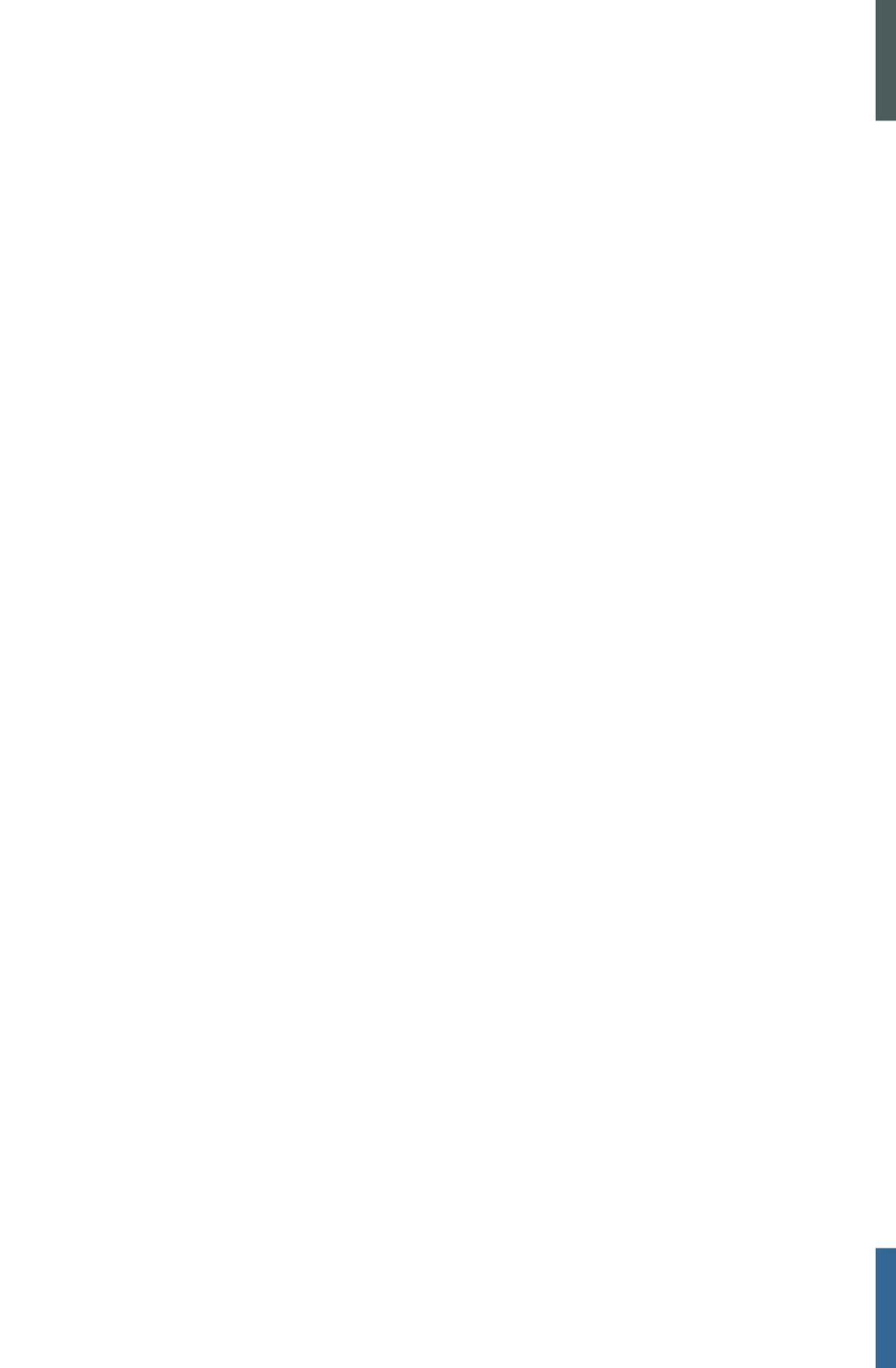


# Topgrading<sup>®</sup> inc. 401



How to avoid  
**costly mis-hires.**



# About Topgrading, Inc.

Topgrading, Inc. is a group of passionate professionals dedicated to helping clients build and maintain teams of high performers who fit their culture. Our tools and processes have been honed over the past 40 years working with clients of all sizes and in all industries. The documented results in dozens of case studies show that Topgrading is the most effective hiring method on the planet.

We have software tools to help human resources effectively and efficiently screen candidates and help hiring managers conduct the most revealing interviews of their careers. Our highly rated training sessions guarantee you will get the maximum value from our powerful tools.

Our candidate assessments help clients avoid nearly all hiring mistakes and are routinely used when clients absolutely, positively need an A player in a role.

The company was founded by Dr. Brad Smart, an internationally recognized management psychologist and consultant to many global 500 companies, but also to hundreds of small, midsize, and growth companies.

This eGuide and the hard cover version are based on **Topgrading: The Proven Hiring and Promotion Method That Turbocharges Company Performance** (Portfolio, 2012).

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# Introduction

Whether you are an owner of a 10-person company, CEO of a Global 1,000 company, or a manager of a department, here's a scenario you probably can relate to:

You have a mixture of talent, and your marginal performers cause you the most frustration. You'd like to spend more time helping your high performers achieve even more, but chronic low performers take up too much of your time and your high performers' time, dragging down your entire organization. You value talent ... you really do, but you only have about 25% high performers. You try to coach the poorer performers, but ... it rarely works.

## **You occasionally replace one, however:**

- Recruiters are not presenting enough quality candidates.
- Resumes are too often fabricated—C Players hype their resumes to look like A Players.
- Your competency (“behavioral”) interviews are not very revealing.
- Reference checks are generally worthless.
- Most of the people hired disappoint you.
- All those mis-hires are **VERY** costly.

You are not alone. Thousands of case studies of Topgrading companies show that before starting to Topgrade, only about 25% of the people hired and promoted turn out to be high performers. That means three out of four people hired turn out to be mis-hires.

We met with the top human resources executives from Global 100 companies, and they said 75% of the people they hire turn out to be mis-hires. The Topgraders in the room said more than 75% of the people they hire turn out to be HIGH performers.

Most managers live with 25% high performers (A Players), about 50% “adequate” or “good” performers (B Players), and 25% poor performers (C Players). But you know in your heart that even a “good” performer doesn’t cut it if you expect a true high performer, the best person available for what you are willing to pay.

You want to hire only the best people available, at a given salary-level, for every job—that’s what you’re supposedly paying for, right? But most of the time you end up not getting the high performer you paid for, so your talent challenges are your biggest impediment to your success.



**Most companies successfully hire high performers only 25% of the time!**



Many Topgrading companies hire and promote high performers 90% of the time!

To Summarize:

A Player = Excellent or Very Good performer (high performer)

B Player = Adequate or good performer

C Player = Only Fair or Poor performer

The good news is that hundreds of Topgrading companies and tens of thousands of hiring managers use the most proven hiring method and they actually hire and promote high performers 90% of the time.

At [www.topgradingcasestudies.com](http://www.topgradingcasestudies.com) you can read dozens of case studies and testimonials from CEOs saying Topgrading made their company more profitable by hiring high performers.

THE IMPACT OF TOPGRADING ON HIRING TOP PERFORMERS

Pre-Topgrading

26% SUCCESS

Since Topgrading

85% SUCCESS

\*Based on before and after case studies using the Topgrading system

Chapter 1 explains why many managers experience such disappointing hiring results. Chapter 2 shows you how simple and common sense Topgrading methods are and why they work.

In Chapter 2 you'll experience Topgrading Lite. In the meantime, here is a sneak peak at how the magic of Topgrading actually works:

1. Candidates fill out the Career History Form with a "truth serum" that motivates low performers and those with made up resumes to drop out. Good!

2. You scan the Topgrading Snapshot, a picture of the candidate's career, to instantly eliminate those who do not have high ratings by bosses, job hoppers, and those far above or below your salary range.

3. With almost all honest, high performing candidates you've kept, you conduct a phone screen interview next. And then you invite the best of the best candidates in and conduct the famous Topgrading Interview, by far the most revealing interview on the planet.

4. You call references that the CANDIDATE arranges (no phone tag!) to verify you will hire an A Player.

90 % hiring success requires a few more bells and whistles, but you can learn those later.

# Chapter 1

## Why Hiring is Your Most Frustrating Challenge



“Nothing matters more in winning than getting the right people on the field. All the clever strategies and advanced technologies in the world are nowhere near as effective without great people to put them to work. Brad developed the methods to help us pick top producers.”

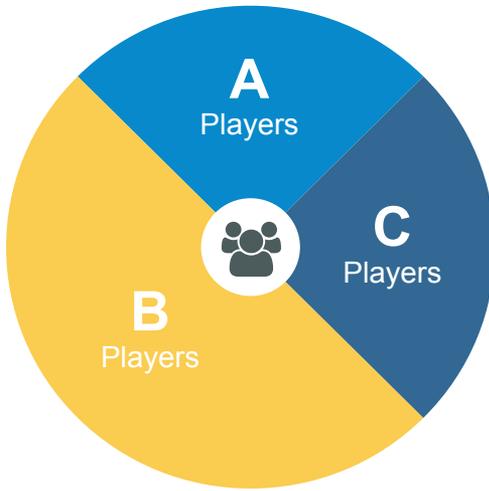
- Jack Welch

Former Chairman and CEO, General Electric

You know talent is all-important, but if you are like most managers, you are frustrated with too many costly mis-hires.

You’ve read the survey results—when CEOs or any managers convene, they say, “picking the right people” is their biggest headache, most pressing problem, their most frustrating challenge.

Why? Because as mentioned in the introduction, despite the importance of hiring high performers, most managers pick them only 25% of the time. Do you have a team of 25% A Players, 50% Bs, and 25% Cs? If so here is your team:



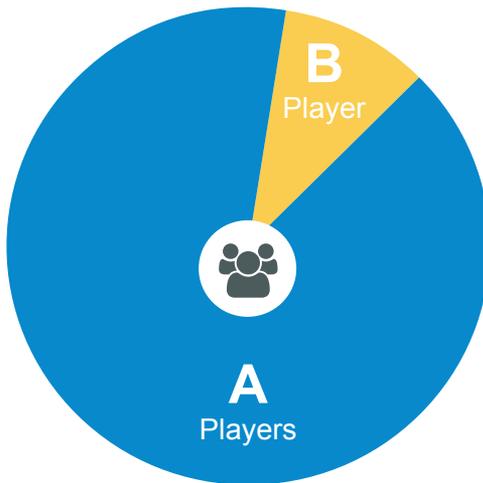
**Topgrading Professionals have conducted more than 25,000 in-depth assessments of managers, and correlated the results with actual performance on the job.**

It is obvious to us and our Topgrading clients that the single most important factor in a manager's success is the talent of the team assembled. Create a team of high performers and you're likely to succeed, keep a lot of low performers and you're more likely to fail.

# What Exactly is a Topgrader?

We define Topgrader as a leader who hires or promotes mostly high performers, the top 10% of talent available for the compensation level. So, if there are 10 qualified candidates waiting at your door and eager to take the job for the pay you offer, you pick the #1 best candidate; if there are 100 candidates you at least hire one of the top 10. Do this and you qualify as a Topgrader.

Over time, here's what a Topgrader's team looks like:



## What do A Players Look Like?

Can you imagine having this team with almost all high performers?  
**You can, and that is not fantasy.**

So what are A Players like?

The following chart is an abbreviated, representative summary of competencies for an upper level manager.

## A Players Tend to Be:

- **Smart**; intellect and business savvy
- Drive to succeed; **passionate**
- **Trustworthy**
- **Consistent** high performers
- **Adaptable** to adjust to many different personalities
- Surround themselves with **high performers**
- Very **hard workers**
- **Resourceful**; overcome obstacles
- Effective **leaders**
- Down-to-earth, well-grounded, self-aware, **humble**



Create a team of high performers and you're likely to succeed, but keep a lot of low performers and you're apt to fail.

What is the single most important competency? It's resourcefulness, a composite of energy, passion, analytic skills, and persistence wrapped into one. In common terms, resourcefulness is getting over, around, or through barriers to success.

A Players all exude RESOURCEFULNESS, in spades. They just don't give up, and when challenged by opportunities or seemingly hopeless setbacks, their mind is going, 24/7, to somehow snatch success out of the jaws of defeat.

B Players reliably do the basic job; they are rated "good". But they lack resourcefulness, so they are mediocre at anticipating and preventing problems or opportunities. And when problems occur their solution is to - you got it - run to you for your decision. Too much of your time is spent "carrying" B Players.

For most managers not exposed to Topgrading, all that frustration, wasted time, lessened job performance, and high cost of mis-hires are very understandable. What? Understandable?" Yes...Let me explain.

If your hiring 'batting average' is only 25%, then 75% of the times you replace a B Player, you end up with a mis-hire, another B Player or a C Player.

It was smart for you to replace your chronic C Players, the ones that cause the biggest problems and keep you awake at night. And it was (until you learned about Topgrading) smart to retain your 50% "adequate" B Players because you were only 25% successful picking B Players replacements.

But now you are learning Topgrading so it isn't so smart to "live with" lessor performers.

# Why Commonplace Hiring Methods Are So Poor

## **The major problems with most hiring methods:**

1. Dishonesty. Candidates know reference checks are generally worthless so they are confident they can fudge their resume and interviews. About 1/3 of resumes contain deliberate falsehoods. C Players easily create resumes to make them look like A Players.

2. Shallow Interviews. So-called behavioral or competency interviews are easy to fake. Any candidate could make up good answers to typical questions, such as, “What is an example of your being organized (a team player, committed to success, etc., etc.)?”

3. Poor Verification. Reference calls are shallow, so there is typically no credible verification of what the interviewee said.

It’s “common sense” that such flaws produce inadequate hiring results. But why do even the most sophisticated companies in the world “live with” such poor results? I believe poor hiring is so widespread that the business world suffers from widespread self-deception; companies are in denial so they don’t seek out better hiring methods.

No one wants to acknowledge that mediocre hiring/promoting is a big burden that's causing poor results. Most companies pretend it isn't there; it's like a pile of elephant poop in the living room. They don't seriously measure hiring success and they just "live with" awful results.

I was a special advisor to an American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) study in which 19 companies participated in case studies, sponsors, or both. Only one company - a Topgrading company - stood out for both measuring success, hiring and promoting people. And that company's success using Topgrading hiring and promoting was 90% high performers. (All the rest of the companies did NOT even measure quality of hires or they had dishonest statistics.



Bad hiring is the huge pile of elephant poop that's stinking up business results.

# Human Resources is Positioned to Lead

In recent years HR has embraced technology, big time! HR systems, including Applicant Tracking Systems (ATSs), have made life easier for recruiters to find candidates and track them through hiring. HR departments typically measure speed to fill and cost to fill jobs, and those numbers look great!

But technology has done nothing for hiring managers; the QUALITY of hires remains abysmal.

**Human Resources has the technology sophistication to lead the way, to introduce Topgrading to improve the quality of hire.**

# Chapter 2

## Topgrading Lite: 4 Easy Steps

If you would like to become a Topgrader, you can actually start TODAY! Really...even before you read the rest of this short book. Here are some of the steps you can take today to improve hiring.

### Step 1: Candidates Fill Out the Topgrading Career History Form

#### **Topgrading Career History Form**

As you know, resumes are incomplete and too often are deceptive, so you waste a lot of time studying zillions of resumes, trying to figure out which are truthful and wishing they contained more of the information you want. C Players are good at fudging the truth, so you end up interviewing way too many candidates and hiring way too many mediocre performers. Topgrading has a much better method...

Candidates complete the Topgrading Career History Form (which can be YOUR application form) infused with the time-tested Topgrading Intellectual Property. It contains the powerful “truth serum,” the statement that a final step in hiring is for candidates

to arrange reference calls with former managers and others. Low performers and those with exaggerated or inaccurate resumes drop out, leaving you with honest, high performers. Good! The Career History Form asks full compensation history, honest boss ratings, and much more.

## Step 2: Screen Candidates with the Topgrading Snapshot and Career History Form

“

“The Topgrading snapshot is amazing! It screens out the fakers and the low performers and even before talking with a candidate you know their full compensation history and how all bosses would rate them.”

- Scott Clawson  
President & CEO / Culligan

You probably think your first contact with a candidate is to review the Career History Form, right? No, you can save a LOT of time by first glancing at candidate Topgrading Snapshots, the colorful pictures conveying the most important facts. A hiring manager or staffing person can easily screen out 50 candidates in an hour, just with the Topgrading Snapshot. Then, with perhaps five impressive Snapshots, it's worth the time to review their full Career History Form.

**Lets look at two “real” Topgrading Snapshots**, with names changed, to see how just the most important information you need is shown. First, let’s look at a likely A Player—we call him Erik Dorsman. Then we’ll look at a likely C Player—we call him John Doe.

Note in the Dorsman Topgrading Snapshot that the years go across the bottom and show that he was with the same employer from 1997 until 2012. This shows solid longevity— Erik is certainly not a job-hopper!

Compensation is on the vertical axis, and shows Erik’s compensation moving higher across his career, starting at about \$38,000 and increasing to about \$156,000. He has steadily earned more and more money—one mark of a high performer. We can see from his current compensation whether Erik is in about the right compensation range for the job being filled. If he was way too high or too low, he might be an A Player, but just not a good candidate for this job.

The Topgrading Snapshot also shows you the reasons for leaving an employer. Erik’s chart indicates that he has left two employers, and both are shown as an A—100% his choice. This is, of course, another mark of a high performer

The Topgrading Career History Form requests boss ratings and Erik says that his first boss, the school principal, would give him a “Very Good” overall performance rating, and that all the bosses since 1997 would give him an Excellent rating.

# ERIK'S SNAPSHOT

2 employers over over 20 years



Hide Key

**Key**

**Manager Rating:**

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Very Good
- 3 Good
- 2 Fair
- 1 Poor
- Impossible to Provide

**Reason for Leaving:**

- M My Choice
- N Not Leaving (Promotion, Different Assignment, etc.)
- L Layoff
- B Buyout
- D Mutual Decision
- O Other Circumstances
- T Terminated for Cause (Unacceptable Performance)

Each Topgrading Snapshot lists all the jobs below it.

### Chronological History

Work	
1992 - 1997	<b>Teacher</b> at South Bend Community School (almost 5 years) \$22,000 - \$35,000 per year Manager Rating: Very Good Reason for Leaving: My Choice
1997 - 2002	<b>Director Information Technology</b> at Educational Management Int'l (over 5 years) \$44,000 - \$84,800 per year Manager Rating: Excellent Reason for Leaving: Not Leaving (Promotion, Different Assignment, etc.)
2002 - 2005	<b>VP Information Technology</b> at Educational Management Int'l (over 2 years) \$90,000 - \$124,000 per year Manager Rating: Excellent Reason for Leaving: Not Leaving (Promotion, Different Assignment, etc.)
2005 - 2012	<b>VP People Development</b> at Educational Management Int'l (over 7 years) \$131,000 - \$156,000 per year Manager Rating: Excellent Reason for Leaving: My Choice

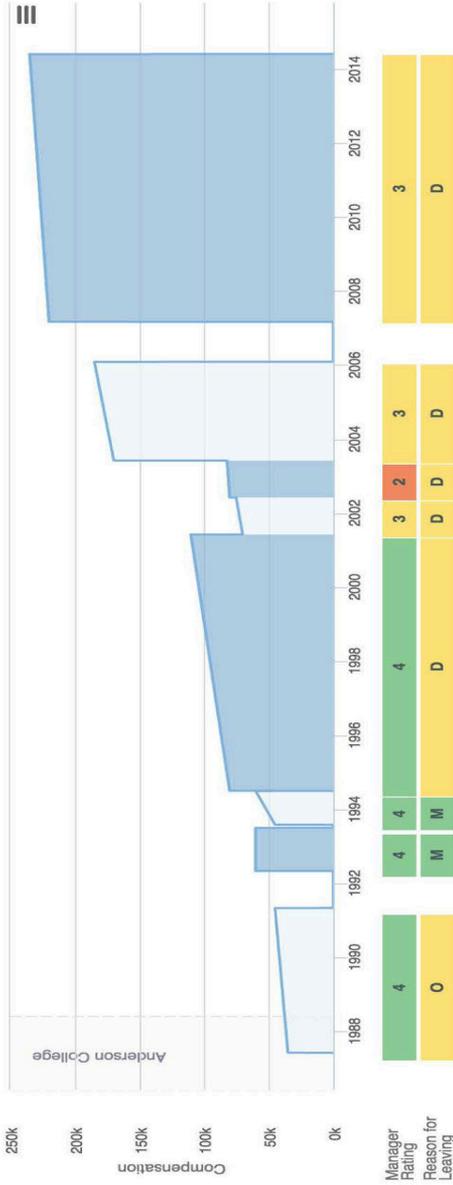
For years Topgrading companies have known that the “truth serum,” informing candidates that they will be asked to arrange personal reference calls with bosses and others just before a job offer, works! The best candidates would tell the truth anyway, but the “truth serum” motivates others to be more honest than they might otherwise be, or better yet, withdraw as a candidate!

Now let's look at a very different Topgrading Snapshot, John Doe's.

At a glance, you can see that John Doe is quite a job hopper, looking to join his 6th employer in a decade. You can also see that he thinks his bosses would give him a low overall performance rating and there are too many questionable reasons for leaving. In contrast to Erik Dorsman, John Doe would probably not be a good fit for a company seeking A Players.

# JOHN'S SNAPSHOT

8 employers over about 27 years



Hide Key

Key	
<b>5</b>	Excellent
<b>4</b>	Very Good
<b>3</b>	Good
<b>2</b>	Fair
<b>1</b>	Poor
-	Impossible to Provide

Reason for Leaving:	
<b>M</b>	My Choice
<b>N</b>	Not Leaving (Promotion, Different Assignment, etc.)
<b>L</b>	Layoff
<b>B</b>	Buyout
<b>D</b>	Mutual Decision
<b>O</b>	Other Circumstances
<b>T</b>	Terminated for Cause (Unacceptable Performance)

## Chronological History

 Education	
1986 - 1988	<b>Anderson College</b> Anderson, MO, United States GPA 3.0/4.0 Marketing
 Work	
1987 - 1991	<b>Director of Private/Parochial</b> at Huge Educational Publisher (almost 4 years) \$35,000 - \$45,000 per year Manager Rating: Very Good Reason for Leaving: Other Circumstances
1992 - 1993	<b>VP Marketing</b> at AAA Publishing (about 1 year) \$60,000 - \$60,000 per year Manager Rating: Very Good Reason for Leaving: My Choice
1993 - 1994	<b>Director of Marketing</b> at Publisher (11 months) \$45,000 - \$60,000 per year Manager Rating: Very Good Reason for Leaving: My Choice
1994 - 2001	<b>President</b> at Religious Publishing USA (almost 7 years) \$80,000 - \$110,000 per year Manager Rating: Very Good Reason for Leaving: Mutual Decision (please explain below)
2001 - 2002	<b>VP Bus Dev</b> at Books, Etc (about 1 year) \$70,000 - \$75,000 per year Manager Rating: Good Reason for Leaving: Mutual Decision (please explain below)
2002 - 2003	<b>SVP Marketing</b> at Major Books (about 1 year) \$80,000 - \$82,000 per year Manager Rating: Fair Reason for Leaving: Mutual Decision (please explain below)
2003 - 2006	<b>SVP</b> at Religious Health Assoc. (over 2 years) \$170,000 - \$185,000 per year Manager Rating: Good Reason for Leaving: Mutual Decision (please explain below)
2007 - 2014	<b>President &amp; CEO</b> at Ryan Publishing (about 7 years) \$220,000 - \$235,000 per year Manager Rating: Good Reason for Leaving: Mutual Decision (please explain below)

With no more training than having studied these two Snapshots, you could cut 75 candidates down to 5 people of interest in one hour, and do so with honest, more complete, and verifiable information than you've had in the past.

Then you'll probably want to conduct a phone screen interview before inviting a candidate in for a face-to-face interview. In a phone screen interview answer questions the candidate has about the job and then ask questions about the most recent 2 jobs – using the questions in Step 3.

You'll save hours and hours of studying resumes and application forms, and prescreening candidates on the phone. Not only do you save a lot of time, but more importantly, you will invite only the very best candidates in for interviews. By screening out C Players and attracting A Players, you will definitely hire more high performers.



## Step 3: Conduct the Famous Tandem Topgrading Interview

“

“The Tandem Topgrading Interview, using the Topgrading Interview Guide, has become critical to our staffing process. It is set up in a logical and systematic way, and permits the interviewers to hear a thorough review of all the previous jobs that got the person to where they are today - the events, motivations, accomplishments, and failures. It's really opened our eyes to important things that we otherwise would have missed.”

- Rick Steinberg  
Vice President of Human Resources / Columbus McKinnon

This is the “silver bullet” of hiring. Every manager we know of achieving 90% hiring or promoting success, conducts the Tandem (2 interviewers) Topgrading Interview, using the Topgrading Interview Guide.

The Topgrading Interview is a chronological interview, starting with the educational years, coming forward to the present, covering every job, and concluding with the usual sections on Self-Assessment and Plans and Goals for the Future.

It asks many questions about every job, including successes, failures, key decisions, key relationships, boss ratings, and reasons for leaving.

When candidates click Submit to send you their Topgrading Career History Form, it becomes possible for you to click to get the Topgrading Interview Guide prepopulated with 100% of the Career History Form information.

Just read (to yourself) what the candidate filled out about a job, read and ask the built-in questions, take notes on the responses, ask follow up questions, and turn forward to the next page until you've completed the interview.

Using the Topgrading Interview Guide makes absolutely certain that you are conducting the most thorough interview possible using the tested and proven Topgrading questions.

**On the next page is a sample of just a few of the many in-depth questions that the Topgrading Interview Guide provides about each job:**

**Most recent or current job**

VP People Development

**Company**

Educational Management Int'l  
Bingham, Ohio, United States

**Compensation**

\$131,000 - \$156,000/year

**Working Hours**

40/per week (Full time)

**Number of total / direct reports**

12/3

**Period**

05/2005 - 12/2012

**Type of business**

Private School

**Manager's Name / Title**

Jeff Wilson / CEO

**Rating by Manager**

Excellent

**Reason for Leaving**

My Choice

(I see you worked for EMI from 2005 until 2012 as VP People Development, reporting to Jeff Wilson, CEO)

1. What were your key responsibilities and accountabilities?
2. What results were achieved in terms of successes and accomplishments? How were they achieved?
3. What would you say were mistakes experienced in this job? What would you do differently? (As time permits, get specifics.)
4. What did you like most and least about this job?
5. What is your guess as to what (Jeff Wilson) really felt were your strengths, weaker points, and overall performance?
6. How would he rate your overall Performance Rating (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor)?
7. What circumstances contributed to your leaving? (Always probe for initially unstated reasons.)

You are probably thinking, “But it’s too time consuming for two interviewers to take one to three hours for a chronological interview.”

Let’s run some numbers. Suppose you calculate a mis-hire costs \$200,000 and you and others waste a total of 200 hours on each mis-hire. And suppose you mis-hire three sales reps, and fire all three, before hiring a good one.

After all, your hiring success is average—one success in four. Your results are typical for sales managers. You waste  $3 \times \$200k = \$600k$  plus  $3 \times 200$  hours = 600 hours with your three mis-hires. Six hours for a tandem interview with 90% success would, according to your own calculations, save \$600k and about 600 hours.

The sentence that makes absolutely zero sense is, “I don’t have time for three-hour tandem interviews that will at least triple my chances of hiring a high performer ... but I can afford to waste \$600k and over 600 hours.”



Solo Topgrading Interviews can achieve 50% success, but a Tandem Topgrading Interview can achieve 85%+ success.

Here's how to make the Topgrading Interview even easier and be sure to improve your hiring result. Conduct a Tandem Topgrading Interview, meaning this: have an interviewing partner, an A Player, and the two of you make up a “tag team” in which you smoothly cover for each other. Many companies doubled their hiring success from 25% to 50% with the solo Topgrading Interview, but you'll read all the case studies in which they achieved 85%+ with ... you guessed it ... Tandem Topgrading Interviews.

## Step 4: Conduct Candidate-Arranged Reference Calls

This step is easy and “puts the cork in the bottle.” You've screened candidates with the TOLS software and then conducted the phone screen and thorough Tandem Topgrading Interviews. You know you have gotten the deepest insights ever into the candidates. And why not?

After all, they knew they'd have to arrange reference calls with former bosses and others, so they happily told you the whole truth as they went into the details of their successes, mistakes, decisions, and relationships

After the Tandem Topgrading Interview, if you and your tandem interviewer want to move toward a job offer, just go through your notes and pick out the people you want to talk with – certainly all bosses in the past decade, and for managers, some peers and subordinates. Ask the candidate to arrange the calls and within a day or so they will typically get back and say yes, all are willing to talk and here is their cell number and availability.

This is your chance to verify everything the candidate said and every (tentative) conclusion you and your tandem interviewer have arrived at. The auto populated Topgrading In-Depth Reference Check Guide essentially walks you through building rapport, asking for an appraisal, you're explaining the job, and you're asking the reference to assess the candidate in relation to that job.

**You're done! And your chances are very good you will hire an A Player.**

Topgrading more than triples successful hiring because just by practicing those four easy Topgrading steps that you just learned, you can solve the biggest problems in hiring, the problems that account for 75% mis-hires:

- Rampant dishonesty by weak candidates who easily get away with fudging their resumes and faking their interviews



Topgrading solves the hiring problems of dishonesty, incomplete information, and lack of verifiability.

- Insufficient information, because most companies use superficial, 45-minute competency (“behavioral”) interviews to screen candidates. Candidates can control such interviews and easily gloss over weaker points.
- Lack of verifiability, as most reference checks get little valuable information. Since most reference checks are either fact checks with Human Resources departments, are not done at all, or they are conducted with the candidates’ buddies as references, even the weakest of candidates can get away with problem #1, rampant dishonesty.

## Why Topgrading Works!

There’s a treatment and cure for your talent headaches, and it’s not a pill. It’s the ... you knew this was coming ... Topgrading methods that are revolutionary in infusing hiring with honesty, thoroughness, and verifiability of candidate information, producing 75% and even 90%+ success.

High performers are generally truthful in their resumes and interviews, but low performers too often hype positives and hide negatives. Topgrading hiring has a “truth serum,” (#1 above) that scares away weak candidates who had falsehoods in their resumes and would have tried to fudge their interviews. That “truth serum” makes sure candidates understand that THEY will eventually have to ARRANGE reference calls with former bosses.

The Topgrading Career History Form, Topgrading Snapshot, (#2 above) and then the Tandem Topgrading Interview (#3 above) combine to cure the “lack of information” headache. For example, the Topgrading Interview covers the candidate’s entire career—every success, failure, key decision, and key relationship (including boss ratings), for every job ... and a lot more.

Topgrading also cures the “lack of verifiability” headache by requiring candidates to arrange reference calls with former bosses and others you choose (#4 above). Aah ... Topgrading brings truth and honesty, complete information on the candidate’s career, and, as frosting on the cake, everything a candidate claims will be verified through reference checks that the candidate arranges.

This is how Topgrading will permit you to double, triple, or even quadruple your success hiring and promoting high performers. That simple fact will then permit you to dramatically change your organizational culture—to raise the performance bar for everyone. And Topgrading coaching methods will help you develop and

retain top talent. The result, as the CEOs of our case studies state, is improved organizational performance.

## Topgrading ROI

Unlike any other hiring approach, Topgraders produce analyses of ROI. For example, most companies easily conclude that if they avoid even one staggeringly expensive mis-hire, their ROI of their investment in Topgrading is sky high.

If half the managers avoid JUST one mis-hire in the next five years, Topgrading costs will be paid for ... for a hundred years!

On an individual manager level, Topgrading will pack your team with high performers, which will assure your improved personal performance and greater career success. And there is frosting on the cake for you personally: because you will be able to delegate to a higher percentage of A Players, you will be able to enjoy that elusive thing ... that most dream of ... what is it called, oh yeah, work-life balance.

**From a company point of view, documented case studies are the strongest evidence of Topgrading success.**

# Chapter 3

## Topgrading Case Studies

“

“Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself, but talent instantly recognizes talent.”

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

In the 3rd Edition of Topgrading there are 40 half-page case studies and eight full length ones (some are holding companies with many separate companies) that demonstrate the success that all sizes of organizations are experiencing in hiring not just “ok” performers, but true high performers in positions ranging from entry level jobs to CEO.

You can also visit: <http://www.topgradingcasestudies.com> and read the long versions for all of the case studies that are available. This bit of online innovation gives you the details of HOW spectacular results are achieved, enabling you to emulate an approach, perhaps without even talking with the company. And it provides hundreds of examples of advice and wisdom from CEOs and heads of HR.

You can view the companies on the following pages:

# Master Chart of Topgrading Case Studies

Organization Name	Pre-Topgrading	With Topgrading
Access Development	33%	94% (total company)
American Heart Association (2005)	25%	95% (upper management)
Argo	51%	96% (Assist. VP and above)
Azura	??%	75% (total company)
Batesville Casket	60%	80% (total company)
Benco Dental	27%	60% (management)
Carestream Health	Est. 30%	74% (total IT department)
Columbus McKinnon	??%	85% (exempt jobs, globally)
Corwin Beverages	33%	92% (non-entry jobs)
DenTek	10%	92% (staff)
	0%	100% (management)
DPT	17%	75% (hired, total company)
	20%	80% (promoted, total company)
Education, Inc.	12%	78% (teachers)
	??%	89% (corporate staff)
EMC (2005 case study)	27%	95% (sales reps)
General Electric	??%	More than 80% (high potential managers)
ghSMART	Startup	100%
GSI	Est. 22%	90% (executives)
Hayes Lemmerz	??%	85% (managers promoted globally)
		74% (managers hired globally)

Hillenbrand (2005 case study)	Low	81% (management)
Home Instead (franchise)	25%	88% (caregivers)
JT Foxx Organization	2%	80% (total company)
K&N Management	21%	86% (total company)
Labshere	30%	70% (total company)
Los Ninos	50%	85% (total company)
MarineMax	25%	95% (dealership general managers)
	30%	100% (region managers)
Mint.com	Startup	90%
Netsurit	9%	75% (promotions, management)
North American Nursing Education (fictitious name)	19%	87% (school deans)
Nurse Next Door	??%	85% (corporate and caregiver)
OnyxMD	10%	90% (total company)
Anonymous Pharmaceutical Company (fictitious name)	33%	75% (sales reps)
ProService Hawaii	45%	91% (total company)
Red Door Interactive (total)	20%	90% (total company)
Ron Santa Teresa	25%	74% (total company)
Roundy's	20%	80% (store directors)
	??%	100% (senior management)
Sigma Marketing	45%	90% (total company)
Southern Tide	15%	67% (total company)
Synergia One	57%	83% (total company)
Tekmore (new name – 2005)	??%	95% (managers hired/promoted)
Triton	2%	80% (total staff)
Virtual Technology (2005 case study)	??%	98% (total company)

# Conclusion

This small book began with a typical hiring scenario. Let's revisit it, but show how Topgrading transforms "typical" to a much more effective process, with much better results:

Pre-Topgrading Hiring	Post-Topgrading Hiring
The resumes of candidates are usually incomplete and packed with hype.	The Career History Form and Topgrading Snapshot quickly tell you the most important facts about candidates.
Your interviews are not very revealing.	The tandem Topgrading Interviews, using the Topgrading Interview Guide, are extremely revealing.
Reference checks are generally worthless.	Candidate-arranged reference calls are revealing and motivate the candidate to be honest in the interview.
Too often the person hired disappoints you. Your results are: only 25% High Performers Hired	Your results, after deploying Topgrading are: 90% High Performers Hired

Of all talent management practices, the single most important, by far, is hiring and promoting high performers.

**Companies consider themselves “Topgraders” when they have 75% - 90% high performers and they report that the other parts of talent management become relatively easy:**

- Reducing turnover is a breeze when Topgrading assures a close-to-perfect job fit.
- Coaching high performers is fun; coaching underperformers is a pain.
- Succession planning is easy with a solid “bench.”

When entire companies soar in revenues and profits, growth opportunities open up, people earn more money, and—as an added huge bonus—Topgraders have such strong teams they can delegate a lot of tasks and enjoy a significantly better balance in their lives!

## Good Luck On Your Journey!

# Topgrading Resources

## Tools To Get You and Your Organization Started Topgrading Today

Call us at 847-244-5544 or learn more about all of the following resources at:

[www.topgrading.com](http://www.topgrading.com)

## How to Start Topgrading - Today!

1. **Use Topgrading Snapshots.** You can get set up in 15 minutes. Ask candidates to complete the Career History Form, fakers and low performers drop out, and you screen in just the honest, high performing candidate, in *seconds*.

[www.topgrading.com/topgrading-snapshot-2/](http://www.topgrading.com/topgrading-snapshot-2/)

2. **Ask a Topgrading Professional to interview finalists.** When the cost of a mis-hire is very high, rely on a pro to conduct final interviews. We invite you to participate, so you witness how a pro smoothly learns *all* the candidates strengths and weaker points.

<http://www.topgrading.com/professional-services/>

**3. Sign up for a public Topgrading Workshop.** If you're convinced Topgrading is worth pursuing, attend yourself or send a couple of managers. Or consider an in-house workshop. On day 1 learn the revolutionary methods through fun exercises and on day 2 conduct the most revealing interview of your career, coached by Topgrading Professionals.

<http://www.topgrading.com/training/>

## How to Roll Out Topgrading

As you have learned, the 3 basic Topgrading principles are simple: use the "truth serum," conduct the Topgrading Interview, and finally conduct reference calls organized by the candidate. To make the process quicker and easier, use the Snapshot and online interview guides. Just take those steps and you'll probably improve your hiring success from 25% to 50%.

But....Hundreds of companies have achieved over 80% hiring success, and many have achieved 90% success. Will you be satisfied with 50%? In over 3 decades working with hundreds of small companies and dozens of largest in the world, companies that have achieved 80% and even 90% success ask us to help them with...how to communicate Topgrading to the organization and how to blend Topgrading with the existing hiring and talent methods and systems.

After taking one or more of the above steps, most companies call us to help roll out Topgrading. The number is 847-244-5544. Weather you represent a billion dollor company, a division of one, or a function...or if you run a start up or are a sinble manager wanting to dramatically improve hiring, we can help.

Here are some additional Topgrading methods “common sense,” that most companies embrace:

**1. Create Job Scorecards.** Job descriptions are typically so vague that hiring managers and the candidates do NOT really understand what is needed for success - so mis-hires occur. Job Scorecards spell out *all* the accountabilities and *all* the competencies needed for success, so there are fewer mis-hires.

**2. Use Topgrading to improve coaching.** As soon as an A Player is hired, they *want* feedback and a development plan. It's easy for you to provide. Just share the *huge* amount of information you acquired in the interviews and reference checks and *they* will happily copy a sample Individual Development Plan to implement. This is a powerful way to help onboard someone and their developmental plan will turbo-boost their performance.

**3. Measure hiring success.** You know if something is worth doing, you'd better measure it but...almost no companies honestly measure the percent of high performers hired. We can show you how to establish your baseline (pre-Topgrading hiring success) and then measure it yearly. Topgraders will shine and earn

promotions because they packed their team with high performers. Non Topgraders, with their 75% mis-hires, will stick out like a sore thumb.

**4. Use Topgrading Professionals for your succession planning.** We conduct Topgrading Interviews of managers and have confidential discussions with the person's boss(s), peers, and direct reports, and you get extremely thorough appraisals of their abilities and potentials. They get the most powerful feedback and coaching.

## Get Your Questions Answered

1. Email questions to [sales@topgrading.com](mailto:sales@topgrading.com) and we'll get back to you promptly.
2. Call **847-244-5544** and we'll be happy to talk in person.

Thank you for your  
interest in Topgrading  
and for reading this  
short book. I hope it  
helps you improve talent  
in your organization!

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Smart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

*Brad Smart*

# Topgrading Testimonials



“In a previous start-up I worked for, hiring was done haphazardly. At Mint.com, I’ve had very rigorous hiring. We use a technique called Topgrading, which reveals patterns in behavior. In the history of Mint, I’ve only fired two people and one left voluntarily.”

- Aaron Patzer  
Founder / Mint.com



“There is no doubt that Topgrading contributed to our 6,000% growth in revenues since we began Topgrading.”

- Jim Twining  
CEO / Southern Tide



“Brad Smart is the #1 thought leader in the world on hiring best practices. As the global talent leader for a publicly traded top medical technology company, I know of no other hiring method that comes close to what Topgrading achieves if you want to hire ‘A’ level, high performers at every pay level.”

- John H.Dickey

Sr. Vice President, Corporate Support / Hillenbrand



“Brad’s Topgrading methods helped us maximize talent at GE.”

- Jack Welch

Author of *Winning* & CEO / General Electric (retired)



“Topgrading is the #1 reason for our company success.”

- Scott Mesh  
CEO / Los Ninos Services



“In the fight against cardiovascular disease and stroke, Topgrading helped us raise an additional \$50 million over the previous year. Topgrading has saved lives.”

- Cass Wheeler  
CEO / American Heart Association (retired)



“Topgrading has allowed us to triple the projected sales for the office. A Player caregivers impress clients, who refer us, and A Players refer other A Players for us to hire.”

- Michael Steinberg  
Franchise Owner / Home Instead Senior Care



“Brad and three of his team have all conducted Topgrading workshops for our managers, and all four received top ratings.”

- Kevin Silva  
former SVP Human Resources / Argo



“Topgrading has been an invaluable tool for DenTek in hiring and retaining high-level performers. Over the past six years we have blossomed into a world-class consumer goods company with explosive growth and great opportunities, due largely to the hard work of A Players recruited through the Topgrading process.”

- David Fox  
President / Dentek Oral Care



“If you read it with the right kind of attention, Topgrading is the most important book ever written.”

- Pasquale Scopelliti  
Recruiter Magazine



“After implementing Topgrading for all new hires and promotions, I am thrilled. Our organization has embraced the philosophy and process and we are seeing the results... the right people in the right positions.”

- Tim Tevens

President & CEO / Columbus McKinnon



“We’ve grown from one to forty-six locations and have experienced 50% to 100% growth annually since Topgrading.”

- Ken Sim

Founder / Nurse Next Door



“No company can expect to beat the competition unless it has the best human capital and promotes these people to pivotal positions. Topgrading is the definitive manual for becoming a high performer and recognizing those traits in others.”

- Larry Bossidy

Author of *Execution* & Chairman / Honeywell (retired)



“The tandem interview process is one of the best tools in our arsenal for getting an in-depth understanding of high-potential managers.” (2012 quote)

- Bill Conaty

SVP Human Resources / General Electric (retired)





*Dr. Brad Smart*

Topgrading methods are the most effective and proven. Proof? Forty case study companies featured in the 3rd Edition of Topgrading more than tripled their success hiring not just “good” performers but true high performers ... and the case study CEOs say Topgrading made their companies more successful.

Topgrading methods are commonsense, but they are not yet commonplace. Topgrading is unique in assuring honest candidate information, complete candidate information, and all conclusions validated in reference checks arranged by the candidate.

By avoiding common hiring mistakes, you can avoid costly mis-hires, create high performing teams, turbo-boost your career, and enjoy more work-life balance, because you can delegate more to your outstanding team ... all because you implemented Topgrading.