

IDEAS AT WORK

Right Person, Right Place, Right Time: Equipping Your Team for Success

Takeaways

- Fit and timing are keys in recruitment
- Build your bench by understanding and supporting employee career goals
- Human-centric management can aid in retention and morale

I was drafted in the third round of the 1961 NFL draft by the Minnesota Vikings. I wasn't the best player drafted that year. I didn't even go in the first two rounds! But I was the right person, in the right place, at the right time. The Vikings needed a franchise quarterback, and took a chance on developing me into just that.

Teams win, individuals lose. I learned this early on in sports, but team is equally as important in business. Sure, the quarterback is important. But without my great teammates, linemen who blocked pass rushers, tight ends who blocked for runners, wide receivers who caught passes, I could never be successful.

By recruiting the right people, in the right place, at the right time, we've built a powerful team here at Tarkenton. In this article, Will Adams breaks down the right person, right place, right time process and how to help level up your team. Read on for his insights, you never know, your next franchise quarterback could be waiting.



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Did you know the cost of replacing an employee can be one half to two times that employee's salary ([Gallup](#))? Or that 38% of new hires leave within the first year—and almost half of those do so within the first 90 days, because of a lack of development opportunities ([Forbes](#))?

That's why I'm a fan of the "Right Person, Right Place, Right Time" model. Here at Tarkenton, it helps us recruit, hire, train, and develop future leaders and builders, as well as assess, coach, and retain our most valuable employees.

Let's break it down. The "Right Person" part of the equation refocuses your attention from the tasks and skills you need to the kind of culture you have and whether or not that person is going to thrive in that culture. The "right person" is someone who will help your organization grow over the long term. Unfortunately, sometimes even highly qualified people aren't a good fit—long-term, your organization just isn't the right place for them.

For example, if you're driving efficiencies to maximize profits, the right person for your organization is probably someone who is driven by best practices and rules. That's very different from the right person at Tarkenton, for instance (we like to blow stuff up).

"Right Place" is more about your company than the candidate, forcing you to look in the mirror and ask if you have the right environment for them to thrive. Consider these questions: Does your organization offer the scope to let that candidate develop? Does your company's vision align with the candidate's experience and plans? Are you hiring to fill a role, or to fill a destination?

Finally, "Right Time" is about whether the placement of that candidate aligns with the needs of your organization. Is this candidate ready for the challenges today will bring—and those to come next year? Can that candidate help you lead your people through change?

But there's more to the model than just recruitment. Adopting this philosophy holistically helps with retention, morale, employee satisfaction—and even with maintaining good relationships with employees you have to let go. What's the secret sauce? Understanding that your human resources are human.

In these days of ever-speedier technology breakthroughs and oceans of data coming our way from every source known to man, it can be easy to think of our human resources as "plug and play." To deliver the kind of long-term results that will help move the needle on your KPIs, you have to move from filling short-term holes to finding long-term team members.

Your company's culture is shaped by its people. At Tarkenton, we are dedicated finding people who share our values and resonate with our mission --- and then we are committed to nurturing their growth, their skills, their leadership and their lives. Finding the "right people," making sure we are the "right place" for them, and engaging them at the "right time" ensures growth for the company and every individual within it.

So, how do you get started? There are a few key principles that can help.

First, always be hiring. Here's the mistake a lot of organizations make: they don't flip the proverbial hiring sign until there's an imminent need. So immediately, they're behind, put in a position where they're more likely to make a hiring decision that's less than optimal. Instead, you should always be looking for talent, both externally and internally.

Even if you don't have an open position, when you meet a candidate who seems like a star, invite them to talk about the possibilities. Let them know you're always looking for talent. Ask what their career goals are and consider whether you can meet those goals.



Your best employees are also your best advertising, so send your best out into the world looking for other stars—at business meetings, conferences, and other industry events. Encourage them to develop relationships with other star performers and empower them with a direct line to your recruiting team and incentives for referring successful candidates.

Beyond recruiting, always be building your bench. Learn what your employees want to do with their careers and then create opportunities for them to do that, through training, mentorships, and in-company networking. Take the time to walk the halls. Get to know the people who work for you. Data and KPIs are excellent tools to use, but nothing can replace what you can learn in a simple face-to-face interaction. Your workplace is full of future leaders. It's up to you to find them.

Even when a crisis hits, the model can serve as a guidepost for how best to manage hard times. When the pandemic hit in 2020 and Airbnb revenues dropped by 80 percent within 30 days, co-founder and CEO Brian Chesky had some hard news to tell: the company would have to make drastic cuts to its workforce.

Chesky knew that when rumors of a layoff are afoot, productivity takes a nosedive—particularly if employees suspect there will be more than one round of layoffs. He and his leadership team wanted to make sure his employees had clarity about their future prospects, instead of leaving them waiting for the hatchet to fall.

So he took a different tack: transparency. He announced that the company would cut 25% of its staff, making a deep cut up-front so that additional cuts later on would prove unnecessary. He called on a network of CEOs to see if they could take on any of the employees he had to lay off. And he made sure severance packages were robust, including three months of salary and health insurance for a year (Fortune). He told Fortune he wanted to be remembered for handling the layoff the right way.

It paid off. Even now, former Airbnb employees applaud the way Chesky handled it.

As Fran Tarkenton has always taught: the mission of business is to help people. That applies to your staff, just as much as your customers, your clients, your suppliers and your partners. By following the Right Person, Right Place, Right Time approach, you can attract talent in a competitive market, retain the people who thrive in and contribute to your culture, and pave the way for future growth.



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Will Adams is an experienced business executive who excels at forging strong alliances with partners, cultivating talent, devising strategic growth initiatives, and driving innovation and operational excellence. Beyond his role at Tarkenton, Will serves on the board of directors of Billfold and is a Principal of Tarkenton Private Capital. In these capacities, he's dedicated to identifying and nurturing promising new business leaders and innovation, shepherding them towards sustainable growth.