

URL: <https://ecorner-stag.tcg.stanford.edu/quick-dips/wisdom-via-the-wizard-of-oz/>

Rich Barton, co-founder of Expedia, the Zillow Group of sites and Glassdoor, turns to the classic tale "The Wizard of Oz" for a lesson on team basics. The traits that the scarecrow, cowardly lion and the tin man sought are the exact ones to look for among members of any team you join. Intelligence, a sensible amount of courage, and genuine care for people are essential for a team, Barton says.



Transcript

- The lesson here is about, how do you know you're getting in with the right lot of people as you embark on your careers? And how do you evaluate who is going to be.... Who do you think exhibits those really rare combination of leadership qualities? And I use this Wizard of Oz short-hands.. The three main characters of the Wizard of Oz were the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion, and the Tinman.. And each one was seeking something that they were missing.. This was their quest in the Wizard of Oz.. They were going to the Emerald City to visit the man behind the curtain, the all great and powerful mighty wizard who was going to grant them each a wish.. And the wish for the Scarecrow was that he had.. - [Audience Member] Brain (mumbles).. - Brains, alright thank you.. Good, getting some participation..

Brains, okay.. So, lesson number one as you look for people in teams and companies is they're smart.. They exhibit brains.. They have brains.. This seems like a simple thing.. It's not actually all that simple.. And it's not actually easy to discern many times.. Especially early in your careers.. But this is super important.. And in the information economy, the economy that most of you are going into, there aren't factories and trucks and trains..

And there's not as much physical capital and assets for companies these days.. All the companies I'm involved with, the assets are all human assets.. It's human capital.. And the work product of people's brains are the assets of the company.. Code and brands and ideas.. So joining a company and joining up with people who are smart is really super important.. And having a work environment that takes care of smart people is really important.. So that's Scarecrow, number one, brains.. The Cowardly Lion, what did he seek? - [Audience Member] Courage (mumbles).. - Courage, alright, good..

Someone's gonna break out into song here soon, I'm sure.. Alright, courage.. People and teams have to have courage.. It can't be crazy courage because too much courage, like if these are three legs of a stool and you have too much courage and not enough brains, the stool tips over.. Because you're being stupid.. You're being stupidly risk loving.. You wanna have courage, but you want to take smart bets.. But it's an obvious one.. And then the third, and perhaps the most important is what the Tinman sought.. He was seeking heart..

Alright, heart.. This is the third leg of the stool.. It's really important that you join teams of people who care about people.. Again, it's people who are driving the economy.. It's the work product of your brands.. And life is too short to fall in with people who don't care about people.. And if you happen to fall in with people who are super passionate about something and are on a mission to change the world in some unbelievable way, that is even better.. Because we all actually don't really want jobs.. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves to change the world so that we can put our little dent in the universe...