

### **3 Ways to Avoid Promoting an Employee Who Isn't Ready to Be a Manager or Supervisor**

Jack slammed the phone down. "That's the 3<sup>rd</sup> time this quarter that we've promoted one of our best hourly employees to be a supervisor, and then they quit after only a couple of weeks. Once again, we've lost another good employee, and we *still* need to fill that supervisor position."

Does this sound familiar? I often hear from clients who are concerned about employees, at all levels, who are doing a great job in the current position, who are interested in being promoted, but who may not be prepared for the demands of a management or supervisory position. (Note: I am using the term, "manager," to include any position that involves supervising others.)

Promoting an employee who isn't ready for new responsibilities, new duties, or new relationships can have serious consequences, such as:

- Loss of high potential employees who were promoted without adequate preparation;
- Demoralizing consequences of demotion of an employee who has been promoted and then not been able to handle the new position;
- Disruption of service and productivity because of newly promoted employee's poor performance.

The problem is that it's hard to know whether an employee is actually equipped and ready for a significant promotion, especially if the employee is doing a great job where he or she is currently placed.

Here are three options you may want to consider in order to learn more about whether an employee is ready for the challenges of a supervisory or management position:

#### **1. A Day in the Life**

Have your potential manager/supervisor take over the responsibility of a group for a short period of time – a few days, for example. Supervise him or her closely, taking

note of what he or she does well, and what areas he or she needs to work on. Be sure to talk over the experience with this person, to find out what he or she thinks about the position under consideration, and how he or she feels about being ready to take it on.

*Advantages:* This approach can be characterized as “thrown into the deep end of the pool.” It gives you an opportunity to watch how well your candidate copes with uncertainty and lack of structure.

*Disadvantages:* Only a few days “in the life” may not be enough time to experience all aspects of a supervisor’s or manager’s responsibilities. In addition, this approach requires a lot of the current manager’s time to adequately observe the potential promotee.

## **2. One Small Bite at a Time**

Give the potential supervisor or manager incremental increases in responsibility and plenty of time to master each one. Gradually add more specific responsibilities or tasks, in a series of small steps, and allow the person to master each step before moving on to new ones.

*Advantages:* The potential manager or supervisor is introduced to the new tasks and responsibilities in more easily digested, or mastered, steps. This approach reduces the stress of having to learn everything at once, and it slows the learning to a more manageable pace.

*Disadvantages:* The “one bite at a time” approach requires a longer timeframe to bring the potential supervisor/manager up to full mastery and productivity.

## **3. Test, Don’t Guess**

A potential supervisor or manager must make the transition from being an individual contributor to a manager of others. This means going from *doing the work* to getting the work done through the efforts of others.

So much of the success as a supervisor or manager depends on a person’s innate preferences that affect *how* he or she manages and directs the activities of others. The underlying preferences are not necessarily visible in non-supervisory positions, but validated psychological tests that measure the attitudes and work style preferences can help you learn how well-suited your internal candidates are for such promotions.

*Advantages:* A validated psychological (personality) assessment will provide insight into the attitudes that underlie a person's ability to guide and direct others. By evaluating these underlying attitudes, early action can be taken to address or strengthen areas through appropriate coaching and training.

A complete assessment package will include a developmental report for the potential supervisor or manager that will help him or her see exactly what to do to grow as a manager. Knowing what to focus on speeds up the acquisition of his or her management skills.

*Disadvantages:* Finding the right psychological test can be challenging. Look for instruments that are designed for improving management potential. Be sure they are validated according to the standards for test development set by the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the American Psychological Association (APA.)

Be sure that the testing program includes coaching tips that are targeted for the person, and developmental feedback that works as a training tool for the test taker.

### **Hope Is Not a Plan**

Doing nothing and hoping for the best doesn't usually work out. Using any one of these three options, or a combination of them, works better to be sure that the person you are considering for promotion is equipped, and ready, for the new responsibilities of being a supervisor or manager.

If you want to know more about the personality assessments that I can offer, send me an email or call me at (800) 886-4356. We have lots of information and options for you.