



## **Don't Promote Your Frontline Talent**

Most managers see talent as a rare and special commodity but that is probably a misguided view, we all have talents, what is rare is to find someone in a job that suits that persons talents and behavioural characteristics. Career progression usually means rising through a rigid hierarchy of jobs and pay and rewards are usually linked to an employee's climb of that ladder. Promotion means status and usually higher pay so naturally people aspire to that, indeed it is often the case that if they do not aspire to progression in that structured way then they are seen somehow as deficient.

This traditional view of people at work can be a problem however. MBA work with clients with the goal of top performing organisations but if good employees see it as essential to move on from a job they are good at then often this is at odds with the company's goal. Top performing companies require top performing people *at all levels* and if the only way they can be rewarded with money or status is to in effect leave the job they are good at then the issue is obvious.

There is a well known theory from one of the (many!) business gurus out there that people in any organisation rise to the level of their incompetence, that is they get promoted until they end up in a job one above the level they can perform at. Theory or cliché we see it happening and most managers we talk to can recognise the symptoms as well. Companies promote good salespeople to be bad sales managers, good operatives to be bad supervisors and good managers into bad leaders. It's not wrong to promote from within if the internal candidate is suitable but it's lazy and destructive to promote from within when you end up wrecking a career and causing yourself two problems (the job that the employee was promoted out of and the job they are now failing in!). When searching for a new person to fill a role of course you should look at the people within the business and give them an equal chance to take on a new role but if the only way that an employee can be recognised or rewarded in your organisation is by promotion out of their existing job then you have a problem. Retention is as important a weapon in today's Talent Wars as recruitment.

Don't believe that some roles are so easy they don't require talent, if an organisation is going to excel then all it's employees must be good at what they do. Very often we undervalue the people who have most customer contact! .Think about how often your delivery driver interacts with customers (sometimes at all levels) and then think about

the status of that job compared with your financial director and how much influence the FD has on customers.

So match people to the jobs, pay them more to keep them rather than pay them more to fail and reward them with the other things people value, recognition, influence and status.

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