

# The Value of Summer Camp in Today's World

Written by Scott Ralls 2/25/2014

"Thanks Andy Pritikin for this great blog...It fits Southwoods Summer Camp so well.

Today's NY Times featured a superb article by renown columnist and author Thomas Friedman called "How to Get a Job at Google."

In this piece, Friedman interviews Laszlo Bock, the senior vice president of people operations for Google — the guy in charge of hiring for one of the world's most successful companies, and a model for companies in the 21st century. Bock states that Google has determined that "G.P.A.'s and test scores are worthless as a criteria for hiring... We found that they don't predict anything." He also noted that the "proportion of people without any college education at Google has increased over time" — now as high as 14 percent on some teams.

Bock tells us that for ALL POSITIONS AT GOOGLE, they look for five "hiring attributes" (character traits) which have nothing to do with GPA, SAT scores, or college alma mater: "the No. 1 thing we look for is general cognitive ability, and it's not I.Q. It's learning ability. It's the ability to process on the fly. It's the ability to pull together disparate bits of information." Thinking quick on your feet, being able to take various pieces of knowledge and put it into a tangible plan. This is stuff that campers and staff learn through experience at summer camp each and every day- especially at Liberty Lake, with our dynamic elective program.

The second character trait is one that the Partnership for 21st Century Skills pointed out as the most important life skill which is the most DEFICIENT in new job hires at fortune 500 companies: LEADERSHIP, "in particular emergent leadership as opposed to traditional leadership. Traditional leadership is... were you president of the chess club? Were you vice president of sales? How quickly did you get there? We don't care. What we care about is, when faced with a problem and you're a member of a team, do you, at the appropriate time, step in and lead. And just as critically, do you step back and stop leading, do you let someone else lead? Because what's critical to be an effective leader in this environment is you have to be willing to relinquish power."

At Summer Camp, leadership opportunities abound in camper groups/bunks, at activities, and at special/spirit events like "Color War". It's the basis of our dynamic and popular (LIT program at Southwoods), and young, aspiring staff grow from counselors to group leaders to assistant division leaders to division leaders and administrators at Camp- at each step of the way taking on more and more leadership responsibilities. Camp churns out dynamic leaders on a regular basis, like a high functioning workforce development program!

Other hiring attributes include Humility and Ownership: "Sense of responsibility, the sense of ownership, to step in, to try to solve any problem — and the humility to step back and embrace the better ideas." Campers and staff at most camps have a tremendous sense of ownership, MUST work together with their group/bunk, problem solve regularly, defer to their peers, and learn from their failures on an everyday basis.

The least important attribute that Google looks for is actually "expertise." According to Bock, Google prefers creative out-of-the box thinkers, rather than "experts" who have spent years in specific areas. Proof that being a well-rounded leader and creative thinker is of utmost importance.

Friedman eloquently ends his piece by stating "for most young people, going to college and doing well is still the best way to master the tools needed for many careers. But Bock is saying something important to them, too: Beware. Your degree is not a proxy for your ability to do any job. The world only cares about — and pays off on — what you can do with what you know (and it doesn't care how you learned it). And in an age when innovation is increasingly a group endeavor, it also cares about a lot of soft skills — Leadership, Humility, Collaboration, Adaptability and Loving to Learn and Re-learn." These are all life skills which are honed on the fields, waterfronts, stages, blacktop and bunks of Summer Camp every day each summer.

So to summarize, summer camp provides a unique, experiential environment in which our children learn and practice the character traits and hiring attributes which the best companies in the world are seeking- all for far less than the \$50,000+ per year that many parents are willing to pay, or put their children into years of debt for. Sounds like a great idea, huh!

Feel free to share this blog with your friends, including those who don't send their children to Camp!!!!