

# “The Ideal Team Player”

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### Notes by Dave Kraft

The three underlying virtues that enable them to be ideal team players: they are **humble, hungry, and smart**.

“Okay, let's try to avoid getting into too many details right now,” Jeff explained. “Let's just identify the biggest levers that we're going to need to pull to make this work.

“Well, as much as we want to be a team company and hire team players, I don't think we know what that means. Seems like a crapshoot to me.

I'm just wondering if we really know what to look for. What are good indicators that the candidates are capable of the five behaviors we worked on?

“I'm convinced that this teamwork thing is the key to staffing, and everything else.

I'd bet my job on the fact that we could get more work done with fewer people if we had real team players.

“The most unhappy people in a company are the ones who don't fit the culture and are allowed to stay. They know they don't belong.

“First, we go figure out how to recognize a real team player, the kind of person who can easily build trust, engage in healthy conflict, make real commitments, hold people accountable, and focus on the team's results.

Just want to know how you identify which kids on your team are better at teamwork than others.

The kind who come to practice wanting to work as hard as they can to avoid losing. Coaching them is easy.

“They're just dumb. They're not socially smart.

He wasn't the kind of guy who had a sense of personal motivation or a desire to do something big.

We need to hire people who are hungry. They go beyond what is required. Passionate about the work they're doing. Hungry.

“People. It had to do with being smart about people.

People smart.

Jeff drew three circles on the board, creating a Venn diagram of sorts. He then wrote the words humble, hungry, and smart next to the circles.

looking for indications that he's not humble. Arrogance. Condescension. Dismissiveness. Self-centeredness.”

If this guy, Ted, isn't all about teamwork, if he doesn't eat, sleep, and breathe humility and hunger, there is no way all the people working for him will.

We have to decide whether this humble, hungry, and smart thing works in reality or whether it's just a theoretical idea that makes our lives harder.”

Most training and development comes down to how much a person wants to change.

“Team players have three things in common. They are humble, hungry, and smart.

“Humble is pretty obvious. We can't abide big egos. Hungry is all about working hard and being passionate about our work. And smart has to do with being aware of the people around you and dealing with them in a positive, functional way.

“The thing is, people who aren't socially smart probably aren't very good at knowing it. Otherwise, they'd be better at it.

“The three virtues,” as they came to be known, were to be regular topics of conversation.

“If you ask me, the best thing that's happened in the last year is that we've almost become a jackass-free zone.

Too many leaders hire mostly for competency and technical skills.

I'm convinced that “the right people” are the ones who have those three virtues in common—humility, hunger, and people smarts.

### Humble

Humility is the single greatest and most indispensable attribute of being a team player.

Leaders aren't considering the effect that an arrogant, self-centered person has on the overall performance of the team.

There are two basic types of people who lack humility,

The most obvious kind is the overtly arrogant people who make everything about them.

The next type

People who lack self-confidence but are generous and positive with others.

C.S. Lewis addressed this misunderstanding about humility when he said “Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”

What both of these types have in common is insecurity. Insecurity makes some people project overconfidence, and others discount their own talents.

### Hungry

Hungry people almost never have to be pushed by a manager to work harder because they are self-motivated and diligent.

When I refer to hunger here, I'm thinking about the healthy kind—a manageable and sustainable commitment to doing a job well and going above and beyond when it is truly required.

Smart simply refers to a person's common sense about people. It has everything to do with the ability to be interpersonally appropriate and aware. Smart people tend to know what is happening in a group situation and how to deal with others in the most effective way. They ask good questions, listen to what others are saying, and stay engaged in conversations intently.

Smart simply refers to a person's common sense about people.

Smart people can use their talents for good or ill purposes.

What makes humble, hungry, and smart powerful and unique is not the individual attributes themselves, but rather the required combination of all three.

Could a person fully practice the five behaviors at the heart of teamwork if he or she didn't buy into the idea of being humble, hungry, and smart? The answer was a resounding no.

These are not permanent characteristics embedded in a person's DNA; rather, they are developed and maintained through life experiences and personal choices at home and at work.

Humble Only: The Pawn

Hungry Only: The Bulldozer

Bulldozers can thrive and go uncorrected for long periods of time.

Smart Only: The Charmer

Humble and Hungry, but Not Smart: The Accidental Mess-Maker

Humble and Smart, but Not Hungry: The Lovable Slacker

It's easy for leaders to shy away from confronting or removing lovable slackers. After all, they're lovable.

Hungry and Smart, but Not Humble: The Skillful Politician

These classifications are reserved only for people who are significantly lacking in one or more of the three traits.

Humble, Hungry and Smart: The Ideal Team Player

Application #1: Hiring

All leaders can certainly do their best to try to recruit, select, and hire people who are humble, hungry, and smart when an opportunity arises to bring on someone new.

Debrief Each Interview as a Team

One of the biggest problems I see is a silo approach to interviewing.

Consider Group Interviews

Make Interviews nontraditional

Ask Questions More than Once

Ask What Others Would Say

## Ask Candidates to Do Some Real Work

### Don't Ignore Hunches

While it's never possible to have complete confidence in a hire, nagging doubts about a candidate's humility, hunger, or smarts need to be properly explored and discarded before an offer can be made.

Humble people are not afraid to say they are sorry, and they accept other people's genuine apologies with grace. People who do this usually have specific stories.

### Developing Humility

The source of a lack of humility is always related in some way to insecurity, and for most people, insecurity is rooted in childhood and family issues that go way back beyond their first day on the job or the team.

Humility is the most attractive and central of all virtues.

### Developing Hunger

The point of praise is not only to reinforce the behavior in that employee, but also to reinforce it in everyone else.

In most cases, managers greatly underestimate the impact that a comment or quick gesture of approval has on employees.