The Paradox of Human Potential

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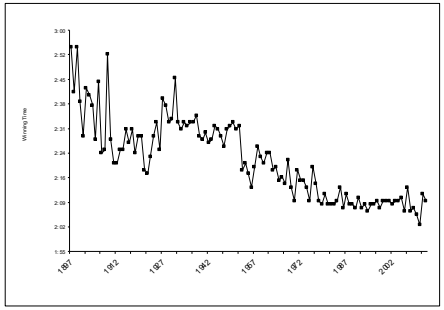

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What are we capable of?

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What explains human performance?

Nature

Nurture

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Francis Galton

A man must ***inherit*** good health, a love of mental work, a strong purpose and considerable ambition, in order to achieve successes of the high order of which we are speaking. The deficiency of any one of these qualities would certainly be injurious, and *probably be fatal to his chance of obtaining great distinction*.

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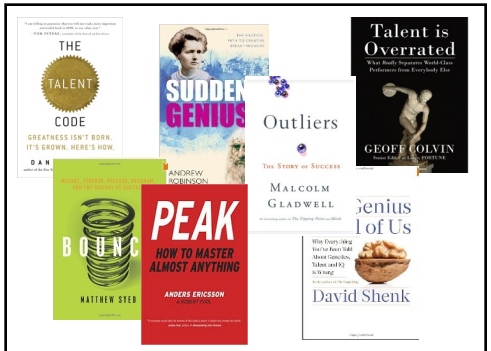

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What explains human performance?

Nature
[Identification]

Nurture
[Development]

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What is talent?

Consider the following scenario: An employee or potential recruit comes to you and asks whether they have 'what it takes' for success in your domain. What kinds of things do you consider?

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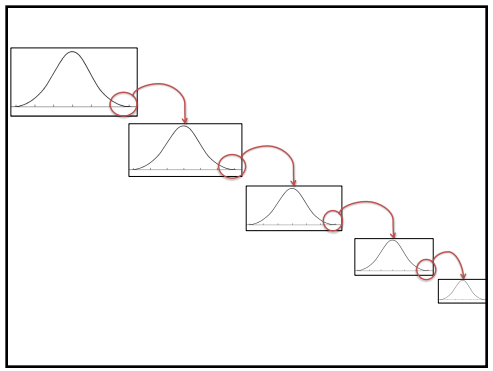

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What is talent?

Does it need to be identified?

Purpose of talent identification – allows an efficient use of resources in environments where resources are limited.

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We're not as good at this process as we think…

Solving sport's 'relative age' problem: a systematic review of proposed solutions

Long-Term Prognostic Validity of Talent Selections: Comparing National and Regional Coaches, Laypersons and Novices

MEDICINE & SCIENCE IN SPORTS

Accuracy From the start: Evaluating draft selections in the National Hockey League

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An Uneven Playing Field: Talent Identification Systems and the Perpetuation of Participation Biases in High Performance Sport

Nick Wattie and Joseph Baker

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Lau Farah | Joseph Baker

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D. Kuo, J. Fraser-Thomas, J. Baker

REVIEW

To draft or not to draft? A systematic review of North American sports' entry draft

Kathryn Johnston | Lau Farah | Harleen Ghuman | Joseph Baker

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Why is identifying talent so difficult?

1. Lack of appropriate talent models

   Talent isn't one thing:

   - Physical
   - Mental
   - Psychological
   - Cognitive

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Why is identifying talent so difficult?

1. Lack of appropriate talent models
2. Over-simplification of the process

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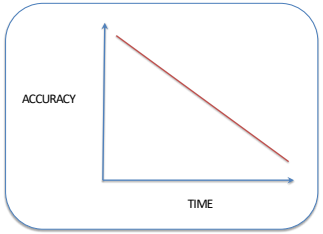

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Why is identifying talent so difficult?

1. Lack of appropriate talent models
2. Over-simplification of the process
3. Biases in our approach

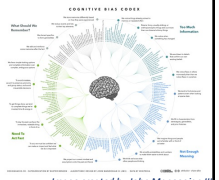

Image created by John Manoogian III

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How do we improve?

1. Appreciate the complexity of the process

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What explains human performance?

Nature

X

Nurture

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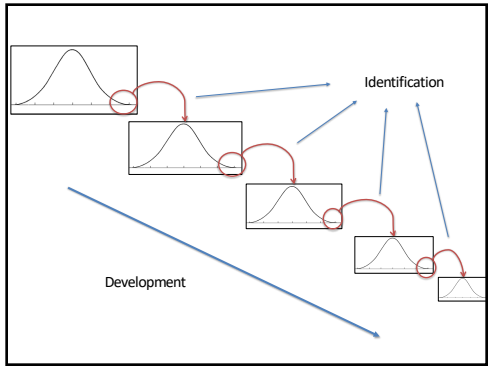

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How do we improve?

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2. Limit measurement 'error' and bias

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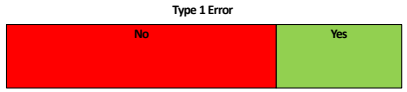

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How do we improve?

1. Appreciate the complexity of the process
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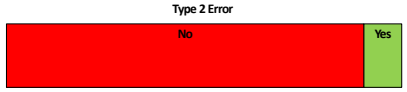

Determine what type of error you're most comfortable with. This will depend on the philosophy and goals of your program as well as the resources available.

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How do we improve?

1. Appreciate the complexity of the process
2. Limit measurement 'error' and bias.
3. Shift from 'identification' to 'development'.

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Developing an Effective Development System

1. What elements are critical for future success?
   - Short-term (performance) vs. long-term (retention)?
2. How are you going to measure/assess it?
   - As a fixed variable or something that changes with learning/experience?
3. How are you going to evaluate accuracy?
   - Do you follow up to assess effectiveness of your approach?

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The Recipe for Disaster

- Undermine motivation and satisfaction
- See employees as fixed commodities instead of developable assets
- Create environments that focus on performance and competition instead of development

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Key Messages

1. Forget about talent
   - If it exists, we don't know how to measure it.
2. Focus on development
   - Increasing quality of working environments is where you will have greatest impact on employee outcomes.

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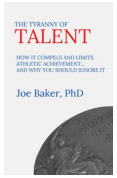

Thank you!
Questions?

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