

Topgrading 201

How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires



By: Dr. Brad Smart



About the Author



Dr. Brad Smart

Dr. Smart is an internationally renowned management psychologist and consultant to many Global 500 companies, but also hundreds of small, midsize, and growth companies. Brad completed his Ph.D. in Industrial Psychology at Purdue University, entered consulting, and after two years launched Topgrading, Inc. (formerly Smart & Associates, Inc.), based in the Chicago area.

This eBook and the hard cover version of it are based on ***Topgrading: The Proven Hiring and Promoting Method That Turbocharges Company Performance*** (Portfolio, 2012), which is Brad's 5th book. Brad is frequently regarded as the world's #1 expert on hiring and most experienced executive interviewer and coach, having conducted over 6,500 chronological Topgrading Interviews in over 200 companies.

As a trusted advisor to CEOs of leading companies as well as startups and fast growth companies, Brad has been featured in a front-page Wall Street Journal profile, CNN, Fortune, Inc., Chief Executive, and numerous other publications.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

TOPGRADING TESTIMONIALS

“Brad Smart is the #1 thought leader in the world on hiring best practices. As the global talent leader for a publicly traded top medical technology company, I know of no other hiring method that comes close to what Topgrading achieves if you want to hire ‘A’ level, high performers at every pay level.”

~ John H. Dickey, Sr. Vice President, Corporate Support
Hillenbrand

“Topgrading has been an invaluable tool for DenTek in hiring and retaining high-level performers. Over the past six years we have blossomed into a world-class consumer goods company with explosive growth and great opportunities, due largely to the hard work of A Players recruited through the Topgrading process.”

~ David Fox, President
DenTek Oral Care

“The company emerged from Chapter 11 one of the strongest automotive suppliers, and Topgrading contributed to that success. Topgrading is a central part of our culture and the most important of our core competencies. We can’t win if we miss on people. I urge you to Topgrade so you too can get an edge on your competition.”

~ Curtis Clawson, President, CEO, and Chairman
Hayes Lemmerz (recently retired since acquisition by Maxion in 2012)

“Brad’s Topgrading methods helped us maximize talent at GE.”

~ Jack Welch
author of *Winning* and former CEO, General Electric

“With over \$70 billion in assets, Topgrading is key to our strategies, and the strategies that have generated the majority of our profits would not have been possible without Topgrading.”

~ Ken Griffin, CEO
Citadel

“During the last three years of the recession we have continued to grow revenue, we’ve been one of Utah’s fastest growing companies, and we’ve won multiple awards as a ‘best place to work.’ Having 94+% A Players at Access is one of the key reasons for this success. Topgrading has been the foundation to help us attract, hire, and retain these A Players.”

~ Larry Maxfield, CEO
Access Development

“Topgrading is the definitive manual for becoming an A Player and for recognizing those traits in others.”

~ Larry Bossidy
author of *Execution* and former CEO
Honeywell

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

MORE TOPGRADING TESTIMONIALS

“Topgrading has allowed us to triple the projected sales for the office. A Player caregivers impress clients, who refer us, and A Players refer other A Players for us to hire.”

~ Michael Steinberg, Franchise Owner
Home Instead Senior Care

“Brad and three of his team have all conducted Topgrading workshops for our managers, and all four received top ratings.”

~ Kevin Silva, former SVP Human Resources
Argo

“After implementing Topgrading for all new hires and promotions, I am thrilled. Our organization has embraced the philosophy and process and we are seeing the results . . . the right people in the right positions.”

~ Tim Tevens, President and CEO
Columbus McKinnon

“In the fight against cardiovascular disease and stroke, Topgrading helped us raise an additional \$50 million over the previous year. Topgrading has saved lives.”

~ Cass Wheeler, former CEO
American Heart Association

“Topgrading is the #1 reason for our company success.”

~ Scott Mesh, CEO
Los Niños Services

“In a previous start-up I worked for, hiring was done haphazardly. At Mint.com, I've had very rigorous hiring. We use a technique called Topgrading, which reveals patterns in behavior. In the history of Mint, I've fired only two people and one left voluntarily.”

~ Aaron Patzer, Founder
Mint.com

“There is no doubt about it—the company as a whole has performed better because of Topgrading. A Player executives do a better job of setting direction, four times as many A Player store directors of course get better results, and when we've Topgraded entry employees and the social media rave about how positive and energized the whole store is, record sales no longer surprise us!”

~ Bob Mariano, CEO
Rounds

Table of Contents

What's New In This Book?	Page 6
Introduction	Page 8
Chapter 1 ~ <i>Begin Topgrading Today!</i>	Page 13
Chapter 2 ~ <i>Why Picking Talent is Your Most Pressing, Frustrating Challenge</i>	Page 19
Chapter 3 ~ <i>Twelve Topgrading Hiring Steps</i>	Page 33
Chapter 4 ~ <i>40 Topgrading Case Studies</i>	Page 67
Topgrading Resources ~ <i>Tools To Get You and Your Organization Started Topgrading Today</i>	Page 73

Trademarks and Copyrights

The marks Topgrading, Topgrader, Topgrade, Topgrading Snapshot, and Topgrading Interview are registered marks of Bradford D. Smart. Smart & Associates, Inc. (Topgrading, Inc.) owns the copyrights to the following Topgrading forms and guides:

- Topgrading Career History Form
- Topgrading Snapshot
- Topgrading Interview Guide
- Topgrading In-Depth Reference Check Guide
- Topgrading Telephone Screening Guide
- Topgrading Cost of Mis-Hires Form
- Topgrading Interviewer Feedback Form
- Topgrading Interview Guide for Sales Representatives
- Topgrading Reference Check Guide for Sales Representatives
- Self-Administered Topgrading Interview Guide

What's New In This Book?

Topgrading 201 is a revision of ***Topgrading 101*** (our first e-book which has been downloaded thousands of times). A hardcopy of this book is also available in the Topgrading Marketplace that can be found on our website at <http://www.topgrading.com/marketplace>.

This book incorporates abbreviated explanations of many of the topics that are fully explained in ***Topgrading: The Proven Hiring and Promoting Method That Turbocharges Company Performance***, the 3rd edition of the previous top-selling, book ***Topgrading—Version 2***.

Among other innovations, the new 3rd Edition of ***Topgrading*** includes:

- A much greater focus on small, midsize, and growth companies than on the Global 100 companies featured in the past. Why? The simple answer is that these companies create the most jobs; they can implement Topgrading and see great results in months; mis-hires are far more harmful to them than mega companies; the CEOs are fun to work with; and ... my own company is one of those small / growth companies.
- Introduction of the Topgrading Snapshot, the picture ("snapshot") of a person's career that permits screening out weak candidates in seconds—with honest, complete, and verifiable information.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

- A new online version of the famous Topgrading Interview Guide with 100% of the Topgrading Career History Form and Topgrading Snapshot information already inserted in the Guide, making conducting the Topgrading Interview easier than ever.
- A much greater focus on entry-level jobs, with dramatic improvements in hiring using the shorter, simplified Topgrading methods.
- 40 case studies of companies of all sizes—perhaps a record number of case studies for a “how to” book. And get this: the average improvement in hiring for all 40 companies is from 26% high performers (A Players) to 85% high performers. Topgrading more than tripled their success hiring not just good, but truly excellent performers.

For most case study companies, Topgrading was used not just for management jobs but all jobs including entry-levels jobs.

Introduction

Whether you are an owner of a 10-person company, CEO of a Global 1,000 company, or a manager of a department, here's a scenario you probably can relate to:

You have a mixture of talent, and your marginal performers cause you the most frustration. You'd like to spend more time helping your high performers achieve even more, but chronic low performers take up too much of your time and your high performers' time ... and those low performers drag down your entire organization. You value talent ... you really do, but you only have about 25% high performers. You try to coach the poorer performers, but ... it rarely works. You occasionally replace one, but:

- Recruiters don't send good enough candidates.
- Resumes are suspect—C Players hype their resumes to look like A Players.
- Your competency ("behavioral") interviews are not very revealing.
- Reference checks are generally worthless.
- Too often the people hired disappoint you.
- All those mis-hires are VERY costly.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Welcome to the club! Thousands of case studies of Topgrading companies show that before starting to Topgrade, typically only about 25% of the people hired and promoted turn out to be high performers. That means that 75% of average hires turn out to be disappointments.

Most companies successfully hire high performers only 25% of the time!

Sure, if managers are willing to live with “adequate” performers, many are “okay hires.” But you know in your heart that “adequate” and “okay” are not good enough. Even a “good” performer doesn’t cut it if you expect a Very Good or Excellent performer—a true high performer, the best available, for what you are willing to pay.

You want to hire only the best people available for every job—that’s what you’re paying for, right? But most of the time you end up not getting the high performer you paid for, so your talent challenges are your biggest headache.

Chapter 3 of this book will highlight 12 common sense Topgrading practices that have enabled thousands of managers in companies of all sizes and everywhere in the world to more than triple the number of high performers hired. Many Topgrading companies hire and promote high performers 90% of the time.

Many Topgrading companies hire and promote high performers 90% of the time!

Topgrading leaders state unequivocally that their companies are performing better because Topgrading helped their managers pick better people.

What Exactly is a Topgrader?

We define Topgrader as a leader who hires or promotes mostly high performers, the top 10% of talent available for the compensation level. So, if there are 10 qualified candidates waiting at your door and eager to take the job at the pay you offer, you pick the #1 best candidate; if there are 100 candidates you at least hire one of the top 10.

What do high performers “look like?” The chart on the next page is an abbreviated, representative summary (of competencies for an upper level manager). You might find this hard to believe, but trained managers gain deep insights into 50 competencies for management jobs. Yes, using Topgrading tools you really can do this, and gaining deep insights into so many competencies is the magic of Topgrading, what permits close to perfect hiring.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Summary of Critical Competencies: Upper Level Manager			
	HIGH PERFORMER	ADEQUATE	LOW PERFORMER
Overall Talent Level	Top 10% of those available at this salary level	65 th -89 th percentile available at this salary level	Below the 65 th percentile available at this salary level
Problem Solving	A "quick study;" able to rapidly perform complex analyses.	Smart; "average" insight.	Has difficulty coping with complex situations.
Leadership	Executes needed change; highly adaptive and able to inspire the organization.	Favors modest change, so there is lukewarm "followership."	Prefers the status quo; lacks credibility so people don't follow.
Passion	Very high energy level; fast paced; 55 (+) hour work weeks (plus home email); driven to succeed.	Motivated; energetic at times; 50-54 hour work weeks.	Dedicated; inconsistent pace; 40-49 hour work weeks.
Resourcefulness	Impressive ability to find ways over, around, or through barriers; can-do attitude.	Occasionally finds a solution; relies on others to "figure it out."	Defeated by obstacles; constantly "delegates" to bosses.
Topgrading	Selects high performers and employees with potential; redeloys chronic underperformers.	Selects a few high performers.	Selects mostly underperformers; tolerates mediocrity.
Coaching	Successfully counsels each team member to turbo-boost performance and personal/career growth.	Performs annual performance reviews; "spotty" coaching.	Inaccessible, hypercritical, stingy with praise; late/shallow with feedback.
Team Building	Creates focused, collaborative, results-driven teams.	May want teamwork but does not make it happen.	Drains energy from others; actions prevent synergy.
Track Record	Consistently excellent performance.	Meets some (not all) key constituency expectations.	Sporadically meets expectations.
Integrity	"Iron-clad."	Generally honest.	"Bends the rules."
Communication	Excellent oral/written skills.	Average oral/written skills.	Mediocre.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

In every two-day workshop attendees start out lamenting, “What? Fifty competencies? I’d have trouble trying to keep track of 5 competencies!” And on Day 2 of the workshop, they amaze themselves because indeed, by following the Topgrading system, they actually did rate their interviewee on 50 competencies.

But what is the single most important competency? It’s resourcefulness, a composite of energy, passion, analytic skills, and persistence wrapped into one. In common terms, resourcefulness is getting over, around, or through barriers to success.

A Players all exude **RESOURCEFULNESS**, in spades. They just don’t give up, and when challenged by opportunities or seemingly hopeless setbacks, their mind is going, 24/7, to somehow snatch success out of the jaws of defeat.

Does Topgrading sound complicated—following 12 Topgrading hiring steps, new forms and guides, a long interview, and tracking dozens of competencies, particularly resourcefulness?

To achieve 90% high performers hired you’ll need to learn a lot more than this book teaches, but the good news follows immediately in Chapter 1!

Chapter 1

Begin Topgrading Today!

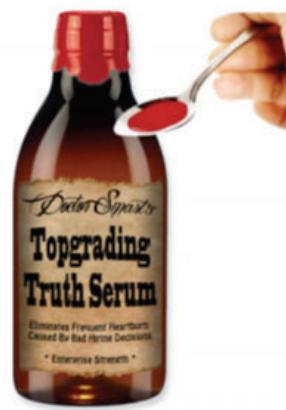
"The ability to make good decisions regarding people represents one of the last reliable sources of competitive advantage, since very few organizations are very good at it."

- Peter Drucker

If you'd like to become a Topgrader, you can actually start TODAY! Really ... even before you read the rest of this little book. But, please read this entire short book because you'll learn the essentials, which are easy to understand. Then, when you want to learn more and practice the methods, you can shoot for 90% hiring success.

This book introduces you to the 12 Topgrading hiring steps, all of which contribute to better hires and fewer, costly mis-hires. I'll start by sharing the simplest steps that you can take today and improve hiring.

1. **Use the Topgrading "Truth Serum,"** which for more than three decades has motivated all candidates, even the C Players, to tell you the whole truth in interviews. It's



Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

incredibly simple. At every step in the hiring process, remind candidates that a final step before receiving a job offer is for THEM to arrange reference calls with former bosses and others.

There are a dozen “Yes, but Brad that won’t work because ...” concerns about this approach and I answer all of them in the 3rd edition of *Topgrading*. But, if you are going to start Topgrading today, you’ll have to trust me that when injected with the Topgrading “Truth Serum,” most C Players will drop out (because they likely faked their resumes) and A Players will happily arrange those reference calls.

2. **Use the Topgrading Career History Form**, which produces the **Topgrading Snapshot** (visit <http://www.TopgradingSnapshot.com> for two free ones). Candidates fill out a Career History Form that has the truth serum and asks for full compensation history, honest boss ratings, and much more. Then, a 5-second glance at the 1-page, multi-color Topgrading Snapshot enables you to immediately screen out weaker candidates, saving you not only time but more importantly assuring that you’ll only interview sharp, well-qualified candidates.
3. **Conduct a Topgrading Interview** using a somewhat abbreviated version of the Topgrading Interview Guide (see page 58 in this book) a

couple of times and then use the full Topgrading Interview Guide that can be printed along with the Topgrading Snapshot and Topgrading Career History Form. Just read the questions, take notes, ask follow up questions, and turn the page when it's full. By conducting the Topgrading Interview, you can possibly double your hiring success from 25% to 50%.

4. **Also, recruit a tandem interviewer** to do these interviews with you, because two heads (and minds) are a lot better than one. You can learn a lot by watching a candidate while your co-interviewer asks questions. Conduct the Tandem Topgrading Interview with a trained tandem interviewer and you'll probably achieve the results shown in the 40 case studies—85%+ hiring success.
5. **Conduct reference calls** with former bosses. Follow through on #1—ask the candidate to arrange the calls and you and your tandem interviewer talk with those former bosses.

Why Topgrading Works Well (Actually Incredibly Well!)

Topgrading more than triples successful hiring because just by practicing those five easy Topgrading steps that you just learned, you can solve the biggest problems in hiring, the problems that account for 75% mis-hires:

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

- *Rampant dishonesty* by weak candidates who easily get away with fudging their resumes and faking their interviews
- *Insufficient information*, because most companies use superficial, 45-minute competency (“behavioral”) interviews to screen candidates. Forrest Gump could control such interviews and easily fudge weaker points!
- *Lack of verifiability*, as most reference checks are practically useless. Since most reference checks are either fact checks with Human Resources departments, are not done at all, or they are conducted with the candidates’ buddies as references, even the weakest of candidates can get away with problem #1, rampant dishonesty.

Now, Here's More Good News!

There's a treatment and cure for your talent headaches, and it's not a pill. It's the ... you knew this was coming ... Topgrading methods that are revolutionary in infusing hiring with honesty, thoroughness, and verifiability of candidate information, producing 75% and even 90%+ success.

Topgrading solves the hiring problems of dishonesty, incomplete information, and lack of verifiability.

High performers are generally truthful in their resumes and interviews, but low performers too often hype positives and hide negatives. Topgrading hiring has a “truth serum,” (#1 above) that scares away weak candidates who had falsehoods in their resumes and would have tried to fudge their interviews. That “truth serum” makes sure candidates understand that **THEY** will eventually have to **ARRANGE** reference calls with former bosses.

The Topgrading Career History Form, Topgrading Snapshot, (#2 above) and then the Tandem Topgrading Interview (#4 above) combine to cure the “lack of information” headache. For example, the Topgrading Interview covers the candidate’s entire career—every success, failure, key decision, and key relationship (including boss ratings), for every job ... and a lot more.

Topgrading also cures the “lack of verifiability” headache by requiring candidates to arrange reference calls with former bosses and others you choose (#5 above). Aah ... Topgrading brings truth and honesty, complete information on the candidate’s career, and, as frosting on the cake,

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

everything a candidate claims will be verified through reference checks that the candidate arranges.

This is how Topgrading will permit you to double, triple, or even quadruple your success hiring and promoting high performers. That simple fact will then permit you to dramatically change your organizational culture—to raise the performance bar for everyone. And Topgrading coaching methods will help you develop and retain top talent. The result, as the CEOs of our case studies state, is improved organizational performance.

On an individual manager level, Topgrading will pack your team with high performers, which will assure your improved personal performance and greater career success. And there is frosting on the cake for you personally: because you will be able to delegate to a higher percentage of A Players, you will be able to enjoy that elusive thing ... that dream of ... what is it called, oh yeah, work-life balance.

Chapter 2

Why Picking Talent Is Your Most Pressing, Frustrating Challenge

“Nothing matters more in winning than getting the right people on the field. All the clever strategies and advanced technologies in the world are nowhere near as effective without great people to put them to work.”

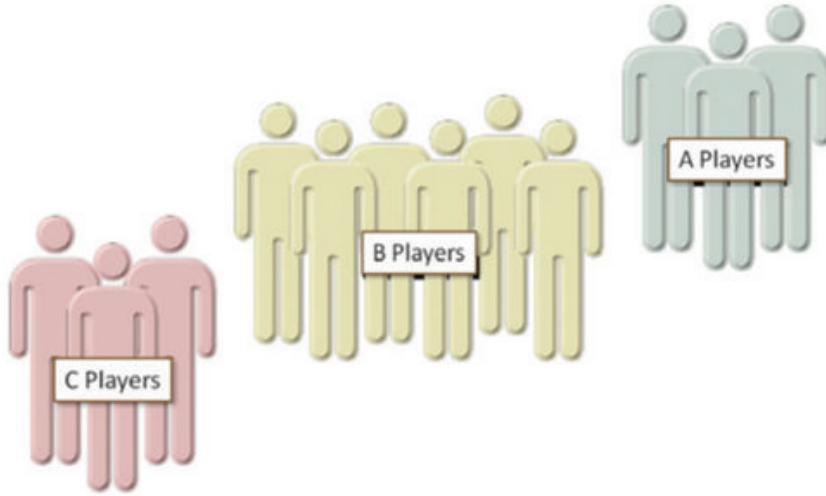
~ Jack Welch
Former Chairman, General Electric

I don't want to preach to the choir, because anyone reading this book is a member of the “choir” of talent-oriented leaders. You know talent is all-important, but if you are like most managers, you are frustrated with too many costly mis-hires.

You've read the survey results—when CEOs or any managers convene, they say “picking the right people” is their biggest headache, most pressing problem, their most frustrating challenge.

Why? Because despite the importance of hiring high performers, most managers pick them only 25% of the time. Do you have a team of 25% A Players, 50% Bs, and 25% Cs?

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires



Let me give you a little different slant on this—where I'm coming from. I've conducted 65,000 face-to-face case studies that have made it glaringly obvious that the single most important factor in a manager's success is the talent of the team assembled.

I wish academicians would study this scientifically, but from these 65,000 case studies, the conclusion seems crystal clear: Create a team of high performers and you're likely to succeed, but keep a lot of low performers and you're apt to fail. Great leaders seem to agree with what my experience proves: A Players might make a mediocre strategy successful, but C Players will almost always mess up a brilliant strategy.

Create a team of high performers and you're likely to succeed, but keep a lot of low performers and you're apt to fail.

“Duh,” you say. Of course it’s possible to have a mediocre team that produces great results, because you have a monopoly, patent protection, colossally weak competitors, or lobbyists who (ahem) give you some “competitive advantage.” And it’s possible to have all high performers but your team fails, because the CEO insists on the wrong strategy, the organization culture is in-bred and lame, someone steals your IP, or markets dry up with a burp in the economy. But you know that most of the time, talent wins.

For years I’ve studied the frustration associated with hiring low performers. Every manager experiences that pain! In this short book you’ll read studies that show the average cost of a management mis-hire to be 15 times base salary.

Why It Was Smart For You to Keep Some “Adequate” Performers

For most managers not exposed to Topgrading, all that frustration, wasted time, lessened job performance, and high costs of mis-hires are very understandable. What?? Yes ... let me explain.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Suppose your mixture of talent is similar to what thousands of managers I've interviewed described in their teams.

If your track record is typical, and only 25% of the people you replace turn out to be high performers, it would be too risky for you to replace disappointing but "adequate" performers. You are very sure they are not as good as the top 10% of talent available, for exactly the same pay, but if your hiring 'batting average' is only 25%, then there is a 50% chance your replacements will be no better than your current "adequate" performers. And, to make things worse, there is a 25% chance your replacements will be worse—low performers.

So it was (and still is) smart for you to give your high performers a lot of support and coaching. And it was (and still is) smart to replace your chronic low performers, the ones that cause the biggest problems and keep you awake at night. And it was (until you learned about Topgrading) smart to retain your "adequate" performers because you were only 25% successful picking high performers and there was a 75% chance that a replacement would be no better than the person you replaced.

Aah ... but this scene changes when you're a Topgrader. When 75% - 90% of the people you hire turn out to be high performers, it's smart and rational to replace not only low performers, but those "adequate" performers. Here's what a Topgrader's team looks like:



Why Commonplace Hiring Methods Are So Poor And How Topgrading Methods Became the Best

Every week, more companies supplement their existing hiring and promoting methods by embracing Topgrading. Why? Because the hiring and promoting practices embraced by most companies are so inadequate, they are demonstrably mediocre at picking high performers. Here are some data points:

- I met with just the #1 human resources executives of Global 100 companies, and they completed a survey showing 80% of the managers they hire turn out to be disappointments. And they said that 75% of the

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

people they promoted turn out to be disappointments. How can Human Resources be respected, with such appalling results?

- McKinsey Quarterly published another article (“Making Talent a Strategic Priority”) in The War for Talent series, showing how the image of HR is mediocre and declining. Line managers say the so-called “best practices” of HR just don’t work, and they complain that HR is not accountable for quality of hires. Worse yet, in the past 10 years the image of HR has declined.
- It’s the best way I know of for HR to become more highly valued in an organization.

Topgrading is the way for Human Resources to earn more respect.

- Two hundred CEOs reported to us that they felt they got their money’s worth from executive search firms only 21% of the time.
- On a conference call the head of HR at a pharmaceuticals company told me they use round-robin competency interviews and achieve “97.5%

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

hiring success.” Skeptical, I asked how the measurement is done, and he said, “The hiring manager is sent an email 30 days after the person is hired, asking, ‘Does the person hired have skills to do the job?’ It’s a yes/no question, with 97.5% responding yes.” Note that the question didn’t ask about sufficient skills or excellent skills to do the job ... just “skills.”

Why not just ask if the person recently hired has a pulse? So I asked, “What percent of managers your company has hired in recent years have turned out to be the high performers you expected—and the only other category is mis-hire?” “Oh,” he said, “probably only 20% turn out to be high performers, and 80% are mis-hires.”

- I was Special Advisor to an American Productivity and Quality Center study in which 19 companies participated as case studies, sponsors, or both. Only one company—a Topgrading company—stood out for both measuring success hiring and promoting people. And that company’s success using Topgrading hiring and promoting: 90% high performers.
- Go to any of the human resources benchmarking company websites, and see if they measure percent of high performers hired or promoted. Bottom line, HR frequently measures hiring costs and time to fill jobs, so they hire the wrong people 75% of the time, but they do it inexpensively and quickly!

What's Wrong with That Picture?

Business today is run on metrics. Everything under the sun is measured ... except what is arguably the single most important factor, quality of people hired and promoted. Companies have embraced TQM, Six Sigma, re-engineering, a zillion financial metrics, Toyota methods, lean manufacturing, dashboards, and Black Belts, but only Topgraders systematically measure quality of those hired/promoted.

Why? I believe poor hiring is so widespread that the business world suffers from widespread self-deception. No one wants to acknowledge that mediocre hiring/promoting is the huge pile of elephant poop that's stinking up results.

Bad hiring is the huge pile of elephant poop that's stinking up business results.

It's like steroid use was (until recently) in many sports: it's widespread and everyone knew it but no one wanted to face it.

Well, maybe it's time to "face it," to confront the reality that hiring practices in most companies are terribly ineffective. Topgraders "face it." They rigorously measure

quality of hire and adopt methods that clearly improve hiring success ... oftentimes achieving 90% high performers hired/promoted.

What Are the “Best Practices” of Leading Companies That Result in Only 25% High Performers Hired & Promoted?

Sadly, what passes for “best practices” often includes these steps:

- A cursory job analysis is created.
- That analysis usually yields a vague job description, which perhaps only identifies six competencies out of dozens that are crucial for success.
- These meager competencies are then investigated through a few (easily faked) round-robin competency (behavioral) interviews, each 50-minutes or less in duration.
- Then, conclusions are “verified” through cursory reference checks that are only marginally useful because most companies don’t allow managers to take reference calls and besides, reference sources are provided by candidates who “salt the mines” with buddies.

If you look at the case studies featured on the websites for some of the companies that sell competency (behavioral)

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

interviewing tools and approaches, too often those case studies simply show that managers are happy with the interview training but give little data about the quality of hires. While some of these case studies suggest there are more “adequate” performers hired than low performers hired, I have yet to see one case study from any company selling competency interviews that credibly shows a significant increase in high performers hired.

**Keep competency interviews but
add the Topgrading Interview for
true “best practice” results!**

In all my books I recommend keeping the job analysis, job description (with some improvements), and even the round-robin competency interviews I’ve criticized (because talented candidates want to talk to more than Topgrading interviewers, and competency questions are better than idle chit chat). However, to improve from 25% high performers hired to 80% or 90% success, add the additional Topgrading steps, including the all-important Topgrading Interview.

Topgrading methods are regarded by many respected leaders to be the best because they:

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

- Require intellectually honest measurement of quality of hires/promotions
- Set the bar high—with the total focus on hiring/promoting people who turn out to be high performers, not just “adequate” performers
- Have proven, again and again, to double and triple hiring success

Note: In Chapter 4 you'll read about case studies in which companies improved from 25% to even 90% high performers hired, and please note: the CEOs of the case studies signed off on the results published, and the names of the companies and CEOs are revealed.

- Solve (as you have read) the three biggest hiring problems—dishonesty, incomplete information and lack of verifiability.

Topgrading ROI

Unlike any other hiring approach, Topgraders produce analyses of ROI. For example, most companies easily conclude that if they avoid even one staggeringly expensive mis-hire, their ROI of their investment in Topgrading is sky high.

Most companies easily conclude that if they avoid even one staggeringly expensive mis-hire, the ROI on their investment in Topgrading is sky high!

If half the managers avoid JUST one mis-hire in the next five years, Topgrading costs will be paid for ... for a hundred years!

Another anecdotal approach to ROI is found in the 40 case studies summarized in Chapter 4. CEOs correlated talent with business results every day, and you can get a good feel for the ROI perspective of CEOs by reading their case studies and why they say that Topgrading has made the company more successful. No hiring approach we're aware of has CEOs making such dramatic statements.

Would you like more data? In the book, *Topgrading for Sales: World-Class Methods to Interview, Hire, and Coach Top Sales Representatives*, which I co-authored with Greg Alexander in 2008, there is a conservative scenario that projects an increase in shareholder value of \$75M (USD) for a \$200M (USD) company.

Here are the base financial assumptions for a company with 400 sales people:

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Pre-Topgrading	
Shares Outstanding	10,0000,000
Share Price	\$22
Earnings Per Share	\$1
P/E Ratio	22
Market Cap	\$220M (USD)

If this company reduced its mis-hire rate from 40% to 20% in just the sales area, their financials could look like this after just one year:

Post-Topgrading	
Shares Outstanding	10,0000,000
Share Price	\$26.40
Earnings Per Share	\$1.2
P/E Ratio	22
Market Cap	\$264M (USD)

Rather amazing data, isn't it? Plus, there are many pages of data provided in that book, which support the data above and led us to this conclusion:

Through the P/E leverage, Topgrading produces a 20% shareholder revenue increase, generating over \$44M in shareholder wealth in the first year, and a total of 34% shareholder return—16% compound annual growth rate—creating \$75M in shareholder wealth, in the first two years of Topgrading deployment.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

As more companies measure quality of hires, the costs of mis-hires, and measure the real business results from improving hiring, the more Topgrading methods stand out.

I hope you appreciate the fact that Topgrading methods are not mysterious, but they are unique in their emphasis on hiring high performers and honestly measuring hiring success.

Chapter 3

Twelve Topgrading Hiring Steps

“Those who build great companies understand that the ultimate throttle on growth for any great company is not markets, or technology, or competition, or products. It is the one thing above all others; the ability to get and keep enough of the right people.”

~ Jim Collins
Author of *Good to Great*

Entire books, articles, and video tapes have been created on the 12 steps in this abbreviated Topgrading manual, but there is enough “meat” here for you to “get it,” and to enable you to immediately hire and promote better performers. You will probably want to do better than just “improve;” you probably want to achieve 90% success. Hey, first things first!

Topgrading Hiring Step #1

Measure Your Current Hiring Success

Historically, we measured nearly everything. Yet, until we embraced the Topgrading philosophy and tools, we never measured how well we hired. Now, it's featured as a core measure of executive success - and we see the results on the bottom-line.

~ Paul Idzik
Former CEO, DTZ

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Everyone knows that in business if something is important it has to be measured ... or the results will never be achieved. But as mentioned above, most companies do not measure success hiring and promoting people. We have created two simple tools to help you with this process. One helps you calculate your current **Percentage of High Performers Hired and Promoted**.

Most companies estimate their teams to consist of 25% - 30% "high" performers, 50% "adequate" (which usually means ... disappointing), and the rest of their teams are ... well, you already know that answer!

The other tool is the **Topgrading Cost of Mis-Hires Calculator**. You can access these calculators and some other cool related tools at:

<http://www.TopgradingCalculators.com>

Using these calculators, in just a few minutes a team can conservatively estimate the costs of a typical mis-hire in any job. Our Cost of Mis-Hires form, used in the Calculators, is by far the most quoted and utilized tool for measuring mis-hire costs. And our decades-long research shows the average costs of mis-hires to be:

- 4 times annual salary for supervisors**
- 6 times annual salary for sales representatives**
- 8 times annual salary for mid-level managers**
- 15 times annual salary for vice presidents**

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

To go into a bit more detail, let's examine a typical sales representative with a \$100,000 base salary. The costs for that job break down like this:

Sales Representative

Hiring Costs	\$23,500
Compensation	\$151,000
Maintenance	\$14,000
Severance	\$25,000
Opportunity Costs	\$250,000
Disruption Costs	\$100,000
	=====
Total	\$563,500

These numbers always produce a rather emotional response, a feeling in the gut that we must improve our success hiring and promoting people.

Topgrading Hiring Step #2

Create A Job Scorecard

Creating scorecards has made a huge difference in hiring and keeping the best people because everyone now knows what A Player performance looks like. In the past, performances were vague. Now we are all on the same page and we are getting A Player performance month in and month out.

~ Travis Isaacson
Senior Director of Organizational Development
Access Development

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Exit interviews show that neither hiring managers nor candidates typically understand enough about the job to avoid confusion and, too often, poor performance. That's because job descriptions (containing responsibilities, budget, competencies) are too vague.

Topgrading companies know that costly mis-hires are avoided when one extra step is taken, and that is to nail down the measurable accountabilities that turn the confusing job description into a very clear job scorecard.

Topgrading Job Scorecard			
Candidate Name			
Title			
Company Name			
Date			
Rating (High Performer, Adequate, Low Performer)			
Recommendations			
Key Accountabilities			
	Accountabilities	Importance (H, M, L)	Rating and Comments
1	Revenue – Exceed annual revenue quota of \$1.0M.	H	
2	Achieve 15% margin.	M	
3	Activities – Maintain an activity level of 7 in-person sales calls per week.	M	
4	Conversion – Build pipeline to quota ratio of 5:1	M	
5	Conversions – Sell each deal with an average selling price at or above company averages.	M	
6	Talent – Consistently rank in the top 20% of industry sales reps in total sales	H	
7	Time – Spend 240 selling days out of the fiscal year's 260 in the field with prospects.	M	

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

A proper Job Scorecard spells out everything that must be accomplished: “Achieve these measurable accountabilities and you are an A Player.”

Topgrading Job Scorecards include templates for something unique—color-coded competencies. Below, we’re only showing 3 of the 50 competencies we feel are critical in determining a candidate’s fitness for a management position.

Note: If your copy of this book is not printed in color, the competencies shown below in white are ones that Topgrading professionals agree can be developed, the very dark ones are almost impossible to change, and those in gray are somewhere in-between ... harder, but doable.

COMPETENCIES (GREEN = RELATIVELY EASY TO CHANGE, YELLOW = HARDER TO CHANGE BUT DOABLE, RED = VERY DIFFICULT TO CHANGE)	DEFINITION	MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE RATING (5 = Excellent, 4 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 2 = Only Fair, 1 = Poor, N/A)	TANDEM INTERVIEWERS' RATING
INTELLECTUAL			
Judgment/Decision Making	Consistent logic, rationality & objectivity in decision making. Neither indecisive nor hip-shooter.		
Education	Meets formal & informal educational requirements. Exhibits continuous learning.		
PERSONAL			
Integrity	Iron clad. Does not ethically cut corners. Earns trust of co-workers. Puts organization above self interests.		

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Note that the Job Scorecard has spaces to enter the Minimum Acceptable Rating as well as a space to record Final Ratings, after all the interviews and reference checks are completed.

Topgrading Hiring Step #3

Recruit From Networks

Recruiting has become a way of life for us through Topgrading. Once we began to implement a “Recruit from Networks” program, hiring has been quicker and more accurate. We have learned that A Players recommend other A Players, and we’ve built a good network of potential candidates. We find that this is a key to our hiring strategy.

~ Frank Evans, CEO
Triton Management

“Floss daily.” “Diversify your investments.” And to recruit, call on your network of (a) high performers you know, and (b) “connectors,” who know a lot of high performers. All are obvious truths.

Every manager knows recruiting from Networks is much better than hiring recruiters or running ads, because it’s faster (email them today, talk with high performers within days), cheaper (no recruiter fees), and better (candidates are pre-screened high performers).

Topgraders are using social media and email lists to recruit, because it works. Staying in touch with 100 high performers is time consuming, and social media can save you time.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

For example, if you have a social media group for recruiting sales reps, and it includes top sales reps you've worked with and heard about, plus sales managers who know high performing sales reps, you can stay in touch by simultaneously sending all of them an interesting article on new technology that helps sales reps (or whatever) and calling them a couple of times each year.

In *Topgrading: 3rd Edition* companies share creative ways to motivate people to recruit from networks, and it's not just with money. Team competition and earning Best Company Awards get results, too.

Topgrading Hiring Step #4

Screen Candidates With the Topgrading Career History Form and Topgrading Snapshot

Resumes are too often vague and include a lot of fluff, so it is difficult to differentiate between A Player candidates and Non-As. The Topgrading Career History Form gets a lot of important information that isn't in a resume, so at K&N we don't waste time with candidates who will not be a good fit for our company. And I love the Topgrading Snapshot because it summarizes the Career History Form information in a picture, enabling us to screen candidates in—or out—in seconds.

~ Danielle Robinson, Topgrading Director
K&N Management

Every book on how to get a job teaches C Players how to write an A Player resume. Every HR professional knows how exasperating it is to spend hours in interviews and

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

finally realize that the candidate's resume was full of hype, and omitted many negative facts.

Topgrading Career History Form

The Topgrading Career History Form gets the best candidates in the door for interviews. The form you see below looks like an application form, and companies that license these copyrighted tools usually convert it into their company application form. It is a powerful pre-screening tool because it contains:

- The “truth serum” you’ve learned about—a statement that just before a job offer the candidate must arrange personal reference calls with former bosses, peers, and subordinates. C Player candidates drop out. Good! A Players are eager to arrange those calls.
- Requests for information about all jobs: full job dates (so short jobs can’t be hidden), full compensation history, estimated boss ratings of overall performance, estimated boss ratings of key competencies, true reasons for leaving employers, likes and dislikes of jobs ... and much more.

The following page shows a screen shot of the online version of the Topgrading Career History Form:

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

John Doe - Job History

Candidate Overview Contact Information Job History Military & Education Qualifications & Goals Review & Submit Snapshot & Interview Guides

[+ ADD A NEW JOB](#)

Business Experience: Ryan Publishing (President & CEO) | Religious Health Assoc. (SVP) | Major Books (SVP, Marketing) | Books, Etc (VP Bus Dev) | Religious Publishing USA (President) | Publisher (Director of Marketing) | AAA Publishing (VP Marketing) | Huge Educational Publisher (Director of Private/Parochial)



Do not combine jobs—fill out a complete section of this form for every job where job title changed (every full time job you have held in your career, and every part time job you have held in the last 6 years).

Jobs may be entered in any order.

Ryan Publishing, President & CEO

Current (or most Recent) Employer

* = Required Field

Company Name:

Address:

City:

Country:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone:

Type Of Business:

Position Title:

Start Date: Still employed in this position
We will not contact any current employer without your expressed permission

End Date:

Staff: Number of Direct Reports:

Total Staff Reporting to You:

COMPENSATION

Salary Starting: USD (\$) Hourly Weekly Monthly Annually
Base:
Bonus:
Other:

Salary Final: USD (\$) Hourly Weekly Monthly Annually
Base:
Bonus:
Other:

The Topgrading Snapshot

"Brad ... I don't just "like" the new Topgrading Snapshot. I LOVE it! It's clean, clear, simple to understand, and provides a wealth of information that is "at your fingertips." Short of your book and the Topgrading Interview Guide, I believe the Topgrading Snapshot is the best Topgrading tool yet."

~ Dr. Ray Bowman, VP Team Development
MarineMax

The Topgrading Snapshot corrects three hiring realities: 1) weak candidates fudge the truth, 2) excessive time is consumed sorting through resumes, and 3) mostly weak candidates are interviewed.

As you know, resumes are incomplete and too often are deceptive, so you waste a lot of time studying zillions of resumes, trying to figure out which are truthful and wishing they contained more of the information you want. C Players are good at fudging the truth, so you end up interviewing way too many candidates and hiring way too many mediocre performers.

How The Topgrading Snapshot Works

It can be deployed in several different ways—all of which work well, but here are two common approaches:

- **Option A:** Prospective candidates often respond to an opening in your company or to an advertisement for a position by emailing (or mailing) their resume

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

for consideration. When that email or paper resume has been received, you simply use the Topgrading Snapshot's built-in emailing system to send them a pre-formatted invitation email containing a link to fill out what looks much like a standard application form, but is actually the Topgrading Career History Form.

This link will take your prospective candidates either to an optional pixel-perfect clone of your current website that is designed specifically to host your organization's version of the Topgrading Snapshot, or to the Topgrading Snapshot website—both of which function identically.

- **Option B:** On your organization's website, you can provide a link for prospective candidates to use (usually in the "Careers" section of your website) that allows any candidate to "self-start" the Topgrading Snapshot process without requiring you to send them an email in advance. Using this approach, the Topgrading Snapshot's built-in Career History Form becomes your organization's application form and any prospective candidate may use it.
- **Other Options:** There are several other methods you can use to deploy the Topgrading Snapshot to fit your organization's needs and circumstances. We'll be happy to discuss a "best-fit" approach tailored specifically for your requirements.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Regardless of the deployment method that you use, your applicants will be completing the Topgrading Career History Form, which turbo-boasts the screening process and gives you the best possible information about prospective members of your team, allowing you to make far better hiring decisions. Remember—the Topgrading Career History Form/Topgrading Snapshot system asks for full compensation histories, boss ratings, true reasons for leaving jobs, likes and dislikes in jobs, a self-appraisal, and many more revealing questions, and you read truthful information because the Topgrading truth serum is so powerful.

How the Topgrading Snapshot “Works”

Suppose you ran an ad for an opening and you received 300 resumes. The Topgrading Snapshot’s automated emailing system will send the 300 “thank you” notes, asking candidates to apply by filling out the Topgrading Career History Form (typically converted to the company application form).

The truth serum (“you’ll have to arrange calls with bosses”) scares away 80 C Players, and 240 others complete the Topgrading Career History Form. As soon as a candidate pushes the Submit button, you receive both the completed multi-page Topgrading Career History Form and the Topgrading Snapshot.

A staffing person in HR, with a little experience, can zoom through all 240 candidates in an hour—NOT by reading 240

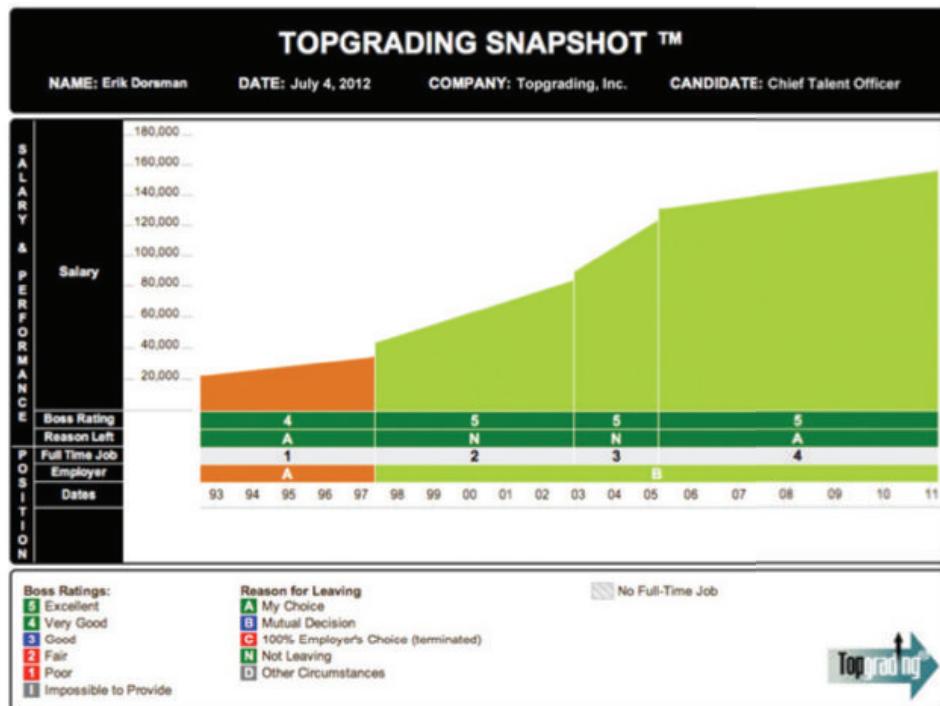
Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Career History Forms that are each 9 or more pages long, but by quickly screening out job hoppers, people whose comp is way too high or too low ... and people with poor boss ratings and people who were fired from jobs. If you determine a candidate is worth further exploration, **then** it's worth your time to read the full Topgrading Career History Form.

Let's look at two "real" Topgrading Snapshots, with names changed, to see how just the most important information you need is shown.

First, let's look at a likely A Player—we call him Erik Dorsman. Then we'll look at a likely C Player—we call him John Doe. Both are actually real people, with names and company info changed.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires



Employers and Positions:	Dates	Salary	Boss Rating
A South Bend Community School 1 Teacher	Aug 1992 - Jun 1997	22,000/yr - 35,000/yr	4
B Educational Management Int'l 2 Director Information Technology 3 VP Information Technology 4 VP People Development	Jun 1997 - Dec 2002 Dec 2002 - Apr 2005 May 2005 - Mar 2011	44,000/yr - 84,800/yr 90,000/yr - 124,000/yr 131,000/yr - 156,000/yr	5 5 5

Note in the Dorsman Topgrading Snapshot that the years go across the bottom and show that he was with the same employer from 1997 until 2011. This shows solid longevity—Erik is certainly not a job-hopper!

Compensation is on the vertical axis, and shows Erik's compensation moving higher across his career, starting at

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

about \$38,000 and increasing to about \$250,000. He has steadily earned more and more money—one mark of a high performer. We can see from his current compensation whether Erik is in about the right compensation range for the job being filled. If he was way too high or too low, he might be an A Player, but just not a good candidate for this job.

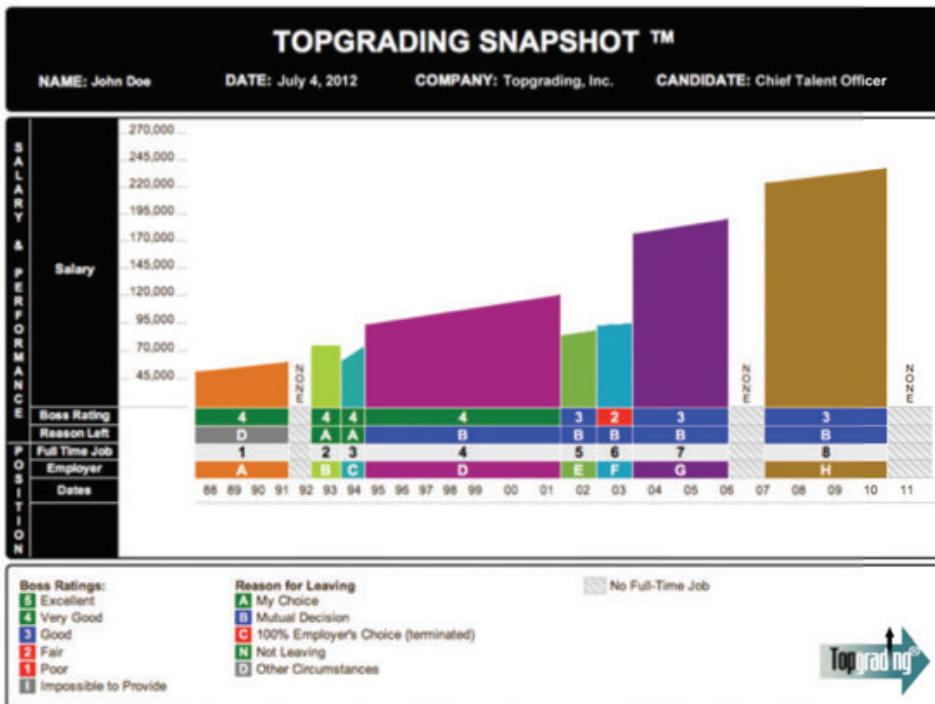
The Topgrading Snapshot also shows you the reasons for leaving an employer. Erik's chart indicates that he has left two employers, and both are shown as an A—100% his choice. This is, of course, another mark of a high performer and he also left two jobs with the same employer because he was promoted—another good sign!

The Topgrading Career History Form requests boss ratings and Erik says that his first boss, the school principal, would give him a “Very Good” overall performance rating, and that all the bosses since 1997 would give him an Excellent rating.

For years Topgrading companies have known that the truth serum, informing candidates that they will be asked to arrange personal reference calls with bosses and others just before a job offer, works! The best candidates would tell the truth anyway, but the truth serum motivates others to be more honest than they might otherwise be, or better yet, withdraw as a candidate!

Now let's look at a very different Topgrading Snapshot, John Doe's.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires



Employers and Positions:	Dates	Salary	Boss Rating
A Huge Educational Publisher 1 Director of Private/Parochial	Jun 1987 - May 1991	35,000/yr - 45,000/yr	4
B AAA Publishing 2 VP Marketing	May 1992 - Jul 1993	60,000/yr - 60,000/yr	4
C Publisher 3 Director of Marketing	Aug 1993 - Jul 1994	45,000/yr - 60,000/yr	4
D Religious Publishing USA 4 President	Jul 1994 - Jun 2001	80,000/yr - 110,000/yr	4
E Books, Etc 5 VP Bus Dev	Jun 2001 - Jun 2002	70,000/yr - 75,000/yr	3
F Major Books 6 SVP Marketing	Jun 2002 - Jun 2003	80,000/yr - 82,000/yr	2
G Religious Health Assoc. 7 SVP	Jun 2003 - Feb 2006	170,000/yr - 185,000/yr	3
H Ryan Publishing 8 President & CEO	Mar 2007 - Jul 2010	220,000/yr - 235,000/yr	3

At a glance, you can see that John Doe is quite a job hopper, looking to join his 6th employer in a decade. You

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

can also see that he thinks his bosses would give him low overall performance ratings and there are too many questionable reasons for leaving. In contrast to Erik Dorsman, John Doe would probably not be a good fit for a company seeking A Players.

With no more training than having studied these two Snapshots, you could cut 50 Snapshots down to 5 people of interest in 15 or 20 minutes, and do so with honest, more complete, and verifiable information than you've had in the past.

You'll save hours and hours of studying resumes and application forms, and prescreening candidates on the phone. Not only do you save a lot of time, but more importantly, you will invite only the very best candidates in for interviews. By screening out C Players and attracting A Players, you will definitely hire more high performers.

Topgrading Hiring Step #5

Conduct A Telephone Screening Interview

The Telephone Screening Interview, incorporating the Career History Form information, keeps the interviewer on point and produces valuable applicant insights. It eliminates most weak candidates, so when we meet in person, it's with only the best candidates.

~ John Dickey, Senior Vice President
Corporate Support Services
Hill-Rom

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Companies vary widely in this step, but the common interest is this: When you invite candidates in for interviews, and those candidates wash out, you've wasted a lot of money and time. The Topgrading Career History Form and the Topgrading Snapshot it produces (Step #4) are powerful pre-screening tools that save a lot of time. The next step is to talk with candidates, and typically it's on the phone.



The Telephone Screening Interview Guide suggests explaining the job in more detail, and if the candidate is still interested, take 45 minutes to ask about the most recent 2 jobs (successes, failures, key decisions, key relationships, estimated ratings by bosses), reasons for job changes, goals, and some competency questions. It's a short, mini version of the Topgrading Interview, but "enough" to effectively screen candidates.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

This phone interview moves quickly since the completed Topgrading Career History Form and Topgrading Snapshot are at hand. For technical jobs, there sometimes is a series of technical questions or even a separate phone screen interview.

The combination of Steps #4 and #5 results in almost every candidate who subsequently comes in for interviews is Very Good or Excellent.

Topgrading Hiring Step #6

Conduct A Series of Competency Interviews

Although the one-hour competency or behavioral interviews are not nearly as good as the tandem Topgrading Interview in giving us insights into candidates, we include several Competency Interviews because candidates want to talk to more people than just the tandem Topgrading interviewers. Also, in those Competency Interviews, the candidates get plenty of time to ask the interviewers tough questions about what it's like working here.

- Ann Smith, Regional Sales Director
Large Pharmaceutical Sales Company

Note: This is a fictitious name of both manager and company because this company requested anonymity so as to not alert competitors to the value of Topgrading.

Most companies, including most Global 100 companies, rely mostly on competency (behavioral) interviews to screen candidates and the result is only 25% high performers hired or promoted. Topgraders know that Step #7, the Topgrading Interview, produces 1000% more valid insights into candidates than competency interviews.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

More than 100 current books on job hunting advise candidates, including C Player candidates, how to fake competency interviews. It's easy.

For example, any managerial job requires teamwork, so they say, "*Think of a time you were a great team player and practice exaggerating your teamwork skills. You'll also probably be asked about a time you were not such a good team player. So think of a time, or make one up and say it occurred long ago, and explain that you were actually pretty good even back then and since then you've become great ... wink-wink.*"

Even some outplacement counselors provide the same sort of "wink-wink" fabrication advice to conceal negatives and hype positives.

So, why conduct competency interviews? There are some very solid reasons:

- Doing five 50-minute interviews focused on one or two key competencies in each interview will usually produce some useful insights.
- Also, as Ann Smith points out in the quote above, these competency interviews also give A Player candidates the opportunity to meet more people and ask more questions.

Topgrading Hiring Step #7

Conduct The Topgrading Interview

The Tandem Topgrading Interview, using the Topgrading Interview Guide, has become critical to our staffing process. It is set up in a logical and systematic way, and permits the interviewers to hear a thorough review of all the previous jobs that got the person to where they are today - the events, motivations, accomplishments, and failures. It's really opened our eyes to important things that we otherwise would have missed.

~ Rick Steinberg
Vice President of Human Resources
Columbus McKinnon

This is the “silver bullet” of hiring. Every manager we know of achieving 90% hiring or promoting success, conducts the Topgrading Interview, using the Topgrading Interview Guide.



Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

The Topgrading Interview is a chronological interview, starting with the educational years, coming forward to the present, covering every job, and concluding with the usual sections on Self-Appraisal and Plans and Goals for the Future.

It asks 16 questions about every job, including successes, failures, key decisions, key relationships, boss ratings, and reasons for leaving. The Topgrading Interview Guide is 30 pages long, but is not as onerous as that sounds.

When candidates click Submit to send you their Topgrading Career History Form, it becomes possible for you to click to get the Topgrading Interview Guide pre-populated with 100% of the Career History Form information.

Just read (to yourself) what the candidate filled out about a job, read and ask the built-in questions, take notes on the responses, ask follow up questions, and turn forward to the next page until you've completed the interview.

It's not only super easy, but more importantly, using the Topgrading Interview Guide makes absolutely certain that you are conducting the most thorough interview possible using the tested and proven Topgrading questions.

On the next page is a sample of just a few of the many in-depth questions that the Topgrading Interview Guide provides about each job:

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

JOB #3

EMPLOYER & POSITION

Company:	<u>Educational Management Int'l.</u>	Type of Business:	<u>Educational Management</u>
Title:	<u>VP Information Technology</u>	Address:	<u>444 Main St. Bingham, Ohio 23456</u>
Start/End Dates:	<u>December 2002 - April 2005</u>	Phone:	<u>666-666-6666</u>
		Staff: Number of Direct Reports:	<u>4</u>
		Total Staff Reporting to You:	<u>18</u>

Can you tell me about the company's revenues, products, services, and number of employees?

SALARY

Starting Salary:	<u>\$80,000 (Annually)</u>	Ending Salary:	<u>\$124,000 (Annually)</u>
Base:	<u>72000</u>	Base:	<u>100000</u>
Bonus:	<u>18000</u>	Bonus:	<u>24000</u>

Was your employment at this company full-time or part-time? Full Time.

RESPONSIBILITIES & PERFORMANCE

What were your expectations for the job? _____

What were your responsibilities and accountabilities? _____

*What did you find when you arrived? What shape was the job in (talent, resources, performance problems)?
What major challenges did you face?* _____

What results were achieved in terms of successes and accomplishments? How were they achieved? (As time permits, get specifics, such as individual vs. shared accomplishments, barriers overcome, bottom line results, and impact on career-bonus, promotability, performance review.)

We all make mistakes - what would you say were mistakes or failures experienced in this job? If you could wind the clock back, what would you do differently? (As time permits, get specifics.)

All jobs seem to have their pluses and minuses; what were the most enjoyable or rewarding aspects of this job? _____

Topgrading Interview Guide© Page 11 of 22

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Would you like to test an easier, simpler version just to try out a Topgrading Interview? New Topgrading interviewers should get a little practice using a simpler “Starter Version” of the interview guide a couple of times. After trying this abbreviated approach, you should watch our FREE online video training on the use of the full interview guide (visit www.Topgrading.com, click on Getting Started, and then click on the video). Here is a portion of a “Starter Version” Topgrading Interview Guide:

Work History

Start with your first full-time job and come forward to your present job. For each job, please tell us:

1. Why you took the job;
2. About your successes and accomplishments (and how you achieved them);
3. About your mistakes and failures;
4. What you liked most and least about the job;
5. (If for a management job) How many A, B, and C Player direct reports you had when you entered the job and at its end; and what happened to change the talent mix—hiring, firing, coaching, etc.;
6. The name of your supervisor, and that supervisor's strengths and weaker points;
7. Whether (or not) you agree to arrange reference calls for us, keeping in mind that in order to receive a job offer, we may ask you to arrange reference calls with supervisors you've had in the past 10 years;

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

8. Your best guess as to what that supervisor would say were your strengths, weaker points, and overall performance;
9. The reason(s) you left that job.

You are probably thinking, “But it’s too time consuming for two interviewers to take three hours for a chronological interview.”

Let’s run some numbers. Suppose you calculate a mis-hire costs \$400,000 and you and others waste a total of 300 hours on each mis-hire. And suppose you mis-hire three sales reps, and fire all three, before hiring a good one. After all, your hiring success is average—one success in four. Your results are typical for sales managers. You waste \$1.2 million plus 900 hours with your three mis-hires. Six hours for a tandem interview with 90% success would, according to your own calculations, save \$1.2 million and about 900 hours.

Solo Topgrading Interviews can achieve 50% success, but a Tandem Topgrading Interview can achieve 85%+ success.

The sentence that makes absolutely zero sense is, “I don’t have time for a three-hour tandem interview that will at

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

least triple my chances of hiring a high performer ... but I can afford to waste \$1.2 million and over 900 hours.” Here’s how to make the Topgrading Interview even easier and be sure to improve your hiring result. Conduct a *Tandem* Topgrading Interview, meaning this: have an interviewing partner, an A Player, and the two of you make up a “tag team” in which you smoothly cover for each other. Many companies doubled their hiring success from 25% to 50% with the solo Topgrading Interview, but you’ll read all the case studies in which they achieved 85%+ with ... you guessed it ... Tandem Topgrading Interviews.

Topgrading Hiring Step #8

Interviewers Receive Feedback and Coaching

About 250 of our managers have given each other constructive suggestions for improving their interviewing technique, using the Topgrading Interviewer Feedback Form. We can all benefit from just a couple of minutes of feedback from another interviewer, and doing this after the tandem Topgrading Interview makes a lot of sense.

– Kevin Silva
Former Senior VP of Global Human Resources
Argo

In almost every study, perhaps including surveys you’ve conducted in your company, new hires say their interviewers were not very good at ... um ... interviewing. Most managers attend one 1-day interviewing workshop in their career, and that’s it—they never receive further training or coaching. When they interview, they talk too

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

much, “lead the witness,” fail to take notes, forget to use the candidate’s name and ... you get it.

Managers in Topgrading companies attend Topgrading workshops, but a key to continued improvement is Step #8—immediately following the Tandem Topgrading Interview, the interviewers take just five minutes and give each other feedback, using a checklist of 40 interviewing techniques they learned in the workshop. Basically they tell each other, “Of the 40 interviewing techniques, you were particularly good at these (five), and you could improve at these (three).” Over time the interviewers get better and better. After conducting over 6,500 in-depth, chronological interviews I still mess up; people sit in on my interviews and then give me feedback and I always could have done better.

Fortunately, the Tandem Topgrading Interview is amazingly robust. Both interviewers can make mistakes, but they cover for each other and in the end, rapport is very high, and the interviewers get terrific insights into the candidate.

Topgrading Hiring Step #9

Write A Draft Executive Summary

Hill-Rom views the Executive Summary as one of the most critical aspects of the selection process. The Executive Summary is a great tool for helping the interviewer to recognize a candidate's work history and behavioral themes.

-John Dickey
Senior VP, Corporate Support Services
Hill-Rom

This is another “common-sense” hiring step—it’s the rigor of systematically analyzing all the available hiring data and writing a draft executive summary.

Don’t bet on changing a candidate’s innate behavior, even if the candidate “promises” to do better. Topgraders routinely scrutinize 50 competencies and experience shows that some can be changed, some can’t and others are in-between. Only assume that a candidate may be able to overcome weaker points when the Topgrading Interview shows a consistent pattern of overcoming weaker points.

The chart below shows some examples of competencies and the ease or difficulty in changing them.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Ease of Changing Competencies

Relatively Easy to Change	Harder, but Doable	Very Difficult to Change
Risk Taking	Judgment/Decision Making	Intelligence
Leading Edge	Strategic Skills	Analysis Skills
Education	Pragmatism	Conceptual Ability
Experience	Track Record	Creativity
Organization/Planning	Resourcefulness/Initiative	Integrity
Self-Awareness/Feedback	Excellence	Assertiveness
First Impression	Independence	Vision
Customer Focus	Stress Management	Inspiring Followership
Team Player	Adaptability	Energy/Drive
Communications - Oral	Likability	Enthusiasm/Passion
Communications - Written	Listening	Ambition
Political Savvy	Negotiation Skills	Tenacity
Selecting A Players	Persuasion	
Training/Development/Coaching	Team Builder	
Goal Setting	Change Leadership	
Empowerment	Conflict Management	
Performance Management	Compatibility of Needs	
Redeploying B/C Players	Balance in Life	
Diversity		
Running Meetings		

Topgrading Hiring Step #10

Ask Candidate To Arrange Reference Calls

Having the candidate set up the reference calls after completing the Tandem Topgrading Interview has been eye-opening. Candidates know up front that they will be arranging these calls and they tend to be open and honest during the interview process because of it. We have not had any big surprises in any of the reference calls we have done.

- Larry Sheftel
Director of Human Resources
MDI Group

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Three decades ago I was devoting all my professional time to finding the very best practices in hiring and someone said, “Ask candidates to arrange the reference calls.” I doubted that would work, since most companies prohibit their managers from accepting reference calls.



But it does work. High performers are delighted to ask former bosses and others to accept “personal” (not business) reference calls from a prospective employer. And 90% of former bosses accept the calls, knowing there is zero chance their former A Player would sue them if they didn’t get the job.

Note that there are more than two dozen Topgrading

professionals, and not one of us has heard of even one legal or ethical incident arising from Step #10. (That goes for all of the Topgrading steps, by the way.)

So, for a mid-manager candidate, the Tandem Topgrading interviewers might ask the candidate to arrange personal reference calls with three former bosses, two former peers, and three former subordinates. The candidate does all the work (not HR recruiters!), and within two days the candidate emails the interviewers, “Yes, they will all be happy to talk, and here are their mobile numbers and availability.”

Topgrading Hiring Step #11

Coach Your New Hire

Our managers now begin coaching new employees from day one. The new employees create an Individual Development Plan within 45 days of starting with us. Doing so helps them hit the ground running and adds value right out of the gates. Managers spend less time dealing with issues and more time helping them achieve and exceed goals. New employees love it and we love it.

~ Travis Isaacson
Senior Director of Organizational Development
Access Development

Coaching a new hire is perhaps the most powerful and the easiest coaching a manager will do. With a huge amount of information about a newly hired A Player, what a shame it would be to wait for a routine annual performance appraisal to begin the coaching process.

With Topgrading, candidates are promised coaching within a couple of weeks for three purposes:

1. Onboarding
2. Turbo-boost immediate performance
3. Development for future positions.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires



The Tandem Topgrading interviewers simply meet with the new hire, and review their Executive Summary, and they already know that their A Player has good self-awareness, recognizes strengths and areas for improvement, and probably already has a history of following through on Individual Development Plans.

The Tandem Topgrading interviewers have done their “heavy lifting,” so the new hire is the one to absorb the feedback, ask questions, and carve out an Individual Development Plan that addresses the three purposes.

This is easy ... and this is fun! With high levels of trust and mutual respect, and with a new hire eager to perform well, this coaching session is typically light-hearted, purposeful, and very productive.

Topgrading Hiring Step #12

Measure Hiring Success Annually

As CEO, I believe annual measurements of our success in hiring and promoting people is essential. Several years ago, we had some hiccups in our hiring process in a couple of plants; we had too many mis-hires. In our analysis, we learned that most of our mis-hires were caused by skipping steps in the Topgrading process. We learned some important lessons and since that time we require full Topgrading process adherence to avoid similar misses.

~ Curtis Clawson
Former President, CEO, and Chairman
Hayes Lemmerz
(recently retired since acquisition by Maxion in 2012)

Many new Topgraders tend to think of this step as so far in the future that they don't need to think of it. But CEOs easily connect this step to Step #1—Measuring the percentage of high performers hired (and promoted), and the costs of mis-hires.

The purpose of it is major: It keeps the whole team focused on what is important—the quality of talent hired and promoted. Without annual measurements fed back to the organization, Topgrading will be “just another program, a flavor of the month.” Every successful Topgrading company integrates talent strategy with company strategy. Topgrading drives superior talent, and that high-performing mindset becomes integral to the company culture, “part of our DNA,” as is commonly stated.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

How do you conduct those annual measurements? It can be simple or more complicated, but 1) estimate costs of every mis-hire, using the Topgrading Cost of Mis-Hire Form (Step #1), and 2) fill in the Topgrading success chart:

Topgrading Methods		
	Used	Not Fully Used
A Player Hired		
Non-A Player Hired		

Showing this chart to managers once per year will reinforce Topgraders (“I’m doing it right!”) and inspire laggards to embrace Topgrading.

Topgrading Sounds Great But 12 Steps Sounds Complicated!

Good point! If a CEO drives Topgrading, then everyone participates in 2-day Topgrading Workshops and HR coordinates all the individual steps. But for small companies and individual managers, if you’d like to get started by doing only the essentials, please go back to Chapter 1 (Begin Topgrading Today), page 13.

Chapter 4

40 Topgrading Case Studies

“Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself, but talent instantly recognizes talent.”

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

In the 3rd Edition of *Topgrading*, 40 case studies demonstrate the success that all sizes of organizations are experiencing in hiring not just “ok” performers, but true high performers in positions ranging from entry level jobs to CEO.

On the following two pages, you will see a listing of all of the great companies whose case studies are featured in the book:

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Master Chart Of Topgrading Case Studies

Page 1 of 2

Organization Name	Pre-Topgrading	With Topgrading
Access Development	33%	94% (total company)
American Heart Association (2005)	25%	95% (upper management)
Argo	51%	96% (Assist. VP and above)
Azura	77%	75% (total company)
Batesville Casket	60%	80% (total company)
Benco Dental	27%	60% (management)
Carestream Health Est.	30%	74% (total IT department)
Columbus McKinnon	77%	85% (exempt jobs, globally)
Conwin	33%	92% (non-entry jobs)
Dentek	10% 0%	92% (staff) 100% (management)
DPT	17% 20%	75% (hired, total company) 80% (promoted, total company)
Education, Inc.	12% 27%	78% (Teachers) 89% (Corporate Staff)
EMC (2005 case study)	27%	95% (sales reps)
General Electric	77%	More than 80% (high potential managers)
ghSMART	Startup	100%
GSI Est.	22%	90% (executives)
Hayes Lemmerz	77%	85% (managers promoted, globally) 74% (managers hired, globally)
Hillenbrand (2005 case study)	Low	81% (management)
Home Instead (franchise)	25%	88% (caregivers)

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Master Chart Of Topgrading Case Studies

Page 2 of 2

Organization Name	Pre-Topgrading	With Topgrading
JT Foxx Organization	2%	80% (total company)
K&N Management	21%	86% (total company)
Labsphere	30%	70% (total company)
Los Ninos	50%	85% (total company)
MarineMax (total company)	30%	95% (dealership general managers) 100% (region managers)
Mint.com	Startup	90%
Netsurit	9%	75% (promotions, management)
Educational Company (fictitious name)	19%	87% (school deans)
Nurse Next Door	??%	85% (corporate and caregiver)
OnyxMD	10%	90% (total company)
PharmaSales (fictitious name)	33%	75% (sales reps)
ProService Hawaii	45%	91% (total company)
Red Door Interactive (total)	20%	90% (total company)
Ron Santa Teresa	25%	74% (total company)
Roundy's	20% ??%	80% (store directors) 100% (senior management)
Sigma Marketing	45%	90% (total company)
Southern Tide	15%	67% (total company)
Synergia One	57%	83% (total company)
Tekmore (new name - 2005)	??%	95% (managers hired/promoted)
Triton	2%	80% (total staff)
Virtual Technology (2005 case study)	??%	98% (total company)

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

In the 3rd Edition of Topgrading there are 40 half-page case studies and eight full length ones. You can also visit:

<http://www.topgradingcasestudies.com>

and read the long versions for all of the case studies that are available. This bit of online innovation:

- Saved a lot of trees (the book is 300 pages shorter than if the long case studies were in the book)
- Gives you the details of HOW spectacular results are achieved, enabling you to emulate an approach, perhaps without even talking with the company
- Provides hundreds of examples of advice and wisdom from CEOs and heads of HR
- Assures a perpetually updated set of case studies. This website will be constantly updated. In 2022, if a reader of the book is intrigued with a case study, they can go to the URL and get the recently updated case study ... as long as the company updated it and it was approved.

Conclusion

The 12 Topgrading Steps will help you hire and promote better performers within your teams, and they will make your career soar, and (depending on the size of your company) your shareholders and/or your family and your entire organization will be very pleased.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

This small book began with a typical hiring scenario. Let's revisit it, but show how Topgrading transforms "typical" to a much more effective process, with much better results:

Pre-Topgrading Hiring	Post-Topgrading Hiring
Recruiters don't send good enough candidates.	Your Virtual Bench produces many excellent, prescreened candidates.
The resumes of candidates are usually incomplete and packed with hype.	The Career History Form adds the facts you need to efficiently and effectively pre-screen candidates.
Your interviews are not very revealing.	The tandem Topgrading Interviews, using the Topgrading Interview Guide, are extremely revealing.
Reference checks are generally worthless.	Candidate-arranged reference calls are revealing and motivate the candidate to be honest in the interview.
Too often the person hired disappoints you. Your results are: only 25% High Performers Hired	Your results, after deploying Topgrading are: 90% High Performers Hired

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

Of all talent management practices, the single most important, by far, is hiring and promoting high performers. Companies consider themselves “Topgraders” when they have 75% - 90% high performers and they report that the other parts of talent management become relatively easy:

- Reducing turnover is a breeze when Topgrading assures a close-to-perfect job fit.
- Coaching high performers is fun; coaching underperformers is a pain.
- Succession planning is easy with a solid “bench.”

When entire companies soar in revenues and profits, growth opportunities open up, people earn more money, and—as an added huge bonus—Topgraders have such strong teams they can delegate a lot of tasks and enjoy a significantly better balance in their lives!

Good Luck On Your Journey!

Topgrading Resources

Tools To Get You and Your Organization Started Topgrading Today

All of the following resources can be found on our website which is located at:

<http://www.Topgrading.com>



Note: This unusual graphic above is a QR (Quick Response) code that allows you to use one of the many scanning applications on your Smartphone or other mobile device to instantly scan this image and open the web address it references on your mobile device's web browser.

How to Get Started

1. Sign up for (free) Topgrading Tips on the Home Page. This free newsletter, sent bi-weekly via email, helps you implement Topgrading successfully. If you downloaded this eBook, you're already automatically signed up to receive Topgrading Tips.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

2. Read the latest discussions of Topgrading from media all over the world and recently published articles mentioning Topgrading in our Press & Articles area, located at:

<http://www.topgrading.com/press>



3. Begin Topgrading today! Follow these steps as your Topgrading skills increase:
 - a) Implement the five key “Getting Started” recommendations described in Chapter One of this book.
 - b) Try out our breakthrough online tool, the Topgrading Snapshot which combines the Career History Form, the Topgrading Interview Guide and the one-page color graphic Topgrading Snapshot (and other tools) via the FREE TRIAL on our website at:

<http://www.topgradingsnapshot.com>

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

c) After your free trial, if you're ready to move ahead with deploying Topgrading in your organization, we'll be happy to discuss your licensing and branding options and we'll be monitoring your process to make sure we are there to help and answer any questions you may have.

However, if you'd like to do a more extended trial using all of our tools on an unlimited basis for all jobs for two full months, we have a special "Topgrading Corporate Starter Kit". You can learn more about this option at:

<http://www.Topgrading.com/startertkit>

By following this simple 1-2-3 process above, you'll quickly see for yourself how to avoid expensive mis-hires and how Topgrading can dramatically improve your organization.

More Advanced Topgrading Resources

Visit the Topgrading Marketplace on our website at:

<http://www.Topgrading.com/marketplace>

In the marketplace, you can learn about such things as:

1. **Our Two-Day Topgrading Workshops**—In addition to thoroughly learning and practicing the basics, you'll get the latest insights and case studies.

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

You'll get all your questions answered and become capable of truly leading your organization to Topgrading success.

2. **The 7-Hour Topgrading Toolkit**—This toolkit features DVD versions of the Topgrading Workshop and is designed to train managers in Topgrading. The toolkit includes the 3rd Edition of Topgrading and other books, workbooks, audios of the DVD, and quarterly conference calls with me.
3. **Second Opinions (and other services)**—Our team of Topgrading Professionals is always available to conduct “second opinion” interviews for finalists for senior executive positions. If your organization is making a change in the “C Suite” positions, you should consider having us conduct final interviews to further assure your organization that you have selected the right person for a position of leadership.
4. **Speeches**—Our team of Topgrading Professionals, including Brad Smart and others, are available to make speeches (keynotes, organizational kickoffs, etc.) for your company, organization, association, or elsewhere.
5. Use the (free) Topgrading Calculators at:

www.TopgradingCalculators.com

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

These calculators are designed to help you calculate the real costs of mis-hiring in your organization. Use them with your company's cost data and the numbers will absolutely stun you.



Get Your Questions Answered

1. Email questions to Brad.Smart@Topgrading.com and we'll get back to you promptly.
2. Call 847-244-5544 and we'll be happy to talk in person.

Thank you for your interest in Topgrading and for reading this short book. I hope it helps you improve talent in your organization!

Sincerely,

Brad Smart

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

MORE TOPGRADING TESTIMONIALS

"If you read it with the right kind of attention, Topgrading is the most important book ever written."

~ Pasquale Scopelliti
Recruiter Magazine

"We've grown from one to forty-six locations and have experienced 50% to 100% growth annually since Topgrading."

~ Ken Sim, Founder
Nurse Next Door

"The tandem interview process is one of the best tools in our arsenal for getting an in-depth understanding of high-potential managers." (2012 quote)

~ Bill Conaty, SVP Human Resources
General Electric (retired 2009)

"Topgrading helped Labsphere's transformation and success, and for sure contributed to my promotion to head a company 3 times larger. Your seminar revolutionized my thinking (built up over a 30+ year career) about how to hire, train, evaluate and develop our people resources. Over time, we trained more than 25% of our workforce - all managers, supervisors, and directors - on Topgrading principles and made Topgrading a vital part of our culture."

~ Kevin Chittim, CEO
(recently promoted to CEO of another division of Halma plc.OceanOptics)

"In the Ron Santa Teresa Rum Company we started applying Topgrading three years ago in one of the roughest business environments in the world - Venezuela, where crime, corruption, and social deterioration are rampant. Thanks to Topgrading we've transformed the company and our community. Operations margins rose from 12% to surpass the 17% industry standard. In 2011, the company was selected as the third best place to work in Venezuela and the 23rd out of 1,900 Latin-American companies."

~ Alberto C. Vollmer, CEO
Ron Santa Teresa

"There is no doubt that Topgrading contributed to our 6000% growth in revenues since we began Topgrading."

~ Jim Twining, CEO
Southern Tide

"The most valuable management skill a person can have is the ability to produce high-talent teams. Nothing else even comes close. That's why Brad Smart's Topgrading approach should be a top priority process in your organization."

~ Price Pritchett, Ph.D., Chairman and CEO
PRITCHETT, LP

Topgrading 201 - How To Avoid Costly Mis-Hires

MORE TOPGRADING TESTIMONIALS

“With 95% to 100% success hiring As, our turnover is down and sales and profits have skyrocketed.”

~ Jack Harrington, CEO
Virtual Technology

“Topgrading has been essential in our international growth. Without Topgrading our growth and market share would not have been nearly as impressive. We've always had strong market share in the U.S., but our double-digit international growth in recent years would not have been possible without Topgrading. Topgrading first helped us pick A Player leaders for China and other locations, and Topgrading has helped us pick A Players for all the exempt jobs as well throughout the company.”

~ Tim Tevens, President and CEO
Columbus McKinnon

“MarineMax is a huge fan of Brad Smart's Topgrading system. We began the process in 2002 and we're totally convinced Topgrading has significantly improved our bottom line. We are in the people business, and now with Brad's gift, Topgrading is the heart of our culture and a primary focus of MarineMax.”

~ Bill McGill, CEO
MarineMax

“There is no doubt Topgrading has made Red Door Interactive more successful. With more A Players, we can achieve higher margins on our services. And clients appreciate the results driven by the high caliber of people we hire and retain. All we have to sell is people.”

~ Reid Carr, CEO
Red Door Interactive

“Since 2008, through Topgrading, our A Players have increased Education, Inc.'s shareholder wealth significantly and made us competitive on a national stage. We now operate with fewer, better people who have changed the game in EI's favor. Topgrading changed my business, and as a small business owner, by extension, Topgrading also changed the quality of my life.”

~ Kenneth Munies, CEO
Education, Inc.

“Topgrading is the stealth bomber of the business world. It gives us a talent advantage which we believe is far superior to our competitors, and enables DPT Laboratories to provide a level of quality and service that is unparalleled in pharmaceutical contract development and manufacturing. Since we adopted Topgrading at DPT, we have developed and successfully implemented a strategic approach to the DPT business that includes a “people strategy” of hiring, developing, and retaining top talent. Over the past eight years we have averaged double-digit growth year over year. It's clear to me that we couldn't possibly have accomplished so much in such a short period of time without continuously Topgrading our talent.”

~ Paul Johnson, President and Chief Operating Officer
DPT Laboratories

No company can expect to beat the competition unless it has the best human capital and promotes these people to pivotal positions. Topgrading is the definitive manual for becoming a high performer and recognizing those traits in others.

~ Larry Bossidy
Author of *Execution*
Former Chairman, Honeywell



Dr. Brad Smart

Topgrading methods are the most effective and proven. Proof? Forty case study companies featured in the 3rd Edition of Topgrading more than tripled their success hiring not just “good” performers but true high performers ... and the case study CEOs say Topgrading made their companies more successful.

Topgrading methods are commonsense, but they are not yet commonplace. Topgrading is unique in assuring honest candidate information, complete candidate information, and all conclusions validated in reference checks arranged by the candidate.

By avoiding common hiring mistakes, you can avoid costly mis-hires, create high performing teams, turbo-boost your career, and enjoy more work-life balance, because you can delegate more to your outstanding team ... all because you implemented Topgrading.