



## **Staffing With Achievers**

Do you remember the old adage about all employees being willing, some of them “willing” to work and the rest “willing” to let them? It is one of those phrases that always evokes a chuckle but a tinge of truth at the same time since most managers are not fortunate enough to have their entire staff running “on all 10’s”, so to speak. In fact, according to Harvard School of Business, only about one-third of the employees in most companies consistently contribute at a level proximal to their capacity! An even more astonishing statistic via Norman Augustine is that the top one percent of achievers in a typical organization produce nearly twenty times the per capita output of the bottom half.

Now if you are manager of a company with no customers to please, no deadlines, and no concern with the “bottom-line”, this is not alarming information. But if you run an organization where these issues are significant, you cannot afford to have an operation full of 5’s, 6’s, and 7’s when your competition across the street is staffed with 8’s, 9’s, and 10’s. All businesses are more competitive these days than ever before and market share advances are simply not accomplished by organizations composed of low achievers.

But if the best management decision is to replace the weak links with stronger contributors, how, practically speaking, can that be accomplished without creating internal and external discord? And how do you go about advertising for and interviewing a candidate for a position which is still being filled by a current employee?

First of all, the subject of internal discord: Is replacing a low-performing current employee really worth it in the end? Will customers who know the individual and other employees who have worked with him or her cause difficulty for the institution? Even in a small town environment, an overwhelming majority of management experts say no. In fact, they say that quite often, the opposite occurs. Let’s face it, most employees in the organization know who the low-performers are. Many of the achievers must even wonder at times that, if by allowing low performance to persist unchecked, does the manager really notice or value performance at all? It is most often true that when the manager finally does take action, most 8’s, 9’s, and 10’s adopt an “it was about time” attitude, while the 5’s, 6’s, and 7’s work a little harder, having seen that performance is noticed and does count in the organization. It is not necessarily a negative stimulant to think that they could be next if their performance is beneath expectations.

By and large, the client reaction is amazingly similar to that of high-performing employees. Those who do not or will not understand the value of decisions regarding efficiency and productivity in an organization are very few. And those few can hardly begin to outweigh the value of a professional and fully functioning staff.

Now, the second subject: How does one go about it? Advertising the position is cumbersome and sometimes quite complicated. The manager has to be so discrete about the process, he can easily seem deceptive to the potential employee. Significantly more effective is the use of



an outside firm. By being able to approach potential candidates as a third party, a search firm can conduct a full search of all qualified individuals in a given geographical area or industry sector who are capable of filling the position. Without knowing the identity of your institution, the resultant candidates can be referenced, screened, and their backgrounds submitted to you for scrutiny. Not until the personal interview stage of the process do you have to reveal your organization to the selected candidates, and yet, you have been given the opportunity to know them in depth through the firm's third-party efforts. You can be very close to a hiring decision before you have to take action on the current employee.

Remember that the highest performer in your department or organization is not the one who establishes the standard of performance. Rather, the poorest performer whom you allow to remain employed establishes the standard. It is said that no organization is any stronger than its weakest link, and if that is true, you as a manager need to consider your responsibilities seriously in this area. Your bonus: You will be pleasantly surprised at how much more productive a staff running on all 10's can be!