

7

BECOMING A TALENT RICH ORGANIZATION: WHY DEVELOPMENT TRUMPS TRAINING



BIG IDEA In A Few Words

There is a fundamental difference between training people and people development. Training begins with a felt need in the organization and gives priority to time and cost efficiency. Development begins with the felt need of the individual. Training people is both time and cost efficient, but people development will ultimately provide a higher return on investment. To become a talent rich organization you have to understand the importance of knowledge workers and what motivates them. Research suggests self-directed learning promotes greater conceptual understanding, enhanced persistence, higher productivity, less burnout and greater levels of psychological well-being.

In the introduction to his book, *Linchpin*, Seth Godin makes the following statement: “The system we grew up with is a mess. It’s falling apart at the seams...because the things we thought would work don’t.”²³ The “system” Seth Godin is referring to is a mindset that permeates schools and workplaces emphasizing conformity over creativity, fitting in over finding your voice. He goes on to suggest that school, where you learned how to learn, was really a factory that reinforced compliance, where the dominant metaphor is the number 2 pencil, where people stand in lines, sit in rows, do



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their homework and get ready for the next test.

My wife is a third grade teacher. She works very hard and is good at what she does. The angst she feels in the classroom is almost always related to the tension between helping kids learn and keeping up with the scope and sequence. You know from your own experience that some teachers are better than others. But there is a bigger problem than teacher performance as Seth Godin points out: “The system we grew up with is a mess.”

What does all this have to do with you as a church or mission leader? A lot. Leaders readily admit people are their greatest asset. But far too often the default approach to growing the talent asset is finding ways to convince people to work harder instead of think better. Forward thinking management guru Peter Drucker coined the phrase “knowledge worker” in 1959, emphasizing “what is between their ears” is more important than “what is in their hands.” The best way to grow your organization is to grow your people. But to be effective in growing your people you will have to get beyond the system in which you learned how to learn.

Training Verses Development

There is a fundamental difference between training people and people development. Training begins with a felt need in the organization and gives priority to time and cost efficiency. In a corporate context, the organization determines all sales managers need a certain set of skills and it develops a training course to insure everyone in this role is up to speed. You put fifty people in a room for the appropriate amount of time and you get the lowest cost per person trained. In a mission context we determine what all new missionaries need to know and we get them in a room for orientation. We identify the skills all field leaders need and we do the same thing.

Don't misunderstand me; there is nothing inherently wrong with training of this nature. Every organization does it for obvious reasons. But we have to see it for what it is and recognize it is very different from development.

While training begins with the felt need of the organization, development begins with the felt need of the individual. Training people is both time and cost efficient, but people development will ultimately provide a higher return on investment. People development costs more and takes longer, which is why so few ministries make it a priority.

The practical challenge for individuals serving in a church or mission context is once you ascend to the highest role you are going to have in the organization and demonstrate functional competence in the core elements required to do the job, you get little or no additional training. Unless of course you mess up badly enough.

When you are a new missionary you get training to help you raise support, adjust to a new culture and learn a new language. If you become a church planter you might receive additional training to insure you have the competencies required and if you become a team, field or area leader you will likely receive additional training. All that is well and good. But all of this training begins with the felt need of the organization with little consideration for the felt need of the individual. Training operates on the assumption that everyone in the program is entering at the same level even though we know it probably isn't so. That's the difference between training people and people development.

Becoming Talent Richer

To truly become a talent rich organization you have to understand the importance of knowledge workers and what motivates them. Daniel Pink, in his book *Drive*, suggests that means understanding motivation 3.0. According to Pink, motivation 1.0 was about survival; motivation 2.0 was about maximizing rewards and minimizing punishment, which sounds a lot like the schools I went to. Motivation 3.0 is fueled more by intrinsic desires than extrinsic ones. It concerns itself less with the external rewards and more with the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. I submit it is much more like development than training.

I can't do Daniel Pink's ideas justice in the few paragraphs of this chapter and highly recommend his book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Motivation 3.0 is driven by three critical factors: autonomy, mastery and purpose. Research suggests that autonomy, or self-directed learning that flows from the felt need of the individual, "promotes greater conceptual understanding, enhanced persistence, higher productivity, less burnout and greater levels of psychological well-being."²⁴

Mastery in this context is defined as the desire to get better at something that matters. Mastery related goals are focused on learning not performance, such as how to speak French rather than getting an A on the next French test. People who focus on mastery with learning related goals are much more resilient and less likely to give up when they encounter difficulty.

Purpose gives meaning to the self-directed pursuit of mastery. Orisen Swett Marden said, "There is no grander sight in the world than that of a person filled with a great purpose, dominated by one unwavering aim."²⁵

Put these three ingredients of motivation 3.0 together, autonomy, mastery and purpose, and you have the building blocks of a developmental initiative that can make your organization truly talent rich. What does that look like in practical terms? I want to offer three simple and easy to remember ideas about motivation 3.0.

Expect it, Respect it, Inspect it

Expect it – Remember development begins with the felt need of the individual, not the organization, and the first building block of motivation 3.0 is autonomous, self-directed learning. Your role as a leader is to create a culture that expects everyone on the team to keep growing. State it openly in your hiring conversation, in your employment handbook, and in your performance evaluations. Tell your team that everyone is expected to be on a journey of self-directed continuous improvement and their personal development is just as important to you as their performance. I put it like this, "If you don't want to keep growing you won't like working here. Period."

Respect it – Keep in mind autonomous learning that begins with the felt need of the individual will always spill over into non-work related mastery goals. That doesn't mean you have to make organizational resources or time available to pursue those learning initiatives but you do need to understand all growth is good and you will ultimately benefit from the development of your team. If team members never come up with self-directed goals that relate to their job it is very possible they are in the wrong role, doing something that doesn't match well with their strengths.

Inspect it – You know the old saying, people don't do what you expect they do what you inspect. That is especially true if you are operating in motivation 2.0 based on a carrot and stick approach of punishment and reward. With motivation 3.0 your commitment to inspect is just as much about validating and affirming as it is about accountability and monitoring.

So let's come back to where we started with a few application questions. What examples would you cite of your commitment to empower people to color outside the lines, emphasizing your value for creativity even if it means nonconformity, producing friction with your existing systems and processes? What is the most practical step you could take to go beyond training people to people development? To what extent would your team members affirm their personal development is just as important to you as their performance?

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NOTES

²³ Seth Godin, *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (Portfolio, 2010), page 3

²⁴ Daniel Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (Riverhead, 2011) Kindle location 1086-1094

²⁵ Orisen Swett Marden, *Rising in the World* (Cooper Union, NY: The Success Company, 1897), page 111

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