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Talent Affirmation and Differentiation

**Great call centres distribute the investments they make in their people accordingly. They differentiate on things like pay, bonuses, opportunities, shifts and recognition.**

EFY News Network

Saturday, March 21, 2009: If a call centre does not engage in a systematic approach to separate talent, both in terms of performance and potential, then it becomes impossible to make the best strategic human resources decisions (i.e., rewards, promotion, succession planning and termination decisions). After all, agents who consistently execute at the highest levels should be rewarded more than employees who don't.

Great call centres distribute the investments they make in their people accordingly. They differentiate on things like pay, bonuses, opportunities, shifts and recognition. They reward their best performers with fast-track growth and pay them substantially more than their average performers. They develop and "affirm" their solid performers who are always trying to raise their game and also assertively address and remove employees who are under performing. Their belief, a perceptive and correct one, is that condoning or tolerating poor performance is destructive to high performers' motivation for greater success and achievement; leadership's actions always speak louder than words and few things communicate organisational indifference and apathy more loudly than treating high, average and low performers exactly the same.

Most call centres, unfortunately, struggle with this concept. Typically, they don't have a way to identify the different category of performers, nor do they have a systematic approach and process to ensure that appropriate actions are taken. Most organisations, frankly, conduct one-day succession planning exercises at corporate headquarters; however, those exercises have little honesty and little resultant action. On the other hand, great call centres have a passionate and diligent focus on executing "talent reviews."

With respect to Talent Affirmation and Differentiation, some of the following best practices could be:  
Performance Management - a joint partnership between manager and employee  
Performance Management is continuous and ongoing  
The "process" is more than a "form" or "software"  
Managers are trained to separate the A, B and C category of performers  
Performance criteria are valid

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Final ratings based on "what" and "how"

A-rated employees receive substantially more organisational investment than B or C rated Employees begin to take action for being outstanding talent leaders.

Conclusion for the series:

To what extent are your talent leadership processes (which include a winning mindset) contributing to, or detracting from, your operational excellence? Are your processes helping you Win or Lose? As shown throughout this series, the answer to this question is critical. Research clearly shows that great call centres:

- 1) Enjoy higher engagement and retention levels of their most talented agents
- 2) Experience higher quality and customer satisfaction results
- 3) Realise significantly higher profit and revenue levels.

Our hope and challenge to HR leaders, senior leaders, managers and call centre employees, anyone who has taken their time to read this series, is to:

# Recognise that the foundational elements of talent leadership execution should be first on your list of priorities.  
# If you are an HR or call centre leader, ask yourself the following four questions:

- i. Do I believe that talent leadership is the most critical variable in driving operational excellence? If you don't believe this, then it will be impossible for you to exact positive change in your organisation. Has my organisation made it a priority to cultivate and shape a positive talent leadership mindset? It is critical that all managers and supervisors engage in talent leadership workshops, mentoring relationships with more seasoned leaders and debriefing or "processing".
- ii. Are there enough sessions in which leaders discuss the ways in which developing and maintaining a positive leadership mindset can be challenging?
- iii. As a leader, am I passionately and diligently focussed on the measurement of the knowledge, skills, abilities, as well as the "fit" (personality) that ensure operational success? If not, take this series of articles to your boss and share your desire to become more focussed on measurement! Enthusiastically persist until those around you join you in your commitment.
- iv. What is the "health" of my centre ?

Finally, begin executing; measure again and again.

--By Dr Cabot Jaffee

**The author is chairman, Global Talent Metrics, a talent technology company and an HR thought leader.**

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