

'Best companies hire for attitude, train for skill'

By Bill Taylor, Harvard Business Review

Many of us who are hungry for the latest dispatches from the war for talent look to Silicon Valley. We want to know Google's secret to hiring the best people or Mark Zuckerberg's one tip for hiring employees. But in a world where most companies don't operate on the frontiers of digital transformation, and most employees aren't tech geeks or app developers, our appetite for unconventional talent strategies should probably extend to more conventional parts of the economy. Like, say, an amazing fast-food chain called Pal's Sudden Service.

At first blush, there's nothing all that amazing about Pal's. It has 26 locations in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia, all within an 80-mile radius of its home base in Kingsport, Tenn. It sells burgers, hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, fries, shakes—standard fast-food fare, although the taste and quality have a well-deserved reputation for excellence.

Dig deeper, though, and you see that nothing about Pal's is standard for its business, or any business. The most obvious difference is its fanatical devotion to speed and accuracy.

But Pal's is not just absurdly fast. It is also staggeringly accurate. So what can the rest of us learn from Pal's? First, the best companies hire for attitude and train for skill.

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