

“RISK OF PROMOTING WRONG PEOPLE”

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Despite the job market doing poorly and supply far exceeding demand, finding the right talent continues to be a problem. As the challenges keep mounting you need even better talent to cope with these challenges effectively.

Talent quickly becomes the limiting constraint for many high-growth companies. And the biggest demand is for management and leadership positions. One of the common strategies Sri Lankan companies adopt is to promote from within their existing ranks and then backfill with new, entry-level talent. It's a good strategy when it works, but too often you see companies promoting the wrong people into the wrong roles and suffering in the long run as a result.

While it's a good policy to have one needs to manage the process rationally to ensure that you don't make a mistake. Too often we have seen someone promoted because they were "perfect for the job," only to find out that they took the role under duress and miss their old position. Without a real desire and internal motivation to take on the role, the results

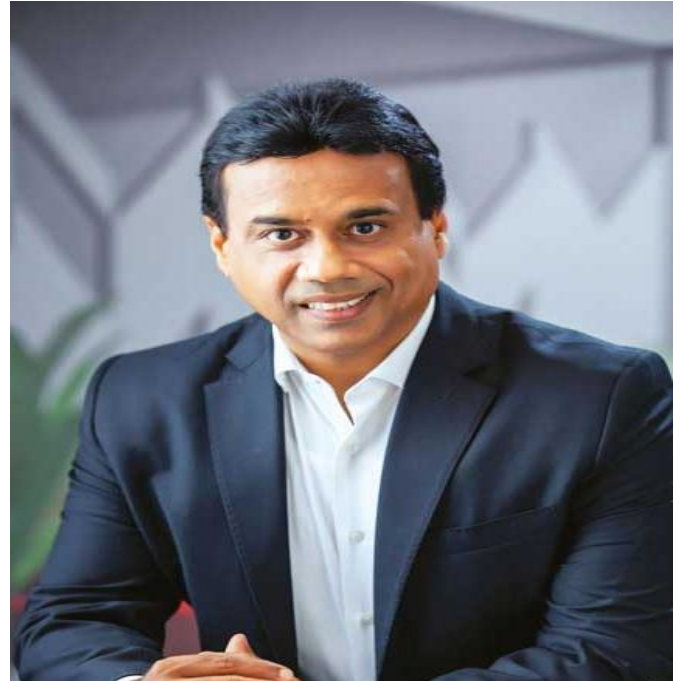
will be lacklustre at best. While people always want to advance and feel like they are making progress, you will want to make sure that this is the role for them. This might take some digging and frank deliberations. The classic misstep many companies make is taking a starting player and making them a manager. Just because someone is a great salesperson or a brilliant coder, that doesn't mean they will make a great people leader. The best technical people often make horrible managers because their expectations and standards are far beyond anyone else on the team. Make sure they have the people skills to lead the team before you put them in charge.

Shift of focus

As you move up from individual contributor to management and leadership, one of the big changes is your shift in focus from day-to-day operations and tactics to strategy and long-term thinking. Before you move someone up the ladder, make sure can think strategically and see the system-level perspective of the business.

Much of this is trainable but be aware of how much work it will take to get someone to the level you need. Moving up the management ladder will also mean a much bigger scope and accountability, more people, more issues, and more demands. If someone hasn't developed the skills to deal with multiple and at times conflicting priorities and learned how to allocate their time effectively, they can quickly become overwhelmed and ineffective. Make sure they have the management skills to take on these new challenges.

A new job may require new skills and sometimes not the same skills at an elevated level. If the promotion you are considering involves new skills and capabilities, you need to make sure they are trained and ready.



Moving someone into a management role that requires strategizing, analytical skills, people management, budgeting and forecasting when the person doesn't know how to use a spreadsheet will be a disaster. While many of these skills are trainable, make sure you know the gaps and have a plan before making the decision. When promoting someone with clear deficiencies, make their training part of their development plan and set specific goals.

Cultural fit

One of the big risks in promoting someone is that the promotion gives them a much bigger impact on the culture of the company. If they are not a good cultural fit, you'll be exacerbating the problem by giving them a more powerful and influential role. And you'll be sending a message to the team that this person represents what is acceptable within the organization. If your employee doesn't reflect your company's desired management culture, think twice before promoting them. Promoting from within existing ranks is a highly effective and desirable strategy for most organizations much of the time. You know the person well, can assess their capabilities more easily, and can determine culture fit with a high degree of confidence. But if you promote without asking yourself the right questions, you'll likely run into problems down the road.

In a world where the majority of employees believe promotions are unfair, it is time to start giving people more opportunities to make their potential visible. It's time to let employees be seen by someone other than their boss to earn credibility for the internal processes. It's time to let them own their career decisions rather than having an organization decide their future for them.