

The Right People in the Wrong Jobs

How you can make your people, and yourself, more productive and happier at the same time, from your About.com Guide to Management.

Recently, I was speaking with a System Architect friend who expressed frustration with her current project. "The Project Manager is not using the (people) resources well," summarized this former manager's complaint.

Manager's Perspective

What manager hasn't struggled with the problem of not having enough of a key resource needed to do the job? You shuffle people, juggle tasks and priorities, and plead for more resources. You cross-train where you can, contract specialists if you can, and work far too much overtime. You know how much it is taking out of you over time, but what about the people you supervise. What is it doing to them?

What About Your People?

The key people on your team like being busy and feeling needed. Yet they can easily burn out and begin to resent the demands you place on their skills.

Others on the team are bored with being underutilized or unhappy being cross-trained to help in areas they lack skill or interest.

"Think of all the hours lost," the system architect told me "by people doing jobs they aren't suited for or excited about."

Why Does It Happen?

Some people are in the wrong job, and doing the work, because they want the attributes of the job. A doctor might be a surgeon for the prestige, but have no interest in people. Some are 'stuck' in a job they don't like because they can't get anything better suited to them. This may be due to a lack of the specific skills needed, a lack of initiative, or no job hunting skill. Others may work at the wrong job because of pressure to stay in 'the family business', or because they think a certain career is expected of them for whatever reason. Many people start a work history with the first job they can get and just stay in that industry forever.

What Can You Do?

We know that people do best at the work that they enjoy doing. You, as a manager, have some control over the situation simply by how you manage. When you give a person the latitude to decide how to do their job, instead of micro-managing every

detail of every task, they will do things in a way that is most enjoyable for them. The result will be a more productive, satisfied employee. You will have more time for managing the 'big picture' and will make yourself more promotable. You'll also be able to concentrate your time on the things that YOU do best too.

More importantly, be sensitive to the skills and interests of your employees as you assign them to jobs. Try to put people in jobs that suit them. Put the dreamer in charge of creative tasks. Put the detail-oriented individual on tasks with more structure. Don't put your introverted loner into customer service.

Just think how much more would get done if people only did jobs for which they had the talent, and a real passion.

How Do You Determine The Best Fit?

There are a lot of companies that will either sell you the tools to do employee screening and testing or do the work for you, for a fee. Most of this is aimed at pre-employment screening to make sure you get the best employees. Firms like ADREM Profiles, Inc. will check out a prospective employee for you by checking for criminal record, verifying educational qualifications and employment history, etc. While that is important, this article focuses on this 'best employee' after they have been hired. How do you make sure you get them in the right spot.

Carl Jung, noted Swiss psychologist and the founder of the Jungian approach to psychotherapy, gave us the concept of personality typology. Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine C. Briggs created a refinement called the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Many companies, like The Brain Type Institute, will conduct MBTI personality inventories of yourself and your employees, classifying an individual into one of 16 types.

Dr. David Keirsey developed the concept into the Keirsey Temperament Sorter. His self-administered test lets you answer 72 questions online and determine your temperament and variant. His descriptions of the 16 types should help you better understand, and place, your people.