



Finding a Good Fit



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As managers, we are responsible for helping those we oversee be the best version of themselves. **Sometimes we find we are dealing with a good person who is a poor fit for the position he is in.** I encountered this early in my career as a sales manager. I worked with a rep that had great technical skills and product knowledge, but his sales territory never hit targeted revenues. He didn't connect with the customers. I recognized he didn't have the talent for sales. I had to let him know he had 60 days to find another job. He was not pleased. Knowing his technical skills were good, however, I was able to get him an interview with a major manufacturer that was hiring an engineer. He was able to take that job and found success in a position that was a better fit for him.

The talent match

It's always painful to let a rep go, but as an executive leader it is your responsibility to steer an employee toward success. As I matured in leading others, I recognized the importance of helping each person I worked with find

a position that showcased their talents.

How do you handle the situation when talent doesn't match the requirements of a job? Here are a few important points to consider.

- **Help people recognize their talent** — [Gallup](#) defined talent as “a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied” (“How Great Managers Define Talent,” *Business Journal*, November 11, 1999). Many people don't realize what their true talent is, yet it is the prerequisite for excellence in their role in life. It is how we form opinions, feel the emotions of others, handle confrontations, and pick up subtle differences in each of life's interactions. Knowing your natural talent motivates you. **Identifying whether a person is competitive, altruistic, or ego-driven helps define the nature of their talent.**



Finding a Good Fit

- **Finding the right position** — Certain sales territories require a person who is aggressive and ego-driven so that the potential in that geography can be maximized. By contrast, a patient, relationship-building salesperson should be offered a territory that requires nurturing. Both types of people must have a desire and natural intuition to solve problems with and through personal contact. To do that, they need to be self-reliant, self-motivated, and self-directed. Learn the goals and passions of your employees and allow them to find the best positions in your organization to maximize their talent. **If there is not a good fit in your company, help them find an opportunity elsewhere.** I've seen too many situations where people have been moved to another area within the business in an attempt to find a fit where one doesn't exist. Witnessing an employee promoted to find a "better fit," only to exacerbate his existing incompatibilities, is even worse.
- **Make the most of each person's talents** — Everyone has a unique set of talents, pattern of behavior, passions, and yearnings. Every salesperson has a distinct source of motivation and style of persuasion. **A good manager's job is to make the most of these talents, person by person.** Acknowledge weaknesses but don't try to change them. Focus on maximizing strengths, especially with your best performers,
- **Don't try to change people** — In their book, [First, Break All The Rules](#), authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman suggest, "People don't change that much. Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out. Try to draw out what was left in. You will find that is hard enough."

The good fit

Ten years after I had let the rep in my opening story go, I saw him at a national convention. Fearing a confrontation, I tried to avoid him. He chased me down, however, and instead of horror, I got a hug. He told me how sorry he was about the way he had acted when I let him go. He was now the engineering manager for the manufacturing company I had recommended. He had secured a job where his talent was recognized and nurtured. Fortunately for him and for me, he embraced the right opportunity and found a good fit.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. As an executive leader, it is your responsibility to steer an employee toward success.
2. Help people realize their talent.
3. Position each person in the right job.
4. Recognize unique talent.
5. Don't try to change people.