



Galvanizing employees and customers for innovation and market superiority

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## Do you tolerate mediocrity?

Have you created a gravy train that is alienating your top performers? Some companies are perfect hiding grounds for under performers or pass around mismatched employees indefinitely. If you are not focused on outstanding performance you are damaging your company and your own personal leadership reputation.

The three biggest faults leaders make:

- **Hesitating** – waiting too long to tackle mismatched employees.
- **Silence** – failing to explain expectations and whether employees hit or miss them.
- **Reward** – inadequate recognition for great leaders of people.

Take the *Mediocrity Measurement Assessment* today and find out where your company stands. Discover the four crucial steps to banishing mediocrity and creating a company where expectations are high and results are exceeded.

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## The cost of a Mediocre Culture

You cannot accelerate growth and innovation when you tolerate mediocrity. Your highest performers will become frustrated and your own leadership reputation will become tarnished. You will create an organization that is known for being an easy ride where mis-fits are put out to pasture. Your under performers will remain oblivious that they are not meeting expectations. The time spent on customers, products and profit will reduce as energy is absorbed by drama, gossip and unproductive conversations.

Here are some common reactions you may hear from your highest performers:

- “How do they get away with it?”
- “Why doesn’t their boss take action?”
- “Maybe this isn’t the right place for me.”

Are those conversations happening in your company today? Take the *Mediocrity Measurement Assessment* to find out.

## Mediocrity Measurement Assessment

Score one point for each yes

1. Do you set clear leadership expectations for your people managers?
2. Do you have frequent forums for people managers to discuss, share and learn outstanding leadership lessons?
3. Do you hold up your strongest people managers as role models for others?
4. Do you spend 25% of your Leadership Team discussions on people topics?
5. Do you have 90-day reviews with new hires?
6. Does every employee have clear measurable goals?
7. Do employees have regular 1-1's to discuss goals, roadblocks and personal development?
8. Do you actively identify and manage out under performers?
9. Do you exit underperformers swiftly, objectively and with grace?
10. Are rewards tied to achieving goals and demonstrating your company values?

### Your Mediocrity Score:

**10 – Congratulations** – Don't lose sight of those high standards you have set. You attract and retain high performers and have built a reputation for not tolerating mediocrity. Please call me; I would love to feature your company in a future best practice article.

**7-9 – Nearly there!** – You stand out from the crowd as a company that sets high standards and ensures exemplary performance. You have a few blind spots, focus on those quickly and you will create outstanding results.

**5-6 – Danger Zone** – You have established some great practices but you have a number of gaps that will cripple your ability to build great products and delight customers. Pay attention to what you are missing, and develop a plan to accelerate changes in those areas

#### <4 Mediocrity Inc.

Watch out – if you are not losing important team members you soon will be. You need to overhaul how you manage people in your organization. Get help, fast.

## Four steps to banishing Mediocrity

### I. Expectations

Let your leaders know you want them to lead! You may need to press the reset button with your people managers about expectations. Share your leadership values how you want leaders to lead in your organization.

## 2. Goals

Every employee should have goals at the start of your business year. Too many companies forget or wait three months to perfect them. Meanwhile employees are making decisions about where they spent their time and trade offs about products and customers without recent direction. Too many leaders assume that employees know the latest direction in strategy or product focus, when in reality there is confusion. Don't make goals overly complex; they should be clear and easy to measure. Every manager of a team should have a people related goal and every senior leader should have a multi-year goal focused on the strategy.

## 3. Feedback

Do not treat everyone equally. Be thoughtful about the experience and style of each member of your team and adapt your feedback appropriately. Vary your frequency and depth of feedback depending on tenure and anticipated autonomy. A recent hire, a leader of a remote team and someone in the biggest role of their career will all have different needs for feedback. Often leaders forget to ask how people like to receive feedback and test if it is working throughout the year. Another common error is waiting too long to share feedback, which loses both impact and relevance. If you ever find yourself telling someone else about your concerns regarding an employee's performance before you have told the employee, it is likely you are failing to communicate feedback effectively.

## 4. Action

I have yet to meet a leader that has regretted talking action too fast on a misfit in their team. Be fair, reasonable, fast and decisive when choosing your course of action. You would be remiss to ignore legal advice, but don't let this command your actions as legal experts have a duty to share all of the risks, just as you have a duty to balance that advice and make informed business decisions.

## What is your excuse?

### **Wait! We can't hire only super stars!**

That maybe true, but set the bar high and the energy and focus in your company will increase, rapidly. I regularly see organizations without strategic direction, employees without goals and employees coasting along, when it would be better for everyone if decisive action were taken. Amazon uses a distinctive test for all of their new hires: *'Is this person better than 50% of the people doing this role today?'* That is a great test to ensure you are continually raising the bar. Many times the under performer or mismatched employee will call you three months later to thank you for ending their misery and allowing them to find a job they love.

### **We have a busy quarter; we will launch this later.**

Every month you wait, is a month where you risk that one of your best people will quit. Solutions are neither time consuming nor complex, they just require commitment. Call a meeting and have a conversation with your people managers about expectations. There, step one is already complete, now you only have three steps left.

Build a plan for the last three steps today; your highest performers will thank you for it.

For faster results, contact me and we can build a plan together for building a culture that accelerates results and banishes mediocrity.

Val Wright