Talent Matters

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Got talent? Well, we all sure hope so. Every leadership team I know wants to acquire, develop and retain the best people, the best talent they can. In this CWERB issue, our faculty outline several suggestions that can help improve your talent management processes. Here are six ways you can quickly apply their insights.

Clarify
Personalize your understanding of grit—

**Context.** Identify your unique grit profile. Take a few minutes to complete Duckworth’s grit scale https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale and then make a list of what grit looks like in your organization. Your list might include determination, attention to detail, follow-through, patience, or dependability. What matters though is to find words and identify grit-focused skills that ring true for the work your folks do.

Acquire:
When acquiring talent—

**Job Descriptions.** Make sure prospective employees know you value grit. Conduct a quick scan of the jobs you intend to post within the next 1-3 months. Edit the skills section to include grit skills like determination, attention to detail, follow-through, patience or dependability.

**Behavior-Based Questions.** Interview with grit in mind. Add at least one gritty question to upcoming interviews. Ask, “Tell me about a time you had a new idea at work? How did you implement it?”; or “Describe a time that you overcame a setback at work? What happened?”; or “Describe a project that you had to work on for an extended period of time and how you stayed engaged.” After incorporating grit questions in your interviews, talk to your peers about what you’ve learned about screening for grit. Identify and share at least one best practice.

Develop
When developing talent—

**Recognition.** Recognize grit in action. Start telling quick, 1-2 minute stories in public and private settings that recognize when people show that they’ve got grit. Be sure to link personal grit to organization performance. Things like, “Gina was so determined. She...”; or “I was impressed with Richard’s [insert grit behavior]. He...”. Quick stories are a great tool for praising people and setting expectations about what good work looks like.

**Experiences.** Expose new employees to grit role models. Identify the two positions most important to your organization, team or project success and do a quick grit development scan. When onboarding new people into these positions, what job training, job shadowing or job rotation assignments will expose them to the grit-focused skills they need to be successful? Once you’ve identified 1-2 experiences, add them to your onboarding plan.

Retain
When retaining talent—

**Culture.** Deepen your understanding of grit in your culture. Once every week or so take a couple of your high potential employees for coffee or lunch and do a little conversational research. Pick an area of grit that matters in your organization. Ask your high potentials what they are doing that requires determination, attention to detail, follow-through, patience or dependability. Alternatively, ask them when they’ve seen these grit skills in others. As your understanding of grit deepens, share your findings with your peers.

Taking the time to explore and experiment in these six focused ways can help you begin to understand how to leverage grit and improve performance. If you want to explore grit further, our faculty can help you implement individual or groups assessments, conduct talent audits, or expand your talent management strategy. To learn more about our programs and services, please contact Jennifer Hess, program manager, Customized Training and Professional Development at jhess@uwsp.edu or 715-346-4782.
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