



Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping the Best People

Bradford D. Smart

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Great companies don't just depend on strategies—they depend on people. The more great people on your team, the more successful your organization will be. But that's easier said than done. Statistically, half of all employment decisions result in a mishire: The wrong person winds up in the wrong job. But companies that have followed Bradford Smart's advice in **Topgrading** have boosted their successful hiring rate to 90 percent or better, giving them an unbeatable competitive advantage.

Now Smart has fully revised his 1999 management classic to reintroduce the topgrading concept, which works for companies large and small in any industry. The author spells out his practical approach to finding and managing A-level talent—as well as coaching B players to turn them into A players. He provides intriguing case studies drawn from more than four thousand in-depth interviews.

As Smart writes in his introduction, “All organizations, all businesses live or die mostly on their talent, and any manager who fails to topgrade is nuts, or a C player. . . . Those who, way deep down, would sooner see an organization die than nudge an incompetent person out of a job should not read this book... **Topgrading** is for A players and all those aspiring to be A players.”

On the web: <http://www.topgrading.com/>

Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping the Best People Details

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From Reader Review Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping the Best People for online ebook

Phillip Bryant says

Whoa!

Way too long!

Sue Learn says

There are some good nuggets of best practices scattered throughout the book but the author's amount of self promotion makes them easy to overlook. My CEO asked me to lead a book club at my company to discuss this book and senior leaders were so focused on the amount of times Smart used the word "Topgrading" that many were not able to focus on the value of best practices such as interview standardization, using reference checking as a legitimate tool and doubling up for team interviews. Additionally, the book is incredibly repetitive in terms of introducing and reintroducing best practices. Had the author restricted himself to 5% of the word "Topgrading" and limited some of the repetition, I bet this book would have been less than half of its current size and a more productive and enjoyable read. Our managers (and I) could not wait for this book to be over!

R.W. Clark says

Catchy title in the category of management tool of the month.

Susan says

Read this for work - very interesting concept for "upping" the talent at an organization. Principles can be applied, but really needs to come from the leadership down in order to be effective.

Rob says

This book was on the shelf in my old boss's office, so I borrowed it just to see what she was reading. Thirteen years later the lessons in the book have stuck with me.

Most of the book is about why the hiring decision is so important, and why it's important to retain top talent. The reason I still have it on my shelf though, is the great section on how to properly conduct an interview. See p. 226 "A short version of the CIDS interview."

I highly recommend it for anyone making a hiring decision.

Charlane Brady says

A must read for anyone hiring anyone. It is hard to think of an organization in any field that cannot benefit from this book. After working in the hi-tech start-up industry for 10+ years (Silicon Valley + International) I agree with about 99% of this book.

Many just cannot get the people thing right.

Vickie says

Didn't find this book as ground-breaking as other readers. Yes, the main concept was interesting, but it seemed like a one long promo for his childrens' consulting businesses.

Phillip says

May have had some good points... I don't know, because I didn't make it past the 2nd cd. It seemed like a giant advertisement for his company.

John Boettcher says

This book was good, as was the concept behind it, and the data that supports it. However, I think that the book was a bit long for what it was trying to prove, and they should have perhaps just stuck with teaching businesses how to conduct meaningful interviews and how to identify good employees and separating them from the bad.

Besides the length and a little bit of fluff in the book, I gave it 5 stars because anyone that has ever given an interview, or anyone who has ever had to write questions or perform an interview, this book will provide not only crucial, invaluable information, but also give a great guideline for conducting interviews that will produce those employees that are productive, efficient, fit into the business model, etc.

I would say that this book is a must for mid managers and anyone in HR in any capacity, from small businesses to large corporations.

Alfred says

Book was good but not groundbreaking. The concept is sound but maybe should've been shorter in length and explained in simpler manner.

Leader Summaries says

Desde Leader Summaries recomendamos la lectura del libro El valor del capital humano, de Bradford Smart. Las personas interesadas en las siguientes temáticas lo encontrarán práctico y útil: recursos humanos, atraer, motivar y retener a los empleados.

En el siguiente enlace tienes el resumen del libro El valor del capital humano, Cómo identificar a los empleados excelentes: El valor del capital humano

Gary says

This book has some valuable information and ideas about how to improve your odds of hiring keepers, but it is also painful to read.

First the painful part – The book shamelessly plugs its own brand and company and this borders on nauseating at times. The methodology explained in the book is labeled "Topgrading" and if had a dollar for every time this term was mentioned in the book, I could retire. His success is self-evident because of the adoption his processes, at companies such as GE, however the author seemed compelled to go past the obvious benefits into ridiculous hyperbola at times. One passage says Topgrading may save your life or at the very least make your healthier. The other knock on the book is that it could have been half the length – if the self-promotion was eliminated as well as the redundancy. At the start of one redundant passage, Smart writes he knows this was previously covered, but since business people skim so much, he was repeating everything in case you missed while skimming the first time -- really?

A synthesis the core elements of the "Topgrading" methodology results in these two steps:

1) START OF INTERVIEW – At the start of the interview, tell the candidate you will be asking them to arrange multiple interviews with their past bosses (assuming they move to the next hiring stage). The idea is that telling them this is a bit of a truth serum, since the candidate is less likely to exaggerate their accomplishments, if they know you will be talking to each of their previous supervisors. Then after the interview, assuming the candidate is still in the running, ask them to arrange reference calls with a list of previous bosses you have selected.

2) INTERVIEW -- Perform long in-depth interviews, by working through the history of candidate. Start with their post-secondary education, and move toward their most recent position. Focus on their relationship to with their boss and peers in each of their past jobs. Dig deep into their relationships with others in these companies. Talk about their failures and success in each job. Try to understand what went right and what went wrong. Do accept simple answers that just make the candidate look strong (Example: "I guess I just worked too hard in that position"). User follow up questions to get to the truth of all issues. Keep careful notes.

Very solid ideas in this book, but very hard to push through to the end due to is over-the-top self-gratification.

Kiri Masters says

Topgrading is a hiring process that is supposed to increase the percentage of “A Players” from 25% to 90% in your company.

The principles are that you keep job candidates honest through thorough reference checks on their background, extremely clear KPIs for roles and other principles, and you either weed out or convert B and C players into A players. A lot is focused around principles for large companies, which have actual HR departments and more than 1 person in a role so that position descriptions & performance targets can be easily defined.

However, smaller companies like mine (less than 20 employees) can still benefit from implementing the same principles from this book.

At my company we have started using all the Topgrading steps for finding, screening, and interviewing candidates, and while it is still early days, I feel like our hiring process is at a minimum more consistent, and at best, will prevent 95% of future potential mis-hires.

My one criticism is the rambling nature of the book and that besides reading the chapter headings, there is no succinct summary of the (many) steps involved. It is, ultimately, a marketing tool for the organization which administers and trains companies on the Topgrading process. But I absolutely recommend any business which is building a team, however small initially, to read this book.

Colin Keeley says

The book has great ideas but 90% of the pages are wasted trying to convince the reader to follow the program. Should be ~100 pages.

James Centenera says

Good insights but written in a very corporate way
