

Tough at the Top

Resource #4



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Getting our teams ready for the future

Chapter 4: The Cossack Riders

A team needs every one of its members. Engaging leaders recognise the value in Talent intelligence – which means recognising who’s performing brilliantly right now, and understanding how to develop the brilliant performers of the future. In this chapter, Adam faced a challenge all leaders dread.

One of his most successful and best performing Cossack Riders was ready to move on to a new challenge. He was performing at his peak for the Starlight, and recognised there would be even greater opportunities for him at the Rodeo.



“It’s just not fair” said Adam to Helen, taking a mug of tea and sitting down in the chair she offered him. “Why did it have to be one of the Cossack riders? They’re the best act I’ve got.”

“And that’s exactly why he wants Jose. Nobody headhunts our bad performers, do they?”



Losing our best team performer is a difficult reality of workplace life. Wanting to progress their career elsewhere is a natural choice for many, and we need to ready ourselves for this.

- 1) Firstly we need to remember that as managers, we are facilitators of people's success. If we have done everything in Chapter three with every member of our team, we should know their vision for the organisation and what they see their part is in it. By making sure we're giving them the opportunities they want to progress, we will do better at holding onto our best performers.
- 2) However, if a team member tells us they are definitely leaving, we shouldn't take this as a personal insult. Instead we should ask ourselves how we can best manage their exit, and who will take their place?



One model for analysing your performers in your team is to use a succession plan. Identifying people who could step up when someone moves on. This model is based on the Top-grading framework by Brad Smart.

The process:

- 1) Rank your people A to C in terms of their personal drive for promotion.
- 2) Rank them 1 to 3 against values that are important to you, i.e. knowledge, leadership or passion.



Once you've ranked your employees according to their desire and readiness for promotion, you can begin creating strategies to ensure they all get what they need to progress in the way they want. For example:

A1 Ready and Able: Promote asap

B1 Some desire and able: Coach on career potential

C1 No desire and able: Engage in a way that will satisfy them

C3 No desire and not able: Establish if they can develop and if wish to stay with company

Your A1s are probably the ones who are ready and able to take on new responsibilities right now – and also are the people who are both most likely, and most able, to leave if you don't give them the progression they crave. Consider progressing them as soon as possible to ensure they stay happy and motivated.

Of course, sometimes it's just not possible for you to give your employees what they're looking for, and they will end up leaving. Rather than simply bury your head in the sand and pray this never happens, it's a good idea to prepare for how you can replace them:

In your business/team, who are your best performers (your A1s) and what would it mean if they left or were heat hunted?

On a scale of 1-10, how happy are those high performers in their careers within your organisation/team? (If you don't know - how are you going to find out?)

When they come to leave (which they may well do) who will step up to take their place (A2)?

[Dotted-line response box]

What can you do to ensure you and your organisation/team are prepared should this happen?

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