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# Helping Your Average Performers

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# The Course Objective

Every company has them and every company needs them; these are your average performers.

What are the characteristics of the average performer? How do they fit into your company strategic plan?

In this session, we will **define** the characteristics of average performers, **discuss** the effects of average performers on the firm culture and **review** ways to develop the process of communicating to and developing your average performers so that they may continue to add value.

## Agenda:

- Introduction
  - The Journey
- What are the characteristics of the Average Performer?
  - Not one-size fits all
  - Group Activity!
- Strategy for identifying your Average Performers
  - Who, What , When, Why and How
- Do Average Performers have a spot in your Firm?
  - Merge On/ Off Lanes
- What can you do to help your Average Performers?
  - Do they know?
  - How to tell them?
  - Let's Practice
- Wrap-Up

- A little about me and my role
- A whole lot more about my Firm's journey through the process of Identifying our Average Performers:
  - The Process
  - The Effects
  - The Journey Continues

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- **The Process**

- We began our journey of becoming a High Performance Firm approximately 3 years ago.

- The process Focuses on 6 Specific Disciplines:

- Leadership, Partner Effectiveness, Client Management, Business Development, **Team Development** and Financial Performance

## •The Effects:

### On Management

#### –Not Acting?

- Diverted Time and Energy, Customer Dissatisfaction, Loss of Competitive Edge, and Poor Internal Morale

#### –Acting?

- Increased awareness in hiring, higher retention , improved feedback and engagement

### On Employees

Employees want to work with High Performers...they are not satisfied with mediocrity and are unable to hide their dissatisfaction

**What are the specific characteristics of the High and Average Performer?**

Group Activity-

Each table will take a few minutes to work together and create **5** characteristics that define the **Average Performer**

Each table will take a few minutes to work together and list **5** characteristics of a **High Performer**

Please be prepared to share with the group

# Let's Get To Work



Average  
Performer

The diagram for the 'Average Performer' consists of a blue circle containing the text 'Average Performer' positioned at the top left of a light blue rectangular bar. The bar is shorter than the one in the 'High Performer' diagram.



High  
Performer

The diagram for the 'High Performer' consists of a blue circle containing the text 'High Performer' positioned at the top left of a light blue rectangular bar. This bar is significantly taller than the one in the 'Average Performer' diagram.

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# Let's Get To Work

Was there overlap?

How did the Average Performer characteristics compare to the High Performer characteristics?

Thoughts on the differences between the two lists of characteristics?

These are your BEST and BRIGHTEST!!

These are individuals who will advance to the “C Suite” within the next 5-7 years.

- Meet and/or Exceed performance standards **consistently**
- Team Players
- Live the core values
- Connect and promote the Firm’s vision and strategy

What about the **Intangible** characteristics?

- Examples?
- Is it Fair?

**Take Away:** There is not a perfect set of characteristics. Depending on your industry, size, and stage of growth the characteristics will change and should be reviewed regularly.

## Strategy for identifying your Average Performers:

- Understand there will be differences of opinion based on company dynamics, industry and personal feelings
- Those in the “C Suite” must set the “Tone at the Top” and should understand WHY identifying your Average and Top Performers is important. They need to stand unified throughout the entire process.

Who should be involved in identifying your Average Performers?

- Owners Only?
- Managers?
- Human Resources?

What should be used to identify the Average Performers?

- Use the characteristics as your guide
- Use your job descriptions
- Use prior evaluations
- Recognize and review your “gut” feelings- But beware

How low within the ranks should you categorize?

- This about your succession plan

When is the right time to begin the process?

- Based on your busy times?
- Before/After Evaluations
- In conjunction with promotions/compensation increases?

The process is recurring, decide on an annual time for this review and stick to it!

One of the biggest conundrums:

- The average performer is viewed as a “road block” by high performers and by management
  
- The Merge On/Off Lane
  - Is it doable?
  - It can be a safe haven for those times when life gets in the way
  - Communication is key!

How to Help your average employees the most:

Do they know?

No surprises

How to tell them?

Never alone

When to tell them?

Evaluation time?

After the review of the characteristics?

Decide and make it part of the process



Do they know?

- Once you identify your high and average employees , you must have open and honest conversations with the rest of the employees as soon as possible
- Avoid the rumor mill
- Keep the process in a positive light
- Most employees will appreciate the process, the feedback and will step up their game as they want to be a high performer!

OR

This could be the catalyst by which employees will self-evaluate and make the determination that they must move on

The news you deliver should NOT be a surprise to anyone!

- It should be viewed as a planning session between the employee and the company
- Evaluations and feedback should have framed the news well in advance
- Letting the employee know where they stand and then providing ideas/plans as to the things the employee needs to do to improve their performance and standing is critical!
- The employee must be an active participant this the process or it will fail

## How to tell them:

Be prepared to deliver the feedback, but to also discuss how it:

- Is tied to the company strategic and succession plans
- Provide SPECIFIC things the employee must do to improve
- Provide SPECIFIC things the company is going to do to help the employee improve:
  - Training
  - Mentoring
  - Specific goal setting with regular review
  - Review work assignments
  - Set the expectations going forward

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# Delivering the News

- The Mentor/Coach should be included in the meeting with the employee, along with someone from the ranking team
- Allow time to ask questions and “take it all in”
- Do not be alarmed if the initial response is not a positive one....give it some time

**\*\*Keep your personal feelings out of this!**

## Time to Deliver the News!

- Pick a partner at your table.
- Practice telling an employee that they have not been identified as a high performer.
- Be specific as to the comparative criteria used
- Be sure to support with specific ideas and tools that will help the employee improve their performance going forward

## Time to Deliver the News!

How did it feel?

What could you have done differently?

Thinking about delivering this message to an employee at your office, what do you see as the possible “sticking points?”

# Wrap Up

Identify the characteristics of both High and Average Performers

Decide if there is a place in your company for Average Performers

Educate your employees on the process, the reasons for the process and the long term strategic plans for the company

Hold open and honest conversations with all of the employees: do not just deliver the news..come with plans and tools ready to work with the employee to improve

Remember that people and circumstances change- this is a continual and integral part of your growth strategy





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QUESTIONS?

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## Heather Sunderlin, MSHRD, SHRM-CP, PHR

I am most passionate about helping businesses achieve the best results possible; from talent acquisition up to and including the implementation of processes and initiatives that will assist them in meeting their long-term financial and human capital goals.

Throughout my career I have always maintained a natural drive for action and a sense of urgency in whatever endeavor I have taken on. I have strong business acumen, analytical skills and a clear understanding of the business/operational environment.

This approach has served me and my employers well.

In my previous role as software training manager/consultant, and in my current role as Director of Employee Services, I provide a visionary approach in support of all initiatives and act as a strategic advisor and confident to the “C” suite leadership of the organization, while continuing to define and implement HR related processes and practices.

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