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Musings

#33: Adjusting to the Rise of the Technologists

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With the accelerated adoption of technology, the size of the technology workforce within your organization is going to grow rapidly. I would suspect that in one year, you will have twice as many people in IT, data and analytics as you do now as you rotate to a “digital first” mode of operating and providing services. As a leader, this will require some adjustments to your game.

In my experience, really good technologists are a different breed. They are lower in their emotional intelligence (EQ) and higher in their IQ. Still, don’t confuse that with a lack of desire for recognition. Like all employees, that want their good work to be acknowledged, especially publicly.

They aren’t the best people managers, as they are used to a digital world of ones and zeros with definitive outcomes versus the human world of gray. You will need to give them some extra time as their coach to develop this part of their game.

They can be over-confident. It is hard to push back on them because of the knowledge asymmetry. How do you know if the server is configured correctly or if Postgres is the right database to use? The best you can do is ask basic questions and see if the answers makes sense. You can also “buy insurance” by having things checked by an “outside” group of IT professionals. There are a lot of individual IT consultants out there doing project work on a 1099 basis.

With the digital revolution, you as a leader need to know the basics about technology. I am not saying you need to code but you need to know that Ruby on Rails is not a Starlight Express character. You should visit your datacenter (if your organization has one) or know where “in the cloud” your valuable data is sitting. “The cloud” has a mystic connotation but fundamentally your software application and data are being run on someone else’s server in someone else’s datacenter (likely Google, Amazon Web Service or Microsoft Azure). It is a critical dependency that you need to understand as you have limited control if something goes wrong.

Finally, there is zero unemployment with technology workers. You are going to have to work hard to retain good ones and need to be constantly training up newer ones like a professional baseball manager stocking his minor leagues with talent.

If you have a good CIO doing a great job, make sure to write him or her a note today!

Be safe.

Jml

Second Thought

In Musing #26 *Building Community*, I spoke of the competitive advantage of having an engaged team. I remembered the attached slide which applies Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to employee engagement. Enjoy.