

CHOOSE EMPLOYEES WISELY

By: Rick Boxx

For any organization, its greatest resource is its people. The company may have cutting-edge products or services. It may have a substantial supply of financial capital. It may have an incomparable marketing strategy. It may have a stellar reputation. But without the right employees to carry out its mission – not only in terms of skills and experience, but also high levels of personal character – success is far from assured.

When I was in public accounting, one time I and another member of our staff were rushing to complete an audit so we could catch our flights home. Unexpectedly, all electrical power was lost in the town where we were working. I was unable to make necessary photocopies of documents related to our audit.

A young man from our corporate office in the Northeast had been assigned to assist me. "I'm going to the next town to make some copies," I told him. "While I am gone, I want you to review this questionnaire with the clerk and then pack up our papers and equipment so we can leave quickly after I get back."

Upon my return I was stunned to find this young man sound asleep on top of the table in the company's board room. He had never left the room, much less reviewed the questionnaire with the clerk as I had requested. When I woke him up, he began babbling about being hung over from drinking alcohol.

Exasperated, I called the managing partner in Atlanta and expressed my belief that this young man should be disciplined for such inappropriate and unprofessional behavior. Later I learned the New Jersey office was so embarrassed they determined that discipline would not be sufficient; they terminated the young man immediately.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, we find many wise observations about the character of people, including their diligence and motivation. For instance, Proverbs 10:26 states, *"Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him."* In all honesty, dealing with that foolish accountant brought about similar feelings for me. I was irritated, to say the least.

Another proverb that reminds me of that unmotivated colleague: *"Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry"* (Proverbs 19:15). I do not know what happened to him, but I hope that his dismissal served as a much-needed wakeup call.

Two more proverbs offer a vivid contrast: *"Like cutting off one's feet or drinking violence is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool"* (Proverbs 26:6) and *"Like the coolness of snow at harvest time is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the spirit of his masters"* (Proverbs 25:13).

Since employees serve as representatives of our organization, whether in our own facilities or interacting with clients in their offices, it is important to choose wisely those who work for us. We cannot rely only on a strong corporate reputation or dealings we have had with clients in the past. Poor performance or poor behavior can leave a lasting, negative impression that might be very difficult to overcome.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that the greatest resource for any organization is its people? Why or why not?
2. How do you think you would have reacted if you had to deal with such a foolish, irresponsible employee or colleague?
3. The challenge is to succeed in making the right hiring choices. What are some ways that you think employers can identify important character traits, such as diligence, motivation, or integrity?
4. What steps have you taken to ensure that whenever you are called upon to represent your organization to others, you are like "the messenger who refreshes the spirit of his masters," presenting a fair and positive image that inspires confidence and trust?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:4-5, 13:4, 17:21,25, 18:9, 19:3,10, 21:25, 24:7, 26:1,11