

Attracting Top Talent with ELITE Magnetism

By Martin Murphy

A challenge a lot of business leaders and entrepreneurs I work with face, is the ability to attract the calibre of people required for both peak performance and the successful growth of their business. In order to attract top talent, leaders must develop a culture which utilises what I define as: ELITE Magnetism.

Having worked in and created many high performing teams, I've had a chance to research the attributes that attract key players required for success. From the Special Air Service to Lockheed's 'Skunkworks', organisations that employ an ELITE team philosophy, have traits common to them all. I've found that these traits are what make an organisation or group stand out and as a result, they attract the highest calibre of people.

ELITE Magnetism attracts the best players to the best party and if you want to attract these players to your mission, you've got to create the following elements and be able to promote them with your brand.

Excellence

One of the values espoused by David Stirling, founder of the elite Special Air Service, is that every soldier must:

“Engage in the never-ending pursuit of excellence”

You don't have to be brilliant when you join, but you do have to commit to following the path of excellence. As tennis legend Arthur Ashe reflected:

**“To achieve greatness, start where you are, use what you have,
do what you can.”**

Excellence is not achieving great strides although that sometimes happens, but it means each step you take, must be better than the last. It is often a case of getting the basics right to such a high degree that it becomes the difference that makes the difference.

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At Netflix its management philosophy includes the elimination of those whose performance does not achieve the required standard:

“Adequate performance gets a generous severance package”

Make it known, when you hire new people, that you're on a mission to be the best. And if the team don't think they're up to the challenge, they'll probably be enjoying a short stay. It seems counterintuitive to put the pressure on potential candidates, but top talent are attracted to this sort of environment. Of course you've got to be the kind of organisation that deserves top talent too. It's a symbiotic relationship.

Liberation

Liberation from leadership ego and organisational inertia is one of the main reasons why high performing teams work so well. The team are inspired with the organisation's purpose and motivated by the mission. People in high performing teams need context but not a command and control style environment.

When people are free to develop their own potential within the context of the team's mission, then their passion will raise the bar on what is possible. As Dan Pink, author of *'Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us'*, confirmed:

“Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives.”

In ELITE teams, everybody is striving to become a star in their own unique way. They might not necessarily want to be out in public view, but they want to be known for producing excellence. High performers, liberated from hierarchical and bureaucratic interference, unleash more of their creative potential. When candidates understand that your organisation will treat them like adults, then you'll attract talented people who want to step up their game.

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Inspirational

ELITE team members are both inspired by being part of something bigger than themselves and, are an inspiration to others. The SAS don't need to hire recruitment consultants to find candidates willing to endure the gruelling selection process. Top talent are drawn to the opportunity to pit themselves against the highest benchmarks of success.

Inspiration comes from having a grand purpose. Team members become passionate advocates and that's both attractive and addictive to others. As Flow psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi proposes:

“...success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue...as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a course greater than oneself.”

Training & Tools

Training for elite athletes is continuous process, as is it for anybody who wants to engage their latent potential. Most top performers have coaches and in the business world, attracting talent requires providing an environment that quenches their thirst for further knowledge, skills and new ideas.

As well as job specific skills, top talent also enjoy personal development training. Boosting the collective intelligence of the team requires increasing their social perception skills such as empathy and self-awareness.

As former CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch said:

“An organisations ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly is the ultimate competitive advantage”

ELITE Teams also want the best tools to work with. In the Special Air Service, we didn't get regulation equipment, we got to choose the best equipment for the job. In the corporate arena, I designed a collection of tools required to boost performance such as the POWER Meetings™ system which helps teams have productive and time efficient meetings. It's this calibre of leading edge tools

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and training, which give leaders a competitive advantage when it comes to attracting ideal candidates.

Enterprising

There are several elements to this.

Enterprising people are able to use their own initiative and influence the direction of the organisation using feedback from the coal face. The ability for team members to make such impactful decisions scares most leaders but there is a way to make this happen effectively and is a vital component in attracting talent.

High performing players want to make a difference. They want to contribute their ideas and skills. I designed the Decision POWER™ process so that anybody with the right training can make great decisions ecologically. This means they can take into consideration the true impact of their decisions balancing innovation with consultation.

ELITE team members also have the ability to lead. Seeing leadership as a skill as opposed to '*being*' a leader, is the key concept here. Sure some people have more experience but that doesn't mean that another talented team member cannot step up when the situation calls for it.

ELITE teams evolve. All human systems go through several phases. The entrepreneurial stage involves a co-dependent relationship between entrepreneur and team. As the organisation grows it passes through the counter-dependent stage where everybody and everything is widgetized. Mostly organisations get stuck at this 'safe' stage where everything seems more controllable.

However ELITE teams carry on developing into the interdependent stage. The team become a cohesive community. Now the entrepreneur has a bunch of highly skilled and collaborative operators who can come up with new ideas and contribute more products and services. This evolves into the independent stage. The organisation becomes a platform for ELITE team members to be

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able to question their own assumptions, explore innovative approaches and pursue their goals with determination.

ELITE Magnetism helps leaders build a team from which the leader can individuate psychologically from. It takes courage to run the type of organisation that displays ELITE magnetism, but courage is an essential quality found in the best organisations who operate in a more empowering way.