

## Fire Your Bottom 10%

### Are You Hindering The Top Performers?

*Ron Hequet*

Baseball was my sport when I was a kid. In fact, I was scouted by the Cleveland Indians. I'll never forget the scout, a guy named Joe. Joe had to be 60 if he was a day. He wore a tattered ball cap that should have been retired years earlier, wore suspenders to hold up his pants (probably because of his belly; I suspect a result of too many adult beverages), he chewed Beechnut and the tobacco juice ran down from both corners of his mouth.

He said to me, "Ron, there's not a pitcher you can't hit, no one can hit a ball passed you (I played 2<sup>nd</sup> base), but...you can't run. Even in the minor leagues on a base hit, they might through you out at first base from right field."

The rest, as they say, is history; college, military, college, business.

My point here is that, even if I had been hired in baseball, I would have ultimately been cut. Why? Although I had two out of the three basic skills required to play the game, I lacked the 'complete package' and would have hindered the team's performance.

In professional baseball, they fire the bottom 10% **every year**.

In all the businesses I have owned, I have always detested firing people. I didn't even like firing cheats and liars, because I knew it would have an effect on their family. Fortunately, all that was very rare (credit my hiring process), but it must be done.

I would be willing to wager that the bottom 10% of your organization is performing below standards (provided you have standards, written and a quantifiable method of measure), and they're honestly hindering your growth and profitability. You know intuitively who they are and you need to cut them loose.

It's not that they're bad folks, the job may not be a fit or they may lack the 'complete package' to perform at a higher level. They suck up management time and energy, other team members have to take up the slack, and they breed negativity to others and spread incompetence, **especially with your customers**.

If firing someone is painful, as it was for me, think about **how much money it's costing you and your team to have them employed** with your organization as compared to the gains by having an achiever with the 'complete package'.

You'll also find very revealing, my article titled: Hire Too Fast and / or Fire Too Slow – available at [Hire Too Fast and / or Fire Too Slow](#)

**Do it Now!** Replace an underperformer with an **achiever** and do all you can to guide the departing person to a better career track. I have actually had people thank me later for terminating their employment with my company. After all, if you don't enforce high performance standards and compliance in your organization, then don't be surprised if your growth and profitability are hindered.

No organization, profits when you pay for ineffectiveness and weak performance; **no one!** Excellence, quality and living up to standards are the only things that contribute to growth and profitability. All else is detrimental. This also applies to your vendors and anyone that gets money from you.

Having said that, I also believe in cutting people some slack.

Years ago, I had an administrative assistant that I gave a research assignment to. She knocked herself out, even spending time on her own at home, on her own time, to do the research and create the reports and documentation I asked for. She presented it to me on time and with a huge smile on her face. She was obviously very proud of what she had done. As it turned out, when I tested the data and information she delivered, it was useless.

My first and personal inclination is to blame myself. Was I specific; was I clear, did I describe it in a way so that she couldn't get it wrong? Even though I paid for a second attempt, no, it turned out that she simply didn't have the skills I thought she had. However, (and this is important), she did what she was capable of doing.

I am a staunch believer in giving people the benefit of the doubt, in training and in charity, but financing mediocrity and a lack of ability is not part of that.

**There's a rule;** if you choose to subsidize 'something for nothing', you pay the consequences, i.e. a waste of your money...and your customers pay the price too in hindered resources to invest in serving them.

Question: If you terminated everyone that works for you, would you rehire every one of them, or would you selectively make some cuts for more talent?

So, when you set and enforce standards in your organization, **everyone benefits**. Your team members benefit from the discipline, your organization benefits from the **growth and profitability** and ultimately **your customers benefit too**, by firing your bottom 10% and remove the environment that hinders your top performers.

There's no cost for conversation, so if you'd like to discuss this process and the associated issues, call my office 817.599.4410.