



Topgrading Tips

March 2007

Additional Information

- New 1-Hour Video on Interviewing and Hiring
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How to be a HAPPY A player

About 6,000 interviews ago I began taking advantage of high achievers I interviewed by asking those in their 50's:

How would you live your life or manage your career differently, if you could start over?

I heard the same responses again and again, so ever since I have passed on their wisdom to executives I've coached. A lot of executives said these words of wisdom, though "obvious," helped them as much as learning to topgrade! Hmmm. 1. Fix broken pieces in your life now, or they will get worse.

The single most read page (p.195) of my book Topgrading explains the Life Balance Scorecard. It says if there are six important parts of your life, rate them OK or NOT OK, and fix those that are NOT OK, or else. Or else what? Hundreds of high achievers said they were not truly happy unless ALL important parts of their life (career, family, health, etc.) were at least "OK." The happiest of the A players said all the important parts of their life were, if not great, at least "OK." 2. Don't neglect family.

As you'd expect, this advice comes from thousands of A players who have been divorced and didn't really get to know their children. They say they kidded themselves at the time ? ?I'll be a workaholic for just another year or two and then get balance in my life.? In retrospect they say they really could have, and should have, invested more in their most important relationships. 3. Pay attention to health.

The high achievers stopped smoking, but about half said their exercise, eating, sleeping, and stress-relief habits were not so hot during their 30's and 40's. 4. Live within your means.

A lot of the high achievers made at least one terrible job move out of desperation ? financial desperation: ?With my expensive life style, I had to get a higher paying job.? That's what they thought at the time. Their advice: Save and invest for rainy days and retirement. 5. Plan your career early.

Since 85% of the high achievers I've interviewed were self-made, from the ?other side of the tracks,? they didn't get great career advice early in their career. They listened to mentors who helped them succeed in the short-term, but not long-term. So, general managers started their broadening processes (MBA, request to be cross trained in sales, etc.) much later than ideal. Career plans can obviously change, but A players suggest recruiting mentors who think long term.

6. Topgrade.

Did you think I'd neglect this? Prior to topgrading A players built their ?virtual bench,? their Rolodex of talented people they'd recruit. That's how they put together teams of 50% high achievers. These days high achievers continue to hire from their virtual bench. But when hiring others, they achieve 90% success using:

- the tandem approach (two interviewers), and
- the Topgrading Interview Guide, to be sure all the right questions are asked and they learn the full, chronological, career history.

And, by hiring and promoting better, and redeploying Non A players, they ratchet up talent so their teams have not just 50% high performers, but 90%.

These 6 bits of wisdom definitely improved my life, and I hope some of it helps you!

Best,

Brad

P.S. Announcements:

1. Our next topgrading workshop will be May 3, near Chicago. The last time we held the workshop there Michael Jordan was walking around ? a dramatic reminder that talent counts!
2. The next Topgrading Tips will offer two topgrading tools ? free!

Forward Topgrading Tips

Article

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