



## Management and Performance Associates – Newsletter – September 2007

### Is it possible there's a "Susan Boyle" in your team?

You're probably among the hundreds of millions of surfers who have accessed YouTube to watch the Susan Boyle phenomenon. If you haven't had the chance to see her, at least you've heard about her. In case you've been away from the planet for the last few weeks and don't know what we're talking about, Susan Boyle is a Scottish simpleton who became the most recent musical wonder. She is a competitor in a British television show called "Britain's Got Talent."

Why did she become a phenomenon in a matter of seconds and why did her fame spread all over the world in the blink of an eye? Because of the unusual. Because she went against all odds. Because she broke paradigms. Because of the uncomfortable discovery of the obvious: we should not judge a book by its cover.

A participant in one of our recent workshops, when we brought the Susan Boyle topic to discussion, said "that happens in the artistic world, but there are no Susan Boyles in the corporate world." Is it so?

In a way she is correct. In the artistic world, the musical world in particular, it suffices for you to open your mouth and people can judge the enormity of your talent. It is pretty obvious, and it's almost impossible to deny a gift like that.

The situation is much more complex and subtle in corporate life; talent recognition depends on much more than just opening your mouth. Before anything, managers need to open up their hearts and minds to recognize and create the conditions for these talents to be developed.

Most of the time, our arrogance does not allow us to see, worse, to admit that someone who does not fit our parameters and judgment criteria that we have built over time, is the Susan Boyle in our team.

Just like Susan Boyle was judged for being born and living in a small, unassuming village in Scotland, some of us use the place a person was raised as criteria for acceptance. "Hmm, he is a redneck, pay attention to his accent." "Wow, she lacks a more cosmopolitan outlook."

Just like Susan Boyle generated low expectations due to her appearance in relation to her performance—that employee who does not launch fireworks when presenting an innovative and intelligent idea may not receive the deserved attention. Who loses with this?

Just like Susan Boyle has a simpleton outlook, that person who does not exhibit a sophisticated image, or who does not use the language and jargon expected by the audience, may be overlooked for a promotion by someone less competent but more popular. Who loses with this?

Just like Susan Boyle has an extraordinary talent it is quite possible that your prejudices insist on not allowing you to discover someone with an extraordinary talent and potential right under your nose. Who loses with this?

In spite of her unique talent, on Saturday May 30<sup>th</sup>, Susan came in second in the season finale of "Britain's Got Talent." There is no question Susan Boyle was finally given the opportunity to find a new path, obtaining her deserved recognition on the way.



It is up to us to put aside our barriers, prejudices and paradigms and give a chance to the Susan Boyles who live in the corporate world, sometimes anonymously, other times suppressed by intolerance.

**See you next month. Suggestions are welcome.**

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