CS 428 Peopleware: Part III (chs 14-20)

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Part III: The Right People

- Get the right people
- Make them happy so they don't want to leave
- Turn them loose

Ch 14: The Hornblower Factor

▶ Getting the right people in the first place is all-important

▶ Companies often tend to push to hire the company average, "people that look like, sound like, and think like everybody else"

▶ Ditto for corporate dress standards

▶ "Unprofessional" is often used to characterize surprising and threatening behavior – "professional" is unsurprising behavior

▶ Note: this is quite different from how I use "professionalism" in TEPES

▶ Entropy (uniformity) is always increasing in the organization

▶ Observations and feedback?

Ch 15: Let's Talk About Leadership

- Leadership is *not* a "work-extraction mechanism"
- Leadership is a form of service
- Real leadership involves (useful) innovation, which often involves rebellion
- Most innovation that happens is unwelcome because it requires accommodating change
  - Key point: humans hate and resist change
  - "Can't we just do what we're currently doing, but better/faster/cheaper?"
- Observations and feedback?

Ch 16: Hiring a Juggler

- Much of the hiring process often involves tasks or evaluations unrelated to the actual work being done
    - Puzzles or brain teasers
    - Asking to write code on the spot w/no access to books or the net
    - Aptitude tests that have no bearing on long-term contributions
- Three different approaches
    - Portfolio of work done to date, which actual examples
    - Audition: 15-minute presentation on some aspect of past work
    - Give candidate 30 minutes to critique sample of flawed or unfinished code
- Observations and feedback?

Ch 17: Playing Well with others

- Once you have screened for talent, knowledge, and experience, then diversity becomes a bonus

- Bringing new and different people in can shake up a team for the better

- However, don't grow team size just for the sake of growth

- Observations and feedback?

Ch 18: Childhood's end

- Technology (new stuff) vs. environment (what you grow up with)
- Continuous partial attention – the opposite of flow
  - Difference between a 10% block of time and 10% of continual activity
- Articulate the contract: expected performance / behavior
  - In your case, work to find out what management expects and then live up to that
- Need to understand where attention lies (texting v. phone/e-mail)
- Observations and feedback?

Ch 19: Happy to be here

▶ Key problem with 'industrial' management viewpoint: turnover costs are seen as minor

   ▶ In real life, they can be devastating to a project and to an organization

   ▶ Hidden costs of turnover: management takes a short-term view to employee development and satisfaction

▶ Why people leave

   ▶ #1 cause across all industries (recent study): their immediate manager

   ▶ Just passing through, feeling of disposability, no reason for loyalty

   ▶ Key point for would-be managers: **loyalty is a two-way street**

▶ Low turnover: mentality of permanence

   ▶ Preoccupation for being the best

   ▶ Investment in developing employees (education, training, etc.)

   ▶ Clear career paths upward for all employees

▶ Observations and feedback?

Ch 20: Human Capital

▶ Essential to see spending on employees as an *investment* not an *expense*

▶ Common management sin: focusing on improving near-term performance by sacrificing the longer term ("eating the seed corn")

▶ Replacement of a valuable team member almost always causes a drop of team productivity (imperfect knowledge transfer, coming up to speed)

▶ Layoffs for the sake of layoffs can easily trigger a negative downward spiral

▶ Observations and feedback?

Bonus slide: Keeping a strong IT staff despite layoffs [link] (Baseline, 2009)

- Avoid or reverse the Dead Sea Effect
    - Get rid of underperformers; keep best people happy and on board
- Reduce Staff, Not Tools and Benefits
    - Need to keep people productive and happy
- Evaluate Teams, Not Just Individuals
    - When possible, keep high-functioning teams intact
- Shape Your Teams to Fit Your Projects
    - Keep people to fit what projects will go forward
- Act Quickly and Decisively
    - Don't let things drag out; your best people will leave before you can retain them