

Move On Up

HOW EXPERTS COACH EMPLOYEES THROUGH PROMOTIONS

BY CAROLYN HEINZE

You've just promoted a model employee. They're happy: not only are they excited about their new responsibilities, the pay raise that goes along with it isn't so shabby, either. You're happy: this employee is a top performer, and you're confident that they're going to excel in their new role. But what plans have you made to help them through the promotion?

"What often happens—and it's really too bad—is [companies] promote someone and then give them no support," said Joel Garfinkle, an executive coach based in Oakland, CA, and author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. "There are so many different pressures that can impact a newly promoted individual, whether it's the possibility of failure, or exposure and visibility to higher levels of management, and how to handle that."

This support should, in a large part, be in the form of training—pretty much immediately. "No one is born knowing how to manage other people's performances, which means that you have to have a development plan for your new manager, and in some way, shape, or form, you have to get them some management training," said Marie McIntyre, a career and organizational development coach based in Atlanta, GA, and author of *Secrets to Winning at Office Politics*. She pointed out that fortunately these days, that doesn't necessarily require you to send them across the country to a management seminar; it could simply mean having them participate in webinars and other online training resources, pointing them to the plethora of management books out there, or "assigning" them to a willing mentor. And, she added, one of the simplest things the person who promoted the employee can do is, during the transition, hold regularly scheduled meetings to talk about how things are going, and what challenges this person might be running up against.

Mark Valenti, president and CEO at The Sextant Group, an audiovisual consulting firm headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA, explained that the company recently transitioned two of its staff members from project design into project consulting roles, and in both cases they participated in a week of orientation at the head office. "[The positions] are different—the kinds of reports that you need to deal with,

the kinds of data that you need to enter and maintain, the kinds of activities that you do, and meetings that you attend every week are different," he explained, "and so we did a real, live orientation as if we were hiring them brand new."

If you're promoting someone within their own department, it's important that you have the manpower to cover their old responsibilities. What not to do, McIntyre cautioned, is to simply add their new responsibilities to their existing workload.

Your expectations of the newly promoted individual must be clear across the board, and that includes communicating them to the entire team. McIntyre is a big believer in holding transition meetings, which can be run by the person that promoted the employee, to discuss what this person's new role encompasses, and what you, as their boss, need them to accomplish. Not only does this acknowledge that this promotion is, in fact, an adjustment for everyone, it can also serve to prevent potential resentment: if the newly promoted Mary is nosing into everybody's



Coaxing Promotions



Mark Valenti, president and CEO at The Sextant Group.

At The Sextant Group, an AV consultancy headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA, management uses annual reviews to determine if, and where, employees would like to move within the company. "In that conversation, people get a chance to say, 'You know, I

love what I'm doing, but what I really want to do is this,'" explained Mark Valenti, president and CEO. "And so for us, that says, 'As managers, our job is to find them an opportunity to do what they love, and if they get a chance to do what they love, they're going to be happy and healthy and stay with us for a long time.'"

Valenti admits that his company isn't always in the position to accommodate employees' wishes, but that the review process is a good occasion to check in. "And as the year goes along and we're looking for opportunities, we can say, 'Look, the next time that we feel the capacity need and we've got to add X, then we're going to make sure we consider this guy first.'" —C.H.

projects, team members know that it's because you've told her to, not because she's flaunting her authority.

One of the issues that newly promoted professionals run into, especially when they've moved up within their own department, is that their new job requires them to supervise people who have, oftentimes, become their friends. While this new role doesn't require them to break friendships, they should be aware that it will definitely alter these relations. Because it's likely that they're better friends with certain people, promoted individuals must also be mindful of real or perceived favoritism toward these folks. "That can be hard if you're really actually friends with your co-workers, but you have to manage that transition with them. Hopefully you will be friendly with your employees—you want a friendly relationship—but you can't be



Marie McIntyre, a career and organizational development coach based in Atlanta, GA, and author of Secrets to Winning at Office Politics.

friends in the same way."

Valenti notes that as the AV industry competes with other industries for talent—and, demographically, there is a shortage of young people in general—management issues like coaching employees through promotions become more crucial than they may have been in the past. "We've often been taught, as businessmen, to manage our money first and foremost, but I think in the next decade we've got to manage people, more importantly, and the money will take care of itself," he said. "So it's all the more important that you handle this kind of internal promotion carefully and correctly because the last thing you want to do is take a really good person, promote them into the wrong spot, and then lose them."

Carolyn Heinze is a freelance writer/editor.



Joel Garfinkle, an executive coach and author based in Oakland, CA.

The Onus is on the Employee, Too

While employers should help newly promoted employees make the transition, employees need to make an effort, too, said Joel Garfinkle, an executive coach based in Oakland, CA, and author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. "Their job is to sit down with their boss and clarify all of this. Their job is to reach out and ask for help and get the support they need. Who are the mentors? Who are the people in the organization who can really support you in the transition that you're making? Put yourself in a position to be successful, and don't wait for your employer to give you what you need."

—C.H.

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