Volume 33

The Question

I believe in the need to have the "right people in the right seats," but how do I do that?

A Perspective

It is critical to have "the right people on the bus!"

Jim Collins made the bus analogy famous in his 2001 leadership classic *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*. I recall two conversations with leaders who dropped this bit of wisdom, though I knew they didn't practice the habits needed to make the concept a reality within their organizations. It's easy to say, but hard to do. Here is a roadmap to getting the *right people* in the *right seats*.

Your Action Plan

1. The first key step is to define the *seats*. This is critical, because, as soon as the names of people are brought into the conversation, the tendency is to create a role that fits the person, rather than creating the role that the organization needs. Identify each role that you need in your team and answer the following questions:

   - What are three to five accountabilities for this role? (An accountability is the work that this role performs.)

   - What are three to five qualities that you expect the person who fills this role to demonstrate when working with others? These qualities should align with your company values, if you have defined them.

2. The next step is to identify the *right person* for each *seat* you have defined. The first part of identifying the *right person* is to assign a person's name to a role and evaluate whether they fit that role. I use a strategic-planning methodology called "EOS® (Entrepreneurial Operating System)," which uses a simple method called "GWC™" to determine the *right person*:

   - **GET IT:** Does this person understand how their role fits into the bigger organization? Do they see the company's vision and understand what their contribution is?

   - **WANT IT:** Do they want to perform this role? Do their personal goals and passions fit the role?

   - **CAPACITY TO DO IT:** Do they have the capacity to do the work? Do their skills, experience and natural talents fit this role, and do they have the ability to learn what they need to perform in this role?

3. The second part of identifying the *right person* is to evaluate their cultural fit for your organization. This is simply alignment with your expectations of how they do their work, which are tied to your organizational values.

   - **CULTURAL FIT:** Based on the three to five expectations that you have defined, does this person exhibit those qualities when working with others?

     a) If you answer, "Most of the time, yes," this is the *right person* for this role.

     b) If you answer, "Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't," more conversation is needed to determine whether this is the *right person* for this role.

     c) If you answer, "Most of the time, no," this is the *wrong person* for this role.

Keep in mind that no role is a perfect fit, and getting feedback from the individual is key to making the best decision.

The two mistakes in placing talent are:

- *right person/wrong seat*
- *wrong person/right seat*

Both mistakes result in performance issues that hurt your organization and create more work for you as leader. Even using this method, mistakes can arise from (a) believing that you can "fix" someone and make them fit the role you want them in, or (b) choosing to ignore the data because you need a body in that role. In either case, using this approach will help drive the right conversations with your people and, over time, will make your people conversations healthier and smarter.

It *is* that simple, and it is not that easy. However, when done with the intent of doing what is best for your people *and* for your organization, getting the *right people* in the *right seats* can lead to an outcome that serves the needs of the individual and the organization.

Do you need help building your capacity to make *right people/right seats* decisions in your organization? Are you struggling with starting or finishing one of these conversations? Contact me. Scott@thetrugroup.com
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