Jumping the Promotion Q



Most organizations have a fairly clear line of advancement. It may not always be clear to employees what they need to do to walk the line to advancement however, if there is a possibility for advancement those who are looking for it can generally see it.

Paths to Advancement

Employee Career Paths:
1) Apprentice or Entry level, 2) Experienced, 3) Senior 4) Leadership role (supervisor, project leader, lead hand, foreman or coordinator), 5) Management.

Manager Career Paths:
1) Junior or entry level manager or management trainee, 2) Manager, 3) Senior manager, 4) Assistant director and 5) Director.

Executive or C-Suite Career Paths
1) Senior manager or Director, 2) Assistant VP 3) Vice-President, 4) Chief 'something' Officer; CFO (financial), CTO (technical), COO (Operations), CEO (Executive) and more.

The names may very, associate and principal being popular ones right now, and any given organization may have more or fewer steps, but generally there is an order to the process of career advancement that has been traditionally followed that makes sense. In most cases the skills, knowledge and experienced gained in one role or level of employment helps prepare one for the next level of employment.

The Pros and Cons of Advancing an Employee Too Far, Too Fast

Certainly it is possible for a stand out employee to jump the line without following the traditional path. However, there are pros and cons to the situation where an employee leapfrogs the normal advancement and promotion process into a more senior role. On the one hand it is a way to reward and retain a high performing employee who can then set the example for others. On the other hand it could cause friction with other employees and if the employee flops in the role you could lose your star performer and other employees could lose faith in your process for promotions.

If you are considering promoting or hiring an employee outside the normal career advancement road here are some things to keep in mind:

Keep Performance in Perspective: Work performance alone may be enough to move someone

from an entry level role into a more senior role but moving them straight into a leadership role with out adequate training and supervision could cost you in the long run. Closely examine their performance and consider ways you can reward them that may not include a jump in promotion.

Think Big Picture: Once you set this employee up to expect a big reward with a big payoff in a more senior role and more compensation it is difficult to un-ring that bell. In other words, if you reward someone handsomely today they may expect to be rewarded again at the same level tomorrow and the leap between a lower position and middle position, where there generally are more opportunities, is much easier to achieve then a leap at the higher levels. Have a career path and plan in mind for this employee and consider how you will manage the next steps.

Determine the Impact on Employee Morale: When you promote one person that is often in place of another. When someone jumps ahead in the promotions that may mean displacing more than one person. Depending on how the situation is managed you could end up with a few unhappy employees. However, if you are certain the person's abilities are well recognized and the person is well liked, a leapfrog promotion can raise the spirits of others who see a well deserving employee be rewarded for hard work. Know your workforce and them employees place within it before proceeding.

Provide Mentoring and Coaching: When you bypass the normal protocols for promotion something is sure to be missed. By providing this newly advanced employee with access to a mentor or coach you create the opportunity for learning that could have occurred through the normal process of promotion.

Hierarchies often exist for a reason. Sometimes they are restrictive and need to be changed or bypassed. Some people will move through them more quickly or slowly. The process is often designed to offer someone the experiences they need to manage all aspects of the job. If you are messing with this process ensure you have the proper checks and balances in place to support this employee.