

leadership instalments

Performance and Job Fit

By Dan Gaynor

LEADERS ARE LIMITED OR LIFTED BY THE PEOPLE THEY LEAD- their productivity depends on the performances of others. With this in mind, good leaders are always building teams that can do more. Here we find a key distinction between leaders and managers: managers do the best they can with what they have; leaders are always improving the team they work with - all genuine leadership is transformational. Casting people in the right roles is an essential part of leadership.

I call this organizational casting issue Job Fit. Effective leaders play a key role in determining when people are in the right roles and when they are not - talent and motivation are the elements of Job Fit. When people are doing the work they have talent for, for leaders and organizations that matter to them, they are invariably both satisfied and productive.

Talent is the stuff we are born with, the raw material. When talent is trained, and accompanied by the right experience, high productivity and job satisfaction are natural outcomes. I learned a long time ago that I do not have the talent for math. Trying to make me into an accountant or mathematician would be an exercise in frustration for everyone and it would be a frustrating exercise for me, but I have other talents. The key to lasting productivity and job satisfaction is matching talent to work. While this might seem obvious a lot of people are doing work they'll never do very well or feel very good about.

Talent alone is not enough, we also need motivation. We must enjoy our work as well as the person and the organization we work for. When we are playing to our strength - our talent - we always enjoy work, provided we are with a good leader. When talent, motivation and a good leader come together lasting job satisfaction and productivity are natural outcomes. Both corporate and individual needs are met. So every great team-building leader is in a constant search for job fit with each and every employee.

Through job fit leaders build high performance teams one individual at a time. As I've been known to repeat constantly, "Great leaders surface and resolve the big questions about people and the work they do." They do not sit by and watch someone struggle constantly



without doing something about it. Job fit becomes their reference point.

This is why great leaders make every performance count. They know that performance is the best indicator of job fit. When performance is strong and the individual enjoys the work, we can be fairly sure of job fit - this is evidence of good casting. When someone is consistently performing poorly, job fit questions arise and it's time to do something about it by ramping up the observation, feedback, coaching and accountability. When performance improves, the leader can dismiss job fit concerns. When it does not, effective leaders must make a change for the individual and the organization. The most frustrating situations I came across during my newspaper leadership career were those where I knew there were job fit issues that previous leaders had passed by, sometimes for years.

When job fit is the issue, productivity will not improve until the casting problem is resolved. Delaying these changes (and at times leaders have to force them) is not the work of a caring leader. While you can't guarantee that everyone who leaves will find the right job the next time, you can know for certain that they won't even get the chance by staying in the wrong one.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are you currently doing to build your team's performance?
2. Are there any issues that need to be surfaced and resolved?
3. When performance issues arise, how are you most likely to deal with them?

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