



MANAGING C PERFORMERS

One of the most difficult tasks for managers is knowing how to manage 'C performers'. These are the individuals who are not obviously incompetent but get by doing the minimum amount of work acceptable. 'C performers' rate 5 out of 10, and do many basic aspects of their job to an acceptable standard, but they don't create, innovate or inspire.

Jack Welch, the recently retired CEO of General Electric, advocates that most companies fail to manage C performers. Famous for his 20:70:10 theory of management and the need to address C performers, he believes that in any group of managers, 20% are top performers, 70% are average, and 10% are not worth having. He recommends that employers should define who falls into each category and then let the bottom 10% go, and to do this on an on-going basis.

The willingness to replace C performers is often limited by the perceived cost of separation and recruiting new staff. But what is the cost of not replacing C performers with A & B performers? Every C performer blocks the advancement of other people and they are poor role models for a performance-focused culture. They are not good coaches or mentors for other staff, and it can be demoralising for the team if C performers are not managed well. It also reflects badly on company leadership, who may be branded as unobservant, out of touch and lacking in judgement and courage.

The discipline of managing C performers requires the following seven steps:

- Step 1** Rate each individual systematically against an agreed set of leadership competencies, i.e. the skills and behaviours expected of all managers. Performance levels must be rated numerically on an agreed scale.
- Step 2** Individuals must be given feedback and coaching support to help them gain insight and self-awareness of their strengths and shortcomings, and clear signposts on how they will be expected to perform.
- Step 3** The expectation as to which leadership competencies need to be progressed must be transparently conveyed.
- Step 4** Action plans must be agreed on how progress will be achieved in the next 6 to 12 months. The action plan should focus on specific actions with agreed time schedules.
- Step 5** Individuals must be held responsible to demonstrate progress on what has been done, what has been learned, and how improved performance will be managed and sustained.

Step 6

Coaching support – internal or external – must be made available to provide constructive and positive support where necessary to increase and maintain self-motivation for the individual. It is vital that feedback is available and that 'corrective' action plans are put in place.

Step 7

Managers must be held accountable to ensure that this performance management system is implemented, and managers should be judged on their ability to build strong talent pools.