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**Got Growth?**

# **Choose and train wisely when replacing managers**

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Those of us who depend on others to help make our businesses successful know the feeling of having one of your top managers tell you it is time for her to move on.

Sales manager, office manager, warehouse manager, it really doesn't matter who. What matters is that you are about to face the difficult task of replacing a key member of your team. And you better not make a mistake when you do it.

Tough choices: During the course of its life, every organization must deal with the issue of having people in management positions either leave or retire.

There are few people who can fill the critical role that is about to be left vacant. All too often the choice comes down to a less-than-ideal candidate or one of your top performers -- two challenging and costly options.

If you choose the less-than-ideal option, you put your entire team at risk by exposing them to potentially bad management. While you can't afford to lose your senior manager, losing the entire team would be devastating, so you lean toward your top performer. The problem with this approach is you will be losing a valuable member of the team, and putting that person in a difficult position for which she may not be prepared. Bottom line, you might still end up with a bad manager and lose a top performer to boot.

Give the issue much thought and compare the pros and cons of each. If you still believe your best option is your top performer, then read on.

Issues: Don't assume the ability to get the job done is any indicator of management skill or the ability to build a team. Most top performers are expert at doing tactical work, and expect immediate results from their efforts. As manager they must find their reward through efforts

of others, those with whom they have been working side by side. As a former friend and co-worker, the new manager must now take responsibility to lead, support and even judge those that were her peers.

Communication is a weakness throughout corporate America today, and the pressure to communicate effectively will be even greater on your new manager now that she has both superiors and direct reports to communicate with.

Delegation is another area where most of us get little formal training regardless of our current role. The manager who cannot delegate effectively is doomed to micro-management or a hands-off relationship with her team, leaving the ship rudderless.

Dos and don'ts: Do make sure the person fits the job, not the other way around, even if you have to go outside the department to find a different set of technical skills.

Don't modify the position to conform to the strengths or weaknesses of the prospective manager.

Don't micro-manage. Give your new manager room to make mistakes, and understand you are training her as you mentor her. If you micro-manage her, she will develop micro-management tendencies. If you delegate poorly, she will emulate your example.

Do understand her pressure. A former top performer is used to being recognized for her skill and excellence. In her new role, she will probably be hard pressed to find that same degree of success initially. Pressure to demonstrate her skill will quickly build and she will tend toward doing the work she was doing previously. Remind her that her job is to share her experience with others. Challenge her to turn her new team into a team of top performers.

Do appreciate tactics and reward strategy. Learn how to wean your new manager from the tactical and develop the strategic. Tactics is where she is most skilled and comfortable. The strategic will be somewhat new territory for her, and as such may be an uncomfortable place she will try to avoid.

Support is critical. The success of a top-performer-turned-manager depends on your ability to provide the tools and support she needs to make the transition. Training is the first step, because without the technical skills, she will be severely limited. Mentoring is second, and allows the new manager to test and experience ideas, decisions and actions with someone who can help her understand the strengths and weaknesses of her choices with no risk of penalty. Finally, when the new manager needs someone to talk to, someone that is not judging her, someone she will not be afraid to appear vulnerable in front of, a coach can be the vehicle that helps the new manager go from capable to gifted.

People develop skills in many ways, but true expertise can only be developed over time. It is

seasoned with subtlety and nuance, flavored with success and failure, made richer through relationships, and comes only after the investment of time.

Don't be afraid to look for managers among your top performers, but realize the journey is one you will be taking together. While the road is difficult, the rewards can be great and long-lasting.

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