



## Management and Performance Associates – April 2011

### Removing the Excess

Last month, we launched the first part of our trilogy: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Talent. For 'Attracting,' our inspiration was Tom Jobim's masterpiece "Waters of March." We used the song as an analogy to the search for talent. In this newsletter we'll continue with the artistic theme, specifically using sculpture.

It is practically impossible to find someone who has never heard of Michelangelo (1475 – 1564). An Italian painter, sculptor, poet and architect, Michelangelo is considered one of the most influential artists of all time, including praise during his lifetime. Although one of his most renowned artworks is the painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican, Michelangelo would probably have liked to be remembered as a sculptor. He considered this form of art superior to painting. According to him, "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." Therefore, for him, sculpting was only a matter of seeing where the excess stone was, and then removing it.

How can this perception inspire managers and leaders in the process of developing people? We may not have the talent to sculpt but we can prepare and develop ourselves to release our staff's talent, making it visible.

The following are hints to develop our staff's talent:

#### 1. Visualizing the excess

Assessing staff's potential is one of the greatest managerial challenges. Defining potential is even a greater challenge. Potential is the expectation of future performance in a function or activity involving larger complexity.

What can help us in this forecast? There are three elements that determine the level of potential of an employee. The first one is the set of displayed skills, including learned, interpersonal, technical and functional skills as well as emotional intelligence. The

second element is the level of engagement, the demonstrated commitment in search of excellence, the discretionary effort to obtain challenging and differentiated results, in addition to the will to remain in the organization. The third element is the personal aspiration to be recognized, to grow in different career paths, the willingness to trade personal time in order to invest in the career.

The combination of these three variables results in different profiles, requiring different managerial actions.

#### 2. Removing the excess

To be considered high potential, employees need to display high levels of the three elements mentioned above. Professionals with this profile need managers who conduct coaching processes with the purpose of mapping and acting to consolidate competencies and to remove internal or external obstacles. This way the high potential employee may advance his career at the high speed required by his potential.

In the case of a combination of high ability and high engagement (but low aspiration) we have a highly competent person who, at this moment, is not looking forward to making a career move which requires more demand or visibility. These employees are considered critical resources to the company, as their contributions are extremely valuable, and they offer stability and continuity to the business. Therefore, dealing with these talents requires permanent actions to maintain their competency aligned to the job requirements as well as providing meaning and value to their contributions. Finally, remember that aspiration is a changing variable. There are moments in our lives where we may be willing to take responsibilities which bring some personal



sacrifice. Therefore, do not forget to periodically check your staff's aspirations.

Employees who display a high level of engagement and aspiration (but with insufficient skills to be successful in a higher responsibility position) need coaching and mentoring with the purpose of developing the needed skills and therefore creating conditions for a successful future.

### 3. The tools

To remove the excess of stone which hid his work, Michelangelo used chisels and hammers. Managers also have their tools to develop talents. Of all available tools, coaching is the one that will make the most difference.

Coaching is a Socratic process to increase the coachee's awareness and to create mental models for permanent and independent development. The coaching process opens space for the coachee to find his/her own creative and motivating ways to remove excesses or to carve to perfection.

There are other effective development tools, such as delegation (delegating activities which will contribute to the development of specific skills or to expand expertise), multifunctional project management, job rotation, local and international exposure, internships in another area, region, or country, training and specialized courses.

In contrast to a fairy tale, "And they lived happily ever after" doesn't always happen in real life. The more talent an organization has, the more they will be sought after by the competition. How to retain talent? How to increase their engagement? How to diminish their interest in headhunters?

Next month, we will have answers to these questions in our newsletter, Retaining Talent. The end of our trilogy.

This month we invited Flávia D'Amico, Human Resources Manager for Société Générale Investment Bank, Brazil to share her experience on this topic.

During my years of professional experience I have witnessed several coaching and career monitoring processes. I *do* believe that all tools that help managers in the process of developing talent are fundamental and must be used. I specifically like the combination of techniques such as coaching and mentoring when the professional gets the monitoring not only from his direct manager but also from someone from another area, or from an expert. This way, he has the opportunity to be assessed in a holistic way, reinforcing positive values and receiving the due incentive to develop what needs to be improved.

For me, the key part of the job description of any manager is caring for team development, with special emphasis to the individual talent.

**See you next time. We welcome your feedback.**

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