

# Secrets to Hiring Heavyweights

*The CEO's Guide to Talent Acquisition: Finding (Employee) Talent Your Competitors Overlook* By Ginni Garner, Timothy J. Tolan and Russell J. Riendeau Softback \$17.95 175pp. (Chicago, IL: Eyecatcher Press, 2008)

**BY BARON CHRISTOPHER HANSON**

**T**he *CEO's Guide to Talent Acquisition* is a modern shot in the arm that brings challenging talent acquisition strategies into Lowcountry organizations large and small. At first, I found the authors' writing styles to be abrupt for Charleston — brutally honest, straightforward and questioning generations of status quo here. Once I learned one of the three authors was from Mount Pleasant, my mind shifted toward original inklings: This brazen literature is exactly what South Carolina employers might need to peruse most in today's globalizing economy.

Unlike books that pontificate at great lengths to reveal only a few well-constructed concepts in a logical framework, this book delivers nearly 100 ideas quickly, impacting various hiring situations in any department. Each page is a 125- to 175-word misadventure that might best be explored further over the course of multiple readings. The volume of ideas covered makes writing a complete review of this book nearly impossible. Page after page is a barrage of highly competitive search, hiring and talent-acquiring ideas that can be applied to many local employment challenges. Readers will also notice a subtle focus on acquiring sales, customer service and operations talent.

**Pushy, in an Exciting Way**  
The book pushes readers to pick up the pace, break through barriers and use excitement to lead positive human resource developments. What is refreshing is that the authors also think in a creative way and suggest new

methods of making room for people, practices and policies that are seemingly beyond the obvious radar screens. One example is to consider candidates that may have a disability or veteran injury. Another example is to have monthly meetings in places that shatter routines — on a fishing charter, inside a Maserati dealership, at the peak of the Ravenel Bridge, after a rugby match, or inside the Charleston Aquarium. You get the idea. It is vital to change meeting environments dramatically and often. Boardrooms and cubicles are almost as riveting as waiting in line at the DMV.

What I liked most about the book is its freshness and innovation. Section III, "How to Hire Using New Rules for the 21st Century," is worth the \$17.95 cover price alone. The following excerpt is a sample of the tone, length and efficiency that readers can expect:

**The Candidate Interview Question of the Century**  
"What businesses did you start from the time you were eight years old until you finished high school?"

*Leaders and entrepreneurs start young in their quest to do something apart from the group. Find out what they did as a kid. We recently completed a search with a VP of sales who believed that every sales professional or sales manager who was above average in his or her profession started out early in business pursuits. This VP probed during the interview to see who shoveled snow from driveways, mowed lawns, worked at the grocery store, baby-sat, worked toward an Eagle Scout badge, or sold Girl Scout cookies. In college, did the candidate work in the cafeteria, paint houses in the summer, work as a lifeguard, or make and sell T-shirts with the school logo? Demonstrated motivation to earn a living at a young age shows gumption and a willingness to work hard. They also demonstrate a desire and drive to become successful and financially independent. Test this theory on your existing staff. Find out who of your staff was the most assertive in his or her youth and see if he or she is the*



Timothy Tolan

*most highly paid now*  
— page 66, *The CEO's Guide To Talent Acquisition*

**Tapping into Core Desires**  
Any person worth his salt years to be a great leader. Be it in a platoon, a school, an athletic team, a business, or a country — the best captains possess a blend of talent and desire that creates an elite skill set that is always about moving forward — and never resting on laurels. The exponential value of these is where economic opportunity exists for both employer and candidate.

**What Got You Here Won't Keep You Here**  
Taught at West Point and The Citadel is the mantra that great leadership requires great "followership." Unlike cushy jobs and universities where getting in is the hard part, plebe year at military colleges is a brutal wake-up call designed to strip old attitudes and rebuild cadets to prepare them for the first lesson in leadership: how to follow. *The CEO's Guide to Talent Acquisition* will change the way many Lowcountry employers acquire eager, willing and worthy talent.

The authors assert that most books are written for CEOs, usually because owners and leaders are the only one's motivated to do anything to improve a company. I would actually encourage young faithful *Mercury* readers to

drink deeply from *The CEO's Guide To Talent Acquisition* as well. Sure, its compact pages suggest a wild diversity of moves and tactics for human resource managers, yet I found myself wishing these insights and skills would be shared with the folks coming up through high school, college and even graduate school.

**Whose Turn Is It to Tell the Emperor He's Naked?**

One suggestion taken directly from the authors' words is to question any executive or employee who does not call you, the leader, out on at least one decision you make each year. Point being, those who kiss your fanny all the time are useless when it comes to learning what company policies are unfair, unprofitable or too lax.

Employees brave enough to come forward, with due respect, to convey what seriously stifles creativity or drives the entire team crazy are worth their weight in gold. Great leaders learn from great followers, and the best followers have the chutzpah to tell the Emperor when he's naked.

**Gold Watches Are for Train Conductors, Not Today's Elite Executives**

The authors suggest many interesting perspectives that challenge outdated HR logic. Today's elite executives are hungry, aggressive and moving forward at a rate of inertia beyond the ordinary paycheck collector. They are on autopilot forward at all times. Outdated HR logic suggests CEOs should be wise to frequent job changes early in a candidate's career. The authors insist these employees were not confused or B-list; they were actually quite motivated. Employees who wrestled early on were often brave enough to seek the right position, and may be A-list level talent.

**Talent Retention**  
The book also goes into talent retention, especially for sales and customer service. Elite talent attracts elite talent in perpetuity. A talented staff places a business in high demand among top-talent job seekers. A track record of advanced employee treatment, above average compensation and an overall stellar workplace culture is akin to one's credit report

at the bank. This book points out that a city or region suffering from the same job market norms year after year does not mean your company cannot break the mold and acquire elite talent by doing things differently in the future.

One consistent argument the authors advance toward acquiring elite talent is that the best employees are not cheap. If one loves lobster and champagne, one must be willing to pay accordingly. Companies facing the most turmoil and risk of failure are often organizations run by leaders who refuse to pay their people well. *The CEO's Guide* explains that the best companies come to grips with this reality by consistently paying well above average for the very best employee talent.

**Results, Results, Results**  
The ideal result is that your organization becomes known in your industry as always having (and attracting) the very best people. Ritz Carlton is known in all four corners of the world for having the most impeccable hospitality employees anywhere. Their staff is over-trained and overpaid to treat all guests as if they were the property owner.

Even if great employees depart your company for other opportunities, the line to take their places will be long and distinguished if your work environment consistently demands talent in the first place. What's more, when elite talent does part your company, these professionals are likely A) to provide valued feedback to you during an exit interview and B) to be prone to refer other applicants and even new customers to your business. All it takes is a little additional money and a thorough updating of your Lowcountry human resources strategy to acquire top talent into your organization.

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## Dorothy Flatley, Supreme Naval Aviation Spouse, Turns 100

Readers may not know that Naval Aviation recognizes a Naval Aviation Spouse of the Year annually. That award is the Dorothy M. Flatley Award, presented "To the Naval Aviation spouse who has come closest to exemplifying Dorothy Flatley's incredible 75 years of inspirational support as a spouse, mother and grandmother." Mrs. Flatley just celebrated her 100th birthday in Mount Pleasant.

She went hang-gliding at the age of 95 and is the mother of four sons, the grandmother of 16 and the great-grandmother of 40. Mrs. Flatley married a Navy fighter pilot in 1933 and continues to keep all of our fighting men and women in her prayers.

## Benefit for Therapeutic Riding

The annual Spring Horse Show and Fundraiser for Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding will be held 9 a.m.-3 p.m. May 17. CATR students will display their horseback riding accomplishments. The public is invited to visit the farm, but those interested should call to make reservations for the 11:30 a.m. lunch fundraiser.

CATR improves the lives of children and adults with disabilities at the area's only nationally accredited therapeutic horseback riding center. The center is at 2669 Hamilton Road, John's Island. For information, call (843) 559-6040 or visit [www.catr-therapeuticriding.org/](http://www.catr-therapeuticriding.org/).

# The Eight Laws of Wealth

## The Law of Planning

**BY ERIK OLSON**  
Special Entrepreneur Correspondent

**E**ntrepreneurs are a funny bunch. We tend to fall into one of two camps: either we don't plan at all and just madly take any action that comes before us, or we sit and plan, plan and plan some more — forgetting that sometime we actually have to get off our duffs and do something.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "Planning is everything — plans are nothing." He was right. Most of the benefit is found in the process of planning, not in the result. There's a very simple reason for this; a plan is static and fixed while life is fluid and dynamic. The minute your plan is put on paper, it starts to become obsolete.

The issue of over-planning is a problem for several reasons. It takes up a lot of time and energy that could be more profitably spent elsewhere. In planning you rapidly reach the point of diminishing returns.

Second, it fools you into thinking that you can anticipate every contingency and robs you of flexibility. Life doesn't work that way. Things both good and bad come in from left field. Try to emulate the flexible willow rather than the rigid oak. Stay supple.

Third, planning fools you into focusing on the wrong thing. Planning is only a means to an end, not an end itself. Results are what count and to paraphrase General Douglas MacArthur, "An imperfect plan executed imperfectly today is infinitely better than a perfect plan perfectly executed never."

Most of us think of planning as a tedious project we have to complete in order for the bank to give us a loan. Once we've gotten the loan, the plan goes

into the bottom drawer of our file cabinet, never to see the light of day again. That's too bad, because a good plan is a fantastic asset to the serious entrepreneur. I'm not talking about some "pie-in-the-sky" fantasy that you use to con the banker, but a real operational plan that defines how you're going to get from here to there as quickly and safely as possible.

The reason this is so helpful is that you'll be too busy dealing with day-to-day issues, problems and opportunities to keep the big picture fully in mind. No one can. But your plan is your cheat sheet. It will nudge and remind you of what's important, help prevent you from running off in strange directions and keep you on course, if you remember to look at it now and then.

I can't tell you the times I've talked to company owners who found their business plan, shook off the dust and told me, "Gee, you know ... we really should have done that. Oh well, it's too late now." All the while, the bank is hauling out the office furniture.

I teach my clients to follow what I call Assumptive Success Planning. It's fairly simple, and quick, but surprisingly effective. Obviously, you have to start with your goal. Then you create an ideal plan, assuming that you have no limitations whatsoever. No limitations on time, talent, money, resources, no limits at all. Even as you do this you know it won't happen, but we start with an ideal and then try to come as close to it as possible.

Once you've created your ideal plan, you make a list of your current resources. Then you start matching them up, needs with resources. It won't take long before you start to see some gaps — some small and some dismayingly large. This is good news. The reason it's good

news is that those gaps were always there, but now you can see them. It isn't the gap that you can see that kills you; it's the gap that you don't see until it's too late that does you in.

Now comes the tricky part. You must confidently assume that these gaps are completely surmountable, given time, persistence and creativity. That's because they are. You will overcome them, you just don't know how yet. This is the magic space that every entrepreneur inhabits. I call it "Irrational Confidence." You simply decide that you have already overcome these obstacles, that it is foreordained. When someone is armed with this kind of attitude, nothing can stop him. You've probably experienced it in school as part of a sports team. There was this feeling, this certainty, an absolute assuredness that you were going to win no matter what. The rest of it was simply going through the motions. That's what we're talking about here.

You must make a decision to be wealthy. Then you must create an imperfect plan for how you are going to get there. The Third Law of Wealth is to take Focused Action. We'll talk more about that next time.

*Erik S. Olson is founder of The Profit Center, Inc. a company that creates tools and teachings to help all entrepreneurs break through barriers, grasp new opportunities, make more money and have more fun doing it. Author, speaker, syndicated columnist and radio show host, Erik has been at the forefront of small business thinking for more than 15 years. Please go to his Web site for a free copy of his latest book, 9 Simple Rules for Starting and Building Your First Business, at [www.theprofitcenter-inc.com](http://www.theprofitcenter-inc.com) or call him at (843) 693-5833.*



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