

Talent Management Perspectives

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Managing All Employees Alike Can Be a Recipe for Disaster

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It has been said that good people don't leave good companies — they leave poor managers. No one wants to lose their best people, but in the midst of time pressures to produce better results, managers often cut corners — one of which is acknowledging the importance of managing according to the strengths of their people.

Many parents understand that their children are unique individuals and know when to treat one child differently than the others. Managing employees needs to be a similar journey of better understanding their unique strengths and learning how to maximize those strengths within the context of the shared goals of teams within the organization.

Consider the following broad categories of people within an organization and the accompanying guidelines on how to manage them.

Futurist employees: These are employees who need to know what's next. They have a directional focus; they're looking at the horizon. While there are different types of futurists, there are certain principles that are important to manage any futurist.

- Respecting their strengths means giving them an opportunity to help shape the future. Managers can give them roles that allow them to co-create what comes next for the team.
- Understanding their limitations means recognizing that some may need help implementing their ideas. Place them on teams with people who are good at execution.
- Helping them develop may mean reminding them that not everyone can see the same things they can and that they need to paint tangible pictures of what the future could look like.

Analysts: These are employees who excel at execution because they can see the steps needed to get things done. They're the ones people depend on to get things done. How does one manage analysts?

- Respecting their strengths means giving them clear instructions of what your desired endpoint is and then giving them the opportunity to create the steps to get there.
- Understanding their limitations means recognizing that managers may need to check in with them occasionally to ensure the steps being executed are still leading toward the desired end result.
- Helping them develop may mean reminding them of the necessity to change at times and that the tried-and-true approaches of yesterday were at one time the new approaches.

Connectors: These are employees who view organizations as a network of people with a common cause, who see the need for a common rally cry or mantra that provides focus and energy. They are the cheerleaders of the organization.

1. Respecting their strengths means making sure that the team has a clearly articulated shared purpose and that they have a role in reinforcing it and helping keep people focused on it.
2. Understanding their limitations means avoiding overly conceptual and theoretical discussions that don't directly relate to improving organizational or individual performance.
3. Helping them develop means reminding them that other members of the team can still be team players by contributing strengths in isolation that contribute toward team success.

Interpreters: These are employees who think first about the needs of customers or clients. If the organization is anticipating or going through a change, the first question an interpreter will ask is, "How will this affect our clients?"

1. Respecting their strengths means ensuring that the team listens to their customer insights. They may not have organized, empirical data for each conclusion, but don't dismiss their conclusions due to lack of numbers.
2. Understanding their limitations means making sure that project priorities are clear. Interpreters want to help, and as such, they will overcommit. They need to understand the highest priorities and have timelines based in reality.
3. Helping them develop means reminding them that great ideas are truly great when you put them into practice.



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