

Recruiter Magazine *Online*

Topgrading: Power Tool for Boosting Recruitment Sales

by *Lori Green*

Forward by *Arthur Young*,

Recruiter.com began sharing excerpts from Topgrading, 'How leading companies win by hiring, coaching and keep the best people' by Brad Smart Ph.D. Smart and Associates in February 2003. At this time Topgrading was listed in Amazon's top 25 books on recruiting at the number 25. Recruiter.com ran a series of articles, including:

*[Keeping "C" players on your team isn't fair to the top performers](#)

*[The secret to attracting A players](#)

*[The Astronomical Costs of Mis-Hires](#)

*[Is your company's talent creating or destroying share-holder value?](#)

As expected our audience shared these articles with their hiring managers and client executives. By late May 2003, Topgrading had reached number 1 in Amazon's list of book in recruiting.

Our community has responded to Brad's work, in my opinion because his study and our presentation can educate hiring managers, executives and high ranking administrators about the **value** of our service (few media outlets or books cover this topic in a comprehensive manner).

Topgrading as a concept, can only be embraced passionately by a small percentage of the populace. Those that will not invest in themselves or have not or can not are turned-off.

Topgrading requires risk taking. What if I'm not a 'A'? What if my company will not follow-through, what then? What about the people who don't belong, how do we, can we handle the fall-out.

Great companies are not born. Great companies analyze, study solutions and take calculated risks to grow and win.

Article by Lori Green:

The more you get to know your clients, the more you spot their C players and wonder, "Why don't they redeploy their C players and hire me to find A player replacements!?"

How exciting is it when your clients call you to say, "We're already a lean organization, and I'm tired of carrying C players, so help me replace them with A

players!"

Recruiters historically have generated business by building relationships with clients, so that they are called when attrition or growth take place. More and more recruiters, however, are proactively generating sales by influencing their clients to create attrition by topgrading their organizations.

"Topgrading" is an emerging best practice, and four years after its publication, *Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping the Best People* is Amazon.com's #1 (of 914 books) bestseller in the Recruiting category.

Dr. Brad Smart, President of Smart & Associates, Inc. (of Wadsworth, Illinois) coined the term topgrading to mean creating teams of A players, by hiring the best, developing Bs into As, and removing C players.

His best practices have been embraced by Jack Welch (GE), Larry Bossidy (Honeywell), Fred Rockwood (Hillenbrand Industries), and hundreds of other companies.

Search executive Keith Gsell, president of The Heritage Group based in Greensboro, North Carolina says, "I have given over 100 copies of *Topgrading* to clients, who read the book and say they simply have to change out their C players." Jon Bartos, president of Jonathan Scott International, says, "I give *Topgrading* to all of my clients, and since I've topgraded my own office using Brad's Chronological In-Depth Structured (CIDS) interview approach, we've seen revenue grow by 40%."

When companies topgrade, recruiters make money. When companies topgrade, they naturally want to hire nothing but A players. Brad Smart defines A player as "someone qualifying among the top 10% of talent for the salary." No matter what the salary is, minimum wage for a Wal-Mart Greeter or zillions for a CEO, topgrading means hiring "best of class," the best talent available at a specific compensation level. Given that definition, there's no reason why every job should not be filled by an A player. As Jon Bartos puts it, "That's what our clients pay us for - getting the best talent available for the comp they're willing to pay."

Recruiters can stimulate sales by doing more than handing their clients the *Topgrading* book, hoping to be part of a topgrading project. Recruiters can encourage their clients to use the thorough screening processes described in *Topgrading*, so that they will know candidates better, assuring a higher percentage of good hires. Companies like Lincoln Financial Group, Hillenbrand Industries, American Heart Association, and others claim a 90% success rate in hiring, using the CIDS Interview. Smart has personally conducted over 6,000 CIDS Interviews and worked with hundreds of public, private and governmental organizations of every size. His research shows that 50% of the time external hires turn out to be mis-hires, so recruiters are doing a huge favor for their clients by showing them how to improve.

Recruiters can also encourage clients to use the same thorough assessment approach to measuring internal talent, as GE, Honeywell, MarineMax, Hayes Lemmerz, Hillenbrand, and Lincoln do...and internal assessments inevitably lead to external recruiting projects. Finally, when clients feel they lack the skills to perform thorough assessments, recruiters can recommend firms like Smart & Associates, Inc.

You can find out more about how Topgrading can boost your business and create tangible benefits for your clients by checking out www.topgrading.com; or by contacting Brad Smart at SmartandAssoc@aol.com or calling (847) 265-7415. Bottom line - topgrading has made CEOs, presidents, boards of directors, and all hiring managers take notice. A teams are achievable, and it's their responsibility to recruit to that high standard.