

Episode #40: Should You Choose Culture over Talent in 2021?

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. Today I want to answer the question of whether you should choose culture over talent as you assess your team members' performance in 2021.

I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I shared three suggestions on how you can maximize your strengths and manage your weaknesses in 2021.

My first suggestion was to focus on developing and leveraging your strengths and the strengths of the people reporting to you.

My second suggestion was to assign a secondary priority to manage your weaknesses. I mentioned there was an exception to this tip: In those cases where you had a controlling weakness, one that was preventing you from delivering on your basic job description, you may need to seek a job elsewhere. This same suggestion applies to those reporting to you.

And my third suggestion was to be crystal clear on which talents you have and which you don't. I mentioned a model, such as "The 6 Types of Working Genius" from Patrick Lencioni, could help identify the type of work that will maximize your strengths and manage your weaknesses.

In the past few weeks, I have participated in a couple of events that led me to choose today's topic, which is to invite you to place a high priority on developing a set of core values for your team, and to use these values in the different stages of talent acquisition and development.

The first event was a workshop with a leadership team, where I helped them explore and choose the top 3-4 core values they wanted to show in their day-to-day behaviors, among themselves and with others. This was part of a larger exercise to reach intellectual alignment among the team members on several aspects of their work.

The second event was a webinar I attended with Jonathan Keyser, author of the book *You Don't Have To Be Ruthless To Win*. At one point I requested him to expand on one of the statements I had read in his book:

"It is imperative that you choose culture over talent."

His answer to my question showed how convinced he was of this assertion. He emphasized how choosing culture over talent has indeed been critical for his company. His organization suffered in the past because he didn't apply a higher sense of urgency and make some tough calls with those members of his team who were culturally misaligned.

Are the core values I covered in the leadership team workshop connected to the "culture over talent" statement from Jonathan Keyser's book? I ran a Google search on "corporate culture and core values" and received 95.5 million results...

In other words, there is a direct connection. Core values are those behaviors practiced by team members which, together with other elements such as beliefs and attitudes, drive the culture within a team or organization.

You may or may not be able to change the culture of an entire company or organization, but you sure can affect the way your team members behave.

It starts with an exercise to define the top 3-4 core values that every team member, and their respective set of employees reporting to them, agree to display in every interaction with people inside and outside the company.

This intellectual alignment should be incorporated in every human and business decision.

For example, when you interview external candidates, will you only probe into the performance aspects of the job, or will you also check for their cultural fit? What if they have superb business skills but a questionable fit with your core values?

What happens when you are considering potential candidates for a promotion from individual contributor to manager? Will you go for star performers, even if they may be weak in one or more of your core values?

And how much are you willing to stall a decision to separate an MVP who only cares about himself or herself, if one of your core values is teamwork?

Perhaps another reason why I chose today's "culture over talent" topic is because, looking back in time, I may have not been consistent or quick enough to apply this principle in my close to three decades inside the corporations I worked for.

Why? I think it was because, inadvertently, I may have prioritized individual performance over the effect it had on other team members.

At times I may have also shirked from making the tough decision to move somebody out of my team, naively hoping that by some corporate miracle, the cultural misfit would somehow disappear.

In fact, I still remember the feedback I received from a colleague who called me out on tolerating the wrong behavior from a team member. When I defended myself, claiming that I had stopped hearing complaints about this employee, who was a star performer, he replied:

"The problems that go away on their own tend to come back on their own."

And sure enough, he was right. I was fortunate that this employee ended up taking a job elsewhere, but I learned my lesson anyway.

Summarizing, I invite you to make sure you and your team are 100% intellectually aligned on the top 3-4 core values you agree to display.

I also invite you to look at both the cultural fit of every employee on your team and their specific performance assessment. Culture and talent work in tandem. The absence of either one should trigger a quick and decisive intervention on your end.

Count on my help as needed.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will provide tips on how you can benefit from reverse mentoring.

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Also, you can request a free coaching call with me by visiting my website at www.cannon.consulting, or if available in this platform, using the links provided in the notes section.

This is coach Percy Cannon, working to help you *make the rest of your life...the best of your life®*.

Percy's BIO

Percy has been helping hundreds of corporate executives and their teams boost their leadership and teamwork capabilities over the past ten years.

Before this, Percy spent close to three decades working for three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, in the United States and across several countries in Latin America.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC", a Certified Go-Giver Speaker & Coach, and a practitioner of several methodologies from best-seller author Patrick Lencioni (e.g., "The Ideal Team Player", "The 6 Types of Working Genius", "Organizational Health" and others).

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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