

CATCH A FALLING STAR!

Are you spending far more time with some employees than others? Have you ever taken time out to understand why?

The fact is that some employees **require** more of your time than others and some employees **demand** more time than others. Understanding the reasons why this may be can assist to ensure your time is balanced.

Don't fall in the trap of keeping those you could do without and losing those that you would love to keep. If some employees demand too much of your time you could be overlooking employees who are less demanding. This can lead to the non-demanding people feeling overlooked and unrecognised.

In some instances this can result in resignations or falling performance standards – getting the right balance right is critical! Let us examine performance and maintenance categories of employees and then explore ways to ensure your time is allocated appropriately to all.

PERFORMANCE STANDARD

HIGH PERFORMING: Exceeding expectations in multi-facets of their role; frequently go above and beyond the call of duty.

GOOD PERFORMING: Meets expectations and demonstrates good competencies. Guidance required from their manager from time to time.

LOW PERFORMING: May be a new employee who is yet to meet expectations, or an existing employee who is underperforming.

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

HIGH MAINTENANCE: Makes frequent direct or indirect demands time for their manager's time for various reasons and at regular intervals.

LOW MAINTENANCE: Makes little or no demands of their manager's time.

Employee Categories	Maintenance Level
High Performing	Employee Induced High Maintenance
	Low Maintenance
Good Performing	Employee Induced High Maintenance
	Low Maintenance
Low Performing	Manager Induced High Maintenance

What makes an employee high maintenance?

Firstly, let's consider the 'willing and able'. Do they have the willingness to do the job but lack some of the abilities required? Or do they lack the willingness but have the ability?

Ability

When one of your team lacks ability in one or more areas of their role, the demand on your time with training, coaching and monitoring can be particularly high.

A well thought out and structured induction program can ensure new employees are able to meet the demands of their new role within a short period of time. They need easy access to you or another skilled team member to ensure their performance standards meet the demands of their role within minimal time delay.

Delegating training, coaching or monitoring can reduce your time drained, although remember, delegation without follow-up becomes abdication. It is important that you ultimately review progress and provide appropriate feedback.

If an employee previously had the ability, but performance standards have declined, it is generally not the ability but rather the attitude UNLESS of course new procedures or processes have been introduced.

Attitudinal or Personal Factors – Unwilling

Employees who lack willingness usually demonstrate one or more of the following traits:

- Insecure and/or emotional
- Selfish
- Highly competitive (win/lose)
- Lacking in self motivation
- Lacking confidence
- Poor relationships with colleagues
- Argumentative
- Highly talkative/disruptive
- Problem dweller
- High need for recognition
- Confrontational
- Poor work ethic

If an employee has recently developed any one of these traits you need to be very attentive and thorough. It is most likely there is a reason behind this change; therefore you need to sensitively uncover why this is so. Identifying the underlying reasons will assist in providing the solutions.

They may be ill, suffering some form of difficulty in their personal or business life – a problem uncovered sensitively can generally be resolved.

If these traits are an ongoing, longstanding issue they can drain energy from you personally but the entire work team can be negatively impacted. These impacts ripple further to the broader organisation and potentially your customers.

High Performing – High Maintenance

Allocating the required time is an excellent investment towards achieving the business outcomes expected of you and well worth the time. Some STARS perform simply to impress you and others and require regular feedback and recognition.

They often like living their work life in the spot light and have a strong desire to achieve and be recognised. By recognising those that achieve excellent results you can actually encourage others to reach the heights of their colleagues.

So go ahead, spend the time with them but make sure it is not to the detriment of others. Constant recognition of select individuals can breed resentment and you could end up with one star and the rest of the team dysfunctional.

Good Performing – High Maintenance

Similar to the high performing, high maintenance people can demand recognition for just doing their job. You may well feel like saying “Congratulations, you get to keep your job!” With someone in this category constantly demanding your time you really need to uncover what is prompting their neediness.

Do they constantly come to you in order to check the next course of action they should take? If so, they may lack confidence in their decision making capacity; if you keep providing them with the answer, this will continue. Try instead to say “That’s a really good question – what do you think you should do?”

I even asked someone to go away and think about the question for five to ten minutes and see what they can come back to me with. When they came back they had three quarters of the answer, “That’s great you nearly have it all covered but what about...?”

This became a constant approach with this individual, rather than always providing an answer I consistently re-posed the question to them and then worked through their response, an excellent coaching and confidence building exercise and time well spent!

Low Performing High Maintenance

As mentioned earlier, new employees are often high maintenance during the first few weeks and months working with you and spending the right amount of time is critical to ensure they perform in accordance with your work practices as quickly as possible.

More frustrating for you is probably the individual who was performing at the expected level but their standards have slipped and now you need to performance manage. Time consuming and often stressful for all parties involved. Make sure you have the facts, make certain there isn’t an underlying reason such as illness, personal or workplace difficulties that you are unaware of.

Problems uncovered sensitively provide the best opportunities for successful resolution. It is critical you address performance issues promptly and appropriately, team members make judgments rightly or wrongly, not only on other team members but on you as well.

Low Maintenance Employees – High Performance and Good Performance

If appropriate time is not allocated they may well develop a sense a being taken for granted or perhaps feel undervalued, used or abused. If this occurs on an ongoing basis they will either seek alternative employment where they believe they will be valued or their performance standards may decline.

For high performers they may become a good performer but no longer the star they once were and good performers may slip to the point that performance management is required.

Beyond anything else, investing your time to provide appropriate feedback and recognition to all staff is vital!

Prevention is better than cure; during the selection process it is extremely beneficial to uncover and identify their likely ongoing needs and demands. Skills testing and psychological profiling can certainly assist with this. To find out more or perhaps to discuss some of the categories of High Maintenance Employees and which strategies you could implement for greater time management and staff retention feel free to contact me.

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