

ATTRACT AND RETAIN TOP PERFORMERS

I am yet to meet someone who says they have purposely hired a poor performer.

Why is it then that about 25 per cent of the Australian workforce is considered sub-standard by their managers?

Compounding the cost of this situation is that a top performer is three times more productive than a poor performer, yet you are probably paying them both the same hourly wage/base salary. Adding insult to injury, many of these poor performers keep performing at unacceptable levels, often in spite of your efforts to help them improve.

This raises some critical questions for franchisees:

- How much revenue, profit and productivity is your team forgoing because your recruitment process has allowed poor performers to get through?
- What greater successes could be achieved by increasing the number of top performers?
- Is there a better way to attract, recruit and retain top performers?

The good news is that there is a better way. However business owners, managers and HR professionals will have to first accept that their current selection processes are not delivering the required result. They then need the courage to change the way they attract, select, train and coach their most important asset... their people.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TOP PERFORMERS

No two roles are exactly the same. It is therefore imperative that those tasked with selection and people management understand what the critical success attributes are

for each role. There are two methods to create role benchmarks – the most effective is to objectively assess your proven top performers and the second is to survey management views.

If franchisees want to improve customer service levels and increase revenue and profitability, they need to seriously consider the establishment of concise role benchmarks. These benchmarks would identify and quantify the critical success attributes of each role, especially customer facing roles.

Develop High Performance Role Benchmarks

If managers are to really understand the roles they are responsible for, they must first identify and quantify the critical success attributes and the competencies required for each role. Remove as much subjectivity as possible by creating High Performance Role Benchmarks using a valid and objective assessment solution to identify and quantify the critical success attributes shared by your proven top performers.

At Peoplogica we use and recommend the ProfileXT JobFit assessment. Basing selection decisions on the proven attributes of existing top performers is the key to a greatly improved selection process. This process will, most likely for the first time, provide management with objective data on what is required if an individual is to be a fully engaged high performer.

ATTRACTING FUTURE TOP PERFORMERS

Attract, screen and select the best candidate(s) by looking for best fit. Candidates must fit the role for which they are being employed, at an individual, team

and organisational level. Many organisations limit their potential talent pool by applying criteria which is not relevant to the role. It is imperative that you define a clear set of benchmarks when building an appropriate selection methodology to ensure the successful candidate fits the role.

Screening candidates based on role benchmarks

Recruitment is arduous at the best of times, let alone wasting time conducting interviews with people who don't possess the minimum level of experience, knowledge and success attributes required.

The purpose of screening is to select the most appropriate people to interview. This process will vary depending on the importance of the role and the number of applications received. In either case one simple rule applies: look for applicants who demonstrate the skills and success attributes identified as critical to the role.

The first interview

The first interview is not just an opportunity for the candidate to impress a potential future employer. It is also a chance for the employer to demonstrate the professionalism, ethos and culture of the organisation. Both the candidate and the employer should be 'selling' themselves to each other. In presenting the role to potential employees, interviewers must convey the role, team culture and rewards with absolute clarity.

This aspect of the employment relationship is called the 'psychological contract'. The psychological contract is not the official terms and conditions contained in the formal employer-employee contract, but all the unwritten promises and suggestions made regarding the role. Research indicates that new employees will rely on the unwritten

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aspects of the role as much as the formal contract and if this leads to the employee being misled, then performance and engagement levels could be dramatically affected.

Use of other selection and assessment tools

A range of assessment tools exist to measure the critical success attributes required in each role but please ensure that they have been validated and normed to the Australian population. We use the ProfileXT JobFit assessment because it is the best instrument to measure potential employees against existing proven top performers and role benchmarks. Measure only the attributes you know are essential for success. Don't waste time, money and energy measuring characteristics just for the sake of it.

Final interview and reference checks

The final interview is very much the business end of the process. For someone to be sitting in front of you for a second time, they are most likely good enough to do the job. We want an outstanding performer, so the purpose of the final interview is to confirm any aspects of the applicant's fit that may still be in question. You should use the customised behavioural interview questions contained in the assessment placement reports to ensure that all potential barriers to success are examined and objectively reviewed.

RETAIN THE BEST

Good talent is always in demand. If you have spent the time and gone to the trouble of recruiting high performers, make sure the first impression they have of your organisation, as an employee, reaffirms that their decision to choose you as an employer

was correct. Invest in their talents to ensure they continue to deliver the best possible job performance and service levels to external/internal clients and prospective customers. It is also important to regularly review their roles in terms of your evolving business, go-to-market and sales strategies.

Induction, training, coaching programs and ongoing career development

High performers have high expectations of their employers. They like working with other high achievers and generally like to learn and be challenged. Creating a personalised induction program not only ensures your new recruits get up to speed as quickly as possible, but also demonstrates your organisation's commitment to them. To retain top talent you need to build loyalty, both you to your top performers and them to the organisation.

Here are some aspects of the initial induction and training program you should consider:

- Involve them with the team as quickly as possible.
- Customise their training and don't make them do programs or courses they've already successfully completed.
- Consider using a proven top performer as a mentor and/or coach.
- Provide regular, collaborative feedback and adjust the program accordingly.
- If your new recruits are Gen Y (born after about 1977), they will be looking for different things than older recruits. Organisational values and flexibility are particularly important to this group, as is the need for honest, regular feedback on their performance.

This induction period should meld seamlessly with an ongoing commitment to

their personal and career development.

Role review and ongoing strategy alignment

As your business and sales strategies change, so may the requirements of particular roles. Regularly review high performance role benchmarks as well as the skills, knowledge and experience of your team. You can't predict all changes but change is inevitable, therefore the departmental functions will need to constantly adapt to maintain a competitive edge. Even top performers need to build knowledge and skills to maintain their high level of performance. The good news is that most top performers want to do this. Your role as a business owner is to simply enable their success to continue.

Apply the framework outlined in this article and you will dramatically improve the way you attract, select, understand and retain high performers. In the process you will join the exclusive group of business leaders who have many top performers and few, if any, poor performers.

Mark Purbrick is the Managing Director of Peoplogica Pty Ltd and serves as a Director on a number of company boards.

Peoplogica is a leading specialist consultant in attracting, understanding and retaining top performers by improving management capability, increasing employee engagement and maximising individual, team and organisational performance.

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