

## Give people a choice

Marcus Buckingham asks the key question about managing talent: "What would happen if men and women spent more than 75% of each day on the job using their strongest skills and engaged on their favourite tasks, basically doing exactly what they wanted to do?"

People who spend their time using their strongest skills to do what they love doing tend to produce results. The question is how can we harness that productivity and focus those results for the organisation? The answer is twofold: make sure that people are given jobs that suit both their abilities and *capabilities*, and make sure they understand the actions and behaviours they need to use to perform the job well.

Unfortunately that's not what normally happens. Somebody somewhere decides that you should do such-and-such a job. You get asked if you will take the job in a way that tends to leave little doubt that "No" is not an acceptable answer. So there you are: stuck having to do something you don't particularly want to do, or that you don't feel particularly capable of doing. And to top it all, they don't give you any hints about how to approach the job – what specific actions (behaviours) you need to demonstrate to perform well. You're just supposed to know.

Why can't we ask people what they feel their skills are and what they think they could do to add the most value to the organisation – and then try to give them these jobs? Is it that we think people are intrinsically lazy and that they'll only want to do as little as possible? Is it that we think that there are a lot of jobs that can never be enjoyable or satisfying and nobody would elect to do them? However what might seem interminably boring to you may be very interesting to me. Managers

need to have courage and trust in people to allow them the choice.

They also need to understand that not everyone wants a job change or career progression. Often people are at their best where they are, and moving them or promoting them in order to reward their excellent performance is a formula for failure. Well known examples include promoting the best sales person to sales manager, the best engineer to manager, a strong functional specialist to general management, etc. Not to say that excellent sales people can't become, or don't become, excellent sales managers, or that engineers or functional specialists can't become excellent senior managers. Of course they can. But not all of them can, and not all of them want to.

The chief executive of a company we worked with had a clear understanding of this and recognised the two-sided nature of talent – ability (current performance) and capability (potential performance). In order to enable people to unlock their potential he also recognised that it was necessary to get people into jobs that allowed them to spend more than 75% of each day on the job using their strongest skills. However he saw the major pitfalls involved in the normal organisational processes of career planning. So he laid out this challenge to his top 300 or so managers around the world: "Rather than have us tell you what and where your job should be, would you please tell us where you think you would add most value to the company. List the

three jobs you think you would be best at and we will do our best to put you in one of them."

Some of the resultant job shifts were dramatic. One senior line manager who had been in charge of a large business unit in Africa elected to move to a public affairs role in Brussels. Some individuals moved from senior headquarters roles to running national business units. Others moved across divisions, across functions and between country units. And a number elected to stay in their current jobs. The net result was a management which came close to spending more than 75% of each day on the job using their strongest skills, basically doing what they wanted to do. Performance, in terms of revenue and profitability, soared, resulting in a tripling of the value of the company.

People like to feel they have some control over what they do. Marcus Buckingham claims that only about 20% of people think they are in a job that allows them to do what they do best. Giving individuals who have nominated themselves for challenges, development, job moves, etc., the responsibility to decide on their preferred career paths makes eminent sense. Good managers try to help people find out what their strengths are and help them build on those strengths rather than focusing on what they aren't good at or don't enjoy doing.

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## strategy people performance

Penumbra is a strategic business consultancy. We bring clarity by using research to drive understanding and direction. We deliver success by balancing experience and innovative thinking.

Whatever your aspiration, we'll provide the tools, information and analysis to turn your strategy into operational reality, in a way that motivates your people to outperform the market.

### Overview

As a strategic business consultancy, our expertise is in helping our clients executing strategies and delivering results.

We achieve this by combining a robust management planning system with a focus on people which drives alignment and commitment

We work in partnership with talented and committed leadership teams to help organisations build corporate value with a wide range of customised, cross-functional advisory programmes and services delivered from four complementary service groups:

#### Strategy

(Development, formulation, implementation and alignment)

Our innovative **Penumbra Balance** approach creates dynamism, drives and sustains momentum and makes strategy real for stakeholders

#### Organisational Development

(Behavioural issues)

We call our holistic approach **Balanced Motivation** which encompasses activities that improve performance both for the organisation and the individual

#### Research and Insight

Our stimulating **Clarity** approach draws on our business consulting skills to deliver a mix of business analysis and market research which

provides compelling insights for winning decisions.

#### Operations

The Operations practice brings all of our hands-on practical experience to bear on execution and delivery of results.

Our technology enabling approach called **Totality** facilitates business focussed services and solutions, aligned to business needs, for people, processes and tools.

#### Why Us?

Organisations turn to us when they:

- Want to find a new strategic direction
- Have created a strategy and now need to execute it
- Need to drive more value from existing initiatives
- Have a big issue to resolve, usually dependent on lasting employee buy-in
- Need to explore new ways to drive value
- Need a breakthrough result
- Are seeking measurable results

#### Our Experience

We have real world experience spanning 20 years with our clients. This includes working with:

BP, Citibank, Morgan Chase, WestLB, RBS, UBS, Bankers Trust, Kleinwort Benson, Coutts, Natwest, Intel, Nokia, Adobe, Kall-Kwik, Glaxo Smith Kline,

Dupont, Pfizer, Savills, British Council, Clifford Chance, British Airways, Gillette, Unilever, Shell, Volvo, Vauxhall, British Gas, TradeStation, MWB Business Exchange, Investors in People, University of Cambridge

On projects such as:

Strategic Planning, Strategy development and implementation, Culture change, Post-Merger Integration, Vision, Purpose and Values, Current State Analysis, Organisation Re-design, Transformational Change, Client Focus Strategies, Perception Studies, Client and Staff Engagement surveys, Global Rebranding, Know your Customer, Market Forecasting, Consumer Insight, Market Segmentation, Process optimisation, Lean/Six Sigma, Project Management, ERP Systems Roll-out, Market Research, Financial Modelling, Franchise Start-up Evaluation models, Cost Benefit Analysis, Implementation Alignment, Strategic Alignment, Complex Database development, Custom Application development, Supply Chain Optimisation

Covering diverse sectors such as:

Financial Services, Pharmaceuticals, Manufacturing, Energy, Mobile Telecoms, Travel and Tourism, Aviation, Property, Hi-tech and Business Services