decision (e.g., team interviews, reference checks). Focus must be placed on matching specific job requirements with specific candidate characteristics.
- Consideration of the applicant's needs during the interviewing process.

Winning professional sports teams don't take shortcuts. They realize that player success depends on good identification together with a huge investment in training. They identify best practices and consistently implement them. Companies must do the same to be champions in their industry. 🏆

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