



Leaders' #1 Failing: HANGING ONTO THE WRONG PERSON FOR TOO LONG

Good business leaders often say they've learned more from their failures than their successes. These leaders have the confidence to know they can't be right all the time and that mistakes come with the territory. For example, they might fail to communicate effectively or delegate properly. Perhaps they need to improve at accountability or developing their people.

But the biggest failure of all, which causes harm to the performance of a company, giving leadership the most grief is a people problem — hanging onto the wrong person in the wrong job for too long.

Ironically, it's often the company leader or manager who is the last to understand the impact of not taking action on a poor performer. It's the employees working alongside the poor performer who quickly recognize the dire consequences of this situation, which breeds poor employee morale and loss of productivity. It can also erode the confidence and effectiveness of those in charge. On the flip side, when team leaders are aware of a performance problem, many do nothing about it or take too long to tackle the problem.

Why does this happen?

Let's start with loyalty. Companies and managers encourage and value loyalty. However, at times a manager crosses the line and over-identifies with a particular employee, often getting too close to that person. This makes it more challenging to deal with performance problems because

the manager has valued loyalty over performance. This often happens when managers hire friends and/or relatives. That thin line between the manager and the employee becomes increasingly difficult to recognize, so the manager becomes confused and finds it difficult to deal with the poorly performing employee in an objective, constructive manner.

Second, nobody likes to be wrong. Managers who hire a bad fit for a position must publicly admit they made a mistake if they let that person go. Unfortunately, the fear of admitting mistakes often stalls or prevents the termination process altogether. Perhaps the manager keeps hoping that this person will improve, but since hope is not a strategy for success, this likely will never happen. The situation just festers, and everyone suffers.

Third, managers often don't do anything about ousting the poor performer if they haven't a back-up plan, believing that any living, breathing body is better than none at all. They accept mediocrity rather than take a risk that would enable them to create the opportunity to improve their situation. The solution would be to recruit proactively, always looking out for someone who could be a better team player.

Managers often don't do anything about ousting a poor performer because they haven't a back-up plan. ”

Fourth, managers often believe that dealing with the poor performer always results in conflict. Most people don't like conflict, so they avoid situations that might lead to it. But implementing a good performance management system, one with an ongoing methodology to evaluate performance, eliminates the potential for conflict by creating an objective process for communicating to employees about their strengths and shortcomings. Many managers don't have a good system in place, so if they have to deal with the poor performer, conflict results. What's more, without an ongoing methodology to evaluate performance and give feedback, employees are often surprised if they're suddenly severely reprimanded or let go. That's obviously a conflict-ridden situation, and one that can be avoided with a solid performance management system in place.

Implementing a good performance management system creates an objective process for communicating to employees about their strengths and shortcomings. ”

But most important, company leaders hold onto the wrong person in the wrong position for too long simply because they lack good performance management skills themselves. A good accountability leader is

able to not only use the established performance system as a tool, but also create a culture in which open, honest conversations about performance can take place. Strong leaders are candid. They have no problem addressing poor performance and embrace the opportunity to make such conversations productive for both the company and the employee. In addition, they set clear expectations for their employees, measure their progress, coach them when necessary, and conduct more formal training. Furthermore, effective leaders sense when it's time to draw a line. For instance, when they keep hearing a little voice inside their head saying, "I hope that employee gets better," they take that as a cue that it's time to ask some critical questions about that person's performance and take immediate, appropriate action.

Company leaders hold onto the wrong person in the wrong position for too long simply because they lack good performance management skills themselves. ”

When you examine all these reasons behind why leaders and managers keep the wrong person in the wrong job for too long, it's easy to see why this is the number one leadership failing. But the good news is leaders can easily change the potential for mistakes by addressing the problem head-on. What's the best way to do this? Position employees for success by establishing a proven system for accountability; properly delegate job responsibilities; provide them with clearly defined goals; make sure their skills align with the job and specific duties; and implement that crucial coaching and training.

Since the number one mistake managers commit is hanging onto that wrong person in the wrong position too long, there's a really good chance that you could be guilty. If that's the case, challenge yourself to uncover the reasons why you haven't addressed poor

performers, develop a plan, follow your company's performance management policy, and take action now.

Challenge yourself to uncover the reasons why you haven't addressed poor performers, develop a plan, follow your company's performance management policy, and take action now. ”

Be an accountability leader

The key to positioning your employees for success is your own ability to hold them accountable. The following checklist will get you on your way to developing your own leadership skills, which relate directly to accountability.

- 1.** Set clear goals and establish Vital Factors, the key indicators of a business's health for each person on the team. Communicate what performance measures you're using and your expectations about performance. Be specific and focus on results, not just activity.
- 2.** Enlist the help of a professional accountability coach to help you understand what good accountability looks like and model accountability effectively.
- 3.** Identify your weaknesses as an accountability leader and determine what you personally need to develop.
- 4.** Establish a system for accountability and use your established Vital Factors, or the key measures of your

company's health, to evaluate performance and take corrective action.

- 5.** Understand how you deal with conflict, what you should do differently to modify any resistance to conflict and improve your conflict style.

DBR

Written by Lee Froschheiser, president and CEO of Map Consulting (MAP) and co-author of the best-selling book *Vital Factors, The Secret to Transforming Your Business — And Your Life*. Reprinted with the permission of PR/PR.

The key to not hiring the wrong person is to hire the right person, the first time.

Drake P3® predicts the behaviour and personality of potential candidates against the traits of your existing top performers — before you make a job offer.

To find out how Drake P3® can improve your hiring success, contact the Talent Management Solutions team.

Africa: 27 21 425 3300
africa@drake.co.za

Australia: 613 9245 0245
hrrsolutions@au.drakeintl.com

Canada: 416 216-1074
solutions@na.drakeintl.com

Hong Kong: 852 2848 9288
Drake@drake.com.hk

New Zealand: 0800 840 940
solutions@nz.drakeintl.com

Singapore: 65 6225 5809
drake@sg.drakeintl.com

South Africa: 011 883 680
Solutions@drake.co.za

United Kingdom: 0800 111 4558
solutions@drakeintl.co.uk