

Volume 8

This issue includes a 5-minute video to take a deeper dive into this topic

What I'm hearing

A friend and mentor sent me this question "You've given advice on how to handle the strongest and weakest performers on a team, but what about the B players?"

What it means

First, let's quickly define who the B players are: they're the people who get the work done, have limited aspirations or potential to move higher in the organization, and likely have a nickname around an adjective like "Steady Eddy," "Reliable Ruth" or "Dependable Dave." Having these people around is priceless yet frustrating because they do their jobs but often aren't looking for more work.

We hide people in this category, so just saying "B player" is often misleading. A client described a person on his team who was solid, knowledgeable and dependable — and everyone in the office was afraid of her (including her boss) because she was also domineering and abrasive. Yet she was a solid performer in his eyes. We HIDE too many people in the "B" area because they are "valuable" or "knowledgeable," all while creating fear in peers and negatively impacting the team. So I would expand the definition of "B player" into three categories:

- **B-PLUS:** Content in their current roles but willing to share their vast knowledge to mentor new people. They contribute to teams looking to innovate and optimize what work is being done.
- **B:** Solid contributors who are not interested in or capable of growing others at this point in their careers. They generally build positive relationships with teammates and consistently get things done.
- **B-MINUS:** Solid to exceptional contributors who get the work done but build few, if any, positive relationships with people around them. They do not cultivate expertise in the group, but give direction instead.

What you should do

People need to hear the truth, and the performance evaluation process is the perfect place to challenge B players — who likely comprise 50 to 60 percent of your workforce — but in a different way than you would A or C players. Don't rewrite your form, but include the following items as post-it addendums if needed:

1. Three to five things you see them doing extremely well.
2. A list of adjectives that come to mind when thinking about what they accomplish but how they accomplish it. Include words that describe how others perceive them.
3. One request, in the form of a goal, that they could accomplish that would help the overall strength of the team — mentoring, permanently fixing a process, cultivating a key customer relationship, etc.

That third item can provide you with an opportunity to divide your B players up a little and challenge them to move the team forward.

B and B-plus players have a place on the team. They have ideas, and may respond to challenges in a way that will surprise you. Those who fall into the B-minus category have to be put on notice, and as the leader you need to be bold enough to have that conversation.

Would getting more out of your B players make an impact on your business? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

See the video extra for this trU Tips by going to www.youtube.com and search for "Scott Patchin trU Tips #8"



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