



Keeping High Potentials Engaged When Growth Opportunities Are Few And Far Between

By Michael Gravelle

Today we continue with our second in a two-part series on motivating and engaging high performers.

In last month's newsletter (Newsletter # 60) we addressed the issue of differentiating between High Potentials and High Professionals.

We will focus more specifically on motivating High Potentials, who, as discussed in our last newsletter, will most frequently possess McQuaig Generalist Group profiles and display high Dominance, Independence and Drive on the job. You can expect your High Potentials to demonstrate the behaviours exhibited by the classic Type A personality, as identified by Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman:

1. An insatiable desire to achieve one's goals.
2. A strong desire for recognition and advancement.
3. A strong willingness to compete in all situations.
4. A desire to multi-task under time constraints .
5. A high sense of urgency and a rush to finish activities.

Nurturing your Type A's may seem like an odd priority when reducing costs and remaining profitable are the order of the day but it is these team members who can provide the impetus to pull you through these difficult times.

However, since the business priorities and the succession plan may have changed since High Potentials were selected, it is a good time to re-evaluate the situation.

Re-define your definition of a High Potential.

If your company is restructuring you may need to build a different set of capabilities. The people seen as High Potential when the business was thriving may not be the people best suited to helping you weather a recession.

Involve the High Potentials in revamping their development strategy.

Looking beyond the recession will improve engagement, reinforce the importance of their contribution, provide much needed strategic focus and foster long-term commitment.

Give High Potentials a stretch assignment.

The current business conditions will undoubtedly create new challenges and out-of-the-box projects. For example, a colleague of mine recently had her HR department downsized and the US parent proposed that they integrate technologies. She selected a High Potential to document and present the benefits of the Canadian HR systems that they believed were superior. It provided the High Potential with an opportunity to raise her profile and she appreciated working on a project that would have a significant impact on the business.

While the typical Type A desires immediate rewards and opportunities, these need not necessarily come in the form of a promotion. They need to be reminded that they are still an integral part of the company's long-term plan and that their current contributions are valued.

Sincerely,

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