



8 | HIRE TENS

As much as I hate using a numeric scale to describe the effectiveness of a leader, occasionally it does serve a purpose. Let's say I have a staff leader who is about a five on the leadership-effectiveness scale, ten being the highest. He or she works hard but does not take responsibility to get better as a leader and does not seek out a coach or a mentor. The five rating appears to be a long-term fixture.

As unfortunate as this is, what complicates matters is that a five can never attract, motivate, or retain people who are *higher* on the effectiveness scale than they are. Fives can recruit and mobilize and retain fours and threes and twos and ones, but no matter how hard they try, fives cannot lead sixes or eights or tens. Likewise, eights can lead and empower sevens and sixes, but give them a nine and the nine will soon bail. Leadership just works like that.

One day it dawned on me that my objective as a senior leader needed to be not only taking responsibility to increase my own level of effectiveness so that I stood firmly in the eight, nine, or ten range, but also surrounding myself with people who were as close to my level as possible. Because collectively, while we would be able to attract people who were *equal to or lower than* we were on the leadership-effectiveness scale, we'd never recruit and retain those above us. Still today I constantly challenge my team to do their very best to raise their level through participating in leadership development and training and reading all they can read.

But I also challenge them never to shrink back from inviting leaders at their same level to come join our cause. Only the most mature leaders can overcome the great temptation to enlist the first warm, willing, low-numbered body they see. After all, people who rank lower on the scale are typically more malleable, less stressful to manage, and more easily impressed by a leader's prowess. They make for a spectacular ego stroke. It's a stroke that comes at a high price, though, because when it's time for that person to invite someone onto the team, they'll follow suit and look for people with scary-low leadership levels.

Over time, the net effect of hiring people less effective than you is an ever-increasing number of lower-caliber leaders. Eventually this compromises the quality of leadership in the entire organization.

Train and embolden your staff members to grow their own leadership and then to shoot high when someone needs to be added to the team. Encourage them to go after the brightest, most accomplished, most effective leaders they can find. In so doing, you will continually upgrade your organization's leadership capabilities.

I've been in various church services when pastors have poked fun at the disciples Jesus chose, as if the Messiah shot low and went after misfits. I don't think this is the case at all. True, he didn't necessarily surround himself with aristocrats. But a careful profile analysis reveals that guys like James and Peter and Paul—a *monster* leader to whom Jesus made a special appearance on the Damascus Road—had quite high leadership capabilities. And when his action-oriented, high-capacity direct reports were thrown the kingdom ball, they scored in a way that would count for all of history.

May the same be said of us. With every recruit we invite into the game, let's be found guilty of gradually *upgrading* the leadership talent of the local church so that our contribution can count for all of history too.

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