

COMPETENCY MATTERS, NOT EXPERIENCE

College and professional sports teams fully understand the meaning of competence. If they don't, they lose. If they lose too much, coaches get fired. In recruiting, player development and game performance, coaches determine what players give them the best chance to win. These are the players who are the most competent at their roles and responsibilities. The best players play, period. It doesn't matter if you are a freshman or a senior. It doesn't matter if you are a rookie or a 12 year veteran. If you are the most competent at your position, you will play.

You would think that organizations would fully understand this as well. In most cases, we believe they do in theory but often fail in its application. What do we mean by this? How about a few questions to illustrate this point:

Do your candidate interview processes place more weight on years of experience then actually finding out if the competencies exist?

Just because someone has been managing for 15 years doesn't necessarily mean they are good at it. Just because someone has led team meetings for 20 years doesn't mean they have effective communication skills or manage conflict successfully. I know of first year managers that can run circles around 20 year veterans who never truly developed the competency of "managing people."

Interviewing should focus on getting answers to questions and case studies that determine whether the competencies exist. Don't be blinded by experience. There are way too many examples of people, CEO on down, that had stellar "experience" on paper but were a disaster once hired.

Have you or your organization ever promoted someone almost exclusively on the fact that they have been with the company five or ten years as opposed to whether they truly have the competency to perform at the next level?

We've seen many organizations promote based on "time served" only to regret it later when results lag. One would hope that competency develops with experience but that is not always the case. Never assume experience translates into competency.

In recruiting, development and promotion, always focus on competency over experience to ensure the team you have on the field gives you the best chance for success.