

Drayton Bird

Hire People Better Than Yourself



I confess: this is not my idea. I have no idea who came up with it.

But I know my old boss David Ogilvy's dictum, "If we hire people better than ourselves we will become a company of giants; if we hire people worse, we will become a company of dwarves."

However, David (like a lot of good people) had no qualms in stealing stuff. Nevertheless it is a natural failing - through insecurity, I guess - to hire people that aren't as smart as we are. That way we feel less threatened.

But I can think of more than one occasion when I have taken on people who I thought were better than me in some way. One was Brian Thomas who came into our Covent Garden offices in 1980 and said "Do you have any jobs?"

I asked why he had come in. He said, "I've been reading your house ads, and you sound like the kind of people I'd like to work for."

(Hint: remember that your ads are certainly read more by your staff than by prospects, and also by possible employees).

I spent ten minutes talking to Brian and realised he knew more about the mail order business than I did, so we hired him. Within a year he was the managing director (I couldn't run a fruit stall).

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."

—Albert Einstein

More recently I hired a partner, who certainly has a better analytical mind than I do (As indeed she should, being a Doctor of Philosophy).

So remember, try not to be daunted by clever people; you're a lot better off hiring them than trying to do everything yourself.

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About the Author

In 2003, the Chartered Institute of Marketing named Drayton Bird one of 50 living individuals who have shaped today's marketing. He has spoken in 53 countries for many organisations, and much of what he discusses derive from his work with many of the world's greatest brands. These include American Express, Audi, Bentley, British Airways, Cisco, Deutsche Post, Ford, IBM, McKinsey, Mercedes, Microsoft, Nestle, Philips, Procter & Gamble, Toyota, Unilever, Visa and Volkswagen. In various capacities – mostly as a writer – Drayton has helped sell everything from Airbus planes to Peppa Pig. His book, *Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing*, out in 17 languages, has been the UK's best seller on the subject every year since 1982.

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