

The Olympics – the purest form of all things Human Capital!

I can't wait for the Olympics to come around every two years between the summer and winter games. I'm a little partial to the summer events, maybe because by February in Pittsburgh I'm just about over the bitter cold and snow fall. And true to form, this winter has lived up to its yearly torture. Thank goodness I didn't go to Punxsutawney! Poor critter has to be the most hated prognosticator on earth.

There are more than 170 countries competing in this year's games. Each country sends their best athletes in what to me is the purest form of Human Resources. Only the best get through via a rather simple form of Performance Management. You do better than everyone else in that you are competing against and you get to go compete against a lot of other individuals who did the same thing for their organizations. You could insert country, team, organization, association, or even company here if you'd like, but each of them is sending their best.

This also points to a critical HR skill- the science of recruitment and selection. When everything is all said and done it's a little simpler than most people understand. Define exactly what the ideal candidate looks like, including skills, training, education, and demonstrated history of success (you might call it a resume here...) and evaluate each individual against a set of standards that you expect them to perform against and a set of goals you expect the position to achieve while that individual is in that particular role. The problem with this 'science of selection' is that most hiring managers don't define the job, or the skills knowledge, education or experience and worse, don't set goals for the position to accomplish before the person is hired – and then when they hire someone that doesn't live up to those expectations – they blame it on the individual – instead of their lack of recruitment and selection discipline.

At this next level we will witness another amazing demonstration. Exceptional coaching and managers. After all, have you ever worked for someone you couldn't wait to go to work for every day and motivated you to do more each day than you thought possible. These athletes have some of the best personnel, team and sport managers there are. Each sport relies on those individuals to get the most out of their staff – the athletes. They won't get much praise and none of the limelight, but each of those individuals will be more than slightly responsible for the success of those competing.

There's another HR element to the Olympics that can't be overlooked. The results of years and years of constant and ever increasing training and development. Companies that outperform their competitors do so because they've trained their employees to do so. If you want your employees to be the best shouldn't you be training them with the best techniques, processes, and solutions. Shouldn't they have the best tools, equipment and technology? Some will come to you having prepared at the highest level possible, but look and screen for the ones with not only the technical skills, but the soft skills, those intangibles that set them apart from all other candidates. And, to some extent we've already had the chance to get a glimpse of some succession planning – did you see the athletes that didn't make the team that were so very close? Some of those individuals are certain to be on the next team in 4 years.

There is one thing that is certain to overshadow all of that selection, training, mentoring and coaching. and it is sheer will. Have you ever hired an employee that you thought, well, maybe they'll be OK, but I'm just not sure. Then sure enough through some almost mysterious outcome they turn out to be one of the best you've ever hired. I can't wait to hear those stories from these games – human interest – yes. But to me it's more about the ability of one individual to overcome an unbelievable set of odds to compete at the highest level on earth. (With the Super Bowl fresh over and Philadelphia's parade yesterday – I'm sure Nick Foles has one heck of a "Personal Will" story to tell his kids – in the face of unbelievable odds – just ask the odds makers in Vegas!) I'm not sure if the some odd 3,000 athletes know it, but given that there are more than 7 Billion people on earth, these individuals make up a microscopic number of elite individuals – demonstrating outstanding human performance.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about a very touching display of employer loyalty that is not far off from the Winter Olympics – in the sport of Hockey. This week, the Pittsburgh Penguins had the opportunity to host the Las Vegas Golden Knights. In one of the greatest displays of affection for a former player, an individual who helped this team win the ultimate trophy in the sport, true to form, the Penguins honored their former goalie – Marc Andre Fleury. If you haven't had the chance to see the video on Facebook or You Tube look it up. It's a 'burg thing. And they've got class.

Remember, the best Human Capital requires discipline, science, training, and the positive will to make a difference! Go Team USA!!!

I wish you well,

Dave