Smarts Matter: 3 Ways to Build Smarts in Your Organization

At a macro level, the biggest predictor of individual success in a role is their level of intelligence. Specifically, their ability to thinking critically, solve problems and apply good judgement. Of course, this level of "Smarts" is increasingly important in larger leadership roles, and roles that require tacit or specialized information.

Smarts are especially important in a dynamic changing environment.

Most employers agree that critical thinking skills are among the most essential for accessing and analyzing the information needed to address the complex, non-routine challenges facing workers. There's hardly a job or task that doesn't require it. It is evident that smarts matter and there are various ways to improve company performance with this gray matter.

Here are three key actions to ensure you have a smart company.

1. Use validated assessment to screen applicants

If you're hiring a leader at any level, they must be strong critical thinkers. There is a threshold of capacity that you will want future leaders to meet. And, it makes the recruiting process more efficient as you are able to reduce the number of viable candidates if assessing against their key indicators of gray matter. This includes unqualified candidates that have great technical and people skills but lack the ability to make critical decisions or set a strategy.

One commonly used assessment is the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Test. The Watson-Glaser provides the ability to benchmark candidates against multiple management levels across industry. Critical thinking ability is more predictive of success than personality. That's what makes the Watson-Glaser such a versatile ability test.

Along with the Watson Glaser, there are other validated assessments that can be used to assesses gray matter. It is best to work with an Industrial Organization Psychologist, or an external firm with experience implementing validated assessments to ensure you are using the right tool with appropriate protocols

2. Deploy situational fact-based interviewing

Situational questions can also provide us with a respectable platform from which to examine a candidate's critical thinking ability. Imagine you want to determine whether someone can critically examine underlying assumptions and can anticipate likely unintended consequences. Rather than ask the candidate to recount an occasion in which she did either of these things, you must present a fact-based situation in which she would need to apply such skills. Using fact-based cases that closely replicate the decisions to be made in the targeted role will help you ascertain who has the relevant gray matter.

3. Facilitate the fully use and development of gray matter

It may sound obvious, but you need to promote better thinking just like you promote honesty, hard work, and fiscal responsibility. Organizations that have good critical thinkers are laying the foundation for higher levels of innovation, problem solving, and creativity – the competencies that will help you create real value in your market. A unique opportunity for corporations and their leaders to cross pollinate knowledge with clients and strategic partners to enable growth and innovation through the power of thought leadership.

The three areas of focus above can create a smarter organization that realizes better solutions, and ultimately creates a sustainable competitive advantage.

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CMP is a talent and transition firm in the business of developing people and organizations across the full talent life cycle – from talent acquisition and leadership development, to organization development and career transition support.