

# White Paper:

## Retention and Productivity through Effective Management

### Step 1: Developing Skills

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Recent studies published by Robert Half International show two important facts:

1. Executives still view employee retention as their number one concern.
2. The top reason for losing top performing employees was unhappiness with management.

In these tough economic times, we cannot afford to lose top performing employees. With budgets being tightened, we must focus on cost effective means to avoid this type of turnover and leverage productivity. There are three areas that may offer a big return for a small investment:

1. Targeted, personalized management development
2. Improved performance management processes
3. Objective information for selecting, training and coaching employees

This white paper suggests an approach to Step 1 above.

For the white paper on Step 2 – Managing Performance, go to [www.pdservices.com/pdf/WhitePaper-ManagingPerformance.pdf](http://www.pdservices.com/pdf/WhitePaper-ManagingPerformance.pdf).

## Management Development

My daughter recently graduated from college and took a job with an insurance company. The company invested 3 months of teaching her the insurance business in general and another three months of training and apprenticeship in her claims position. My bet is that if and when she is first promoted to a supervisory/management position, regardless of the company, she will receive far less training. Often, a new manager is simply given a pat on the back and an encouraging word rather than training for his/her new responsibilities. Doesn't the level of responsibility of a supervisor/manager exceed that of this entry level position? Is it surprising that these managers are not effective with our top performers?

A good "Management 101" program is best for new managers, but many of us are saddled with a staff of poorly trained and, to some degree, ineffective supervisors and managers. In most cases the managers have varied strengths and weaknesses. We don't want to waste time and money providing development for specific managers in competencies they have already mastered. Instead, we need to identify areas of weakness and maximize the return on training by focusing on these areas that can offer the highest return.

The most effective approach to developing management skills in your existing management team is to first identify their individual strengths and weaknesses. Don't be fooled into thinking that you know, or that their managers know what these are. The people who know best are their direct reports and their peers (in that order). The best way I have found to identify management strengths and weaknesses is through implementing a good 360 survey.

A good 360 feedback survey should measure competencies that are appropriate and important to performing effectively as a manager in your organization. It should include feedback from the self (targeted manager), his/her boss, and anonymous feedback from direct reports and peers. The results should be presented in a fashion that facilitates identification of the manager's strengths and weaknesses and is oriented to development versus evaluation. Depending on the number of managers you have, online administration and management tools may be important in order to contain the time and effort spent to implement the surveys.

Once you have the 360 survey results, each manager should meet with HR and/or their manager to agree on a development plan. This plan should consider the relative weaknesses identified in the 360 and the importance of those competencies in effectively performing their job responsibilities. A plan that focuses on developing 1 to 3 competencies over a 12 month period has proven to be the most reasonable.

Selecting development activities now becomes the challenge. You will want to consider options that specifically address the competencies identified as focus areas for the specific manager. You may have internal or external training that will fit the bill. We have found that an online training and action planning program, tied to the specific competencies measured in our 360 tool, is a cost-effective approach to targeted individualized development. The programs are self-paced, but should have a coach of some sort (internal or external) assigned to advise and hold the learner accountable. Other alternatives may include self paced reading or mentoring with someone strong in that specific competency.

The key to success in the development phase is follow through and accountability. Follow through from the standpoint that managers with identified training needs (weaknesses) are encouraged to take action to improve. Accountability generally stems from executive management buy in to the program, giving priority and emphasis to follow through.

There are many ways to approach developing managers. The most important thing is to recognize the need and potential payback, then take action. I have found the process suggested above to be very effective but anything you can do to improve management skills will likely have a positive impact on retaining top performers and improving organizational effectiveness.

*Note: PDServices offers a 360 management feedback system that offers an excellent 360 feedback survey coupled with online, self paced training and action planning programs for each competency measured. This allows for creation of an effective, personalized development program for individual*

*managers. Information is available by contacting PDServices at 740-397-4928 or by visiting their website at <http://www.pdservices.com/employee-survey-360-feedback.php>.*