

# Passion and principles: Keys to unlocking talent

By Philip Carrigan

One Pharma president's 32nd-floor office has a marvelous skyline view and the experienced industry player sees more than most. But on this particular morning he wanted to know my views. He asked me point blank why we recommend the executives and leaders we did. When searching for a manager or director, what did we look for?

Warren Buffett has more CEOs working for him than anyone else and looks for three qualities in his senior staff: integrity, intelligence, and energy. If they don't have the first, the other two will kill them, Buffett says.

Closer to home, Haruo Naito, the president of Eisai, knows exactly what he wants in his successor. My source explains that Naito is looking for somebody who is blessed with luck and good fortune. Naito believes luck and good fortune can shine upon anyone who is passionate, enthusiastic and most importantly, puts patients' needs first.

Nobuyuki Baba, the former president of Novartis, has also influenced Optia Partners in the way we find the best people for Pharma organizations. Baba is renowned for his passion and his in-depth knowledge of Japanese physicians, and this background helped in the hugely successful launch of Diovan working with Mochida. As Baba-san demonstrated, knowing who to partner with is also a key to the success of a product.

Strong leaders come in all shapes and sizes. In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins and Jerry Porris debunk the myth of the flamboyant, take-no-prisoners type of leader. They found that business leaders with humility and a dedication to purpose have quietly and systematically built and transformed ordinary organizations into the very best companies in the world.

Many of the leaders profiled in their book were described as "quiet", "reserved", "awkward in public settings" yet were amazingly effective in business. Research suggests that being humble, but unwavering toward the right goals, are far more effective attributes than being charged with a larger-than-life personality. You do not need "rock star" executives. Instead, you need men and women who strive for humility and use their willpower.

It is also important to know who not to hire. Soren Celinder's short-lived leadership of Pfizer is a good example of an executive appointment gone horribly wrong. When Pfizer brought Hiromitsu Iwasaki out of retirement in order to put Pfizer back on track we noted his sentiments. "Operational results are important, but building trust (with our employees) is equally important," he said.

In addition to a successful track record of launching products and the ability to build future leaders, a defining leadership characteristic is the ability to successfully build a winning team and to motivate others to go the extra mile and to become future leaders within an organization.

A quick and easy test to identify a person's leadership qualities is to ask former subordinates. Confidentiality must be a priority, but if you can find someone who has

moved on from the former company, then this scuttlebutt approach can be enlightening. The reference check of former bosses is another approach, but I have found this “on-the-record” approach sometimes riddled with various agendas and not hugely enlightening.

In summary, here are the five keys to use when opening the doors to top talent:

1. Integrity and character.
2. Passion. Those who excel are passionate.
3. Watch out for the big talker.
4. What are their values and principles?
5. Ask around.