

Promotions are not always good

Written by By Julie Desmond
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Nico is about to lose his job. He does not realize it, but his company set him up to fail, and he drank the Kool-Aid. He was the best account exec in the firm, and he had been there the longest, so when it came time to hire a Sales Manager, he was first in line. He accepted the promotion and it has been all downhill from there. How can this be?

Some of the best employees are graduates from the College of Common Sense. Who should play drums in the band? The person who plays drums. Who should manage the sales team? The person the sales team turns to with questions, concerns and new ideas. Managers are born, not made. They are the people who quietly nudge others in the right direction, with or without the manager title. The best manager candidates might even seem less able in a lesser role. For instance, Nico had the highest sales numbers. But Cal had the ear of the sales team. When Cal made a suggestion, people listened. His sales numbers might have been affected because he often spent time training new salespeople and was known for occasionally handing a tip to a coworker when it made sense to do so. Rather than competing with coworkers, Cal brought out the best in others. Meanwhile, Nico ran ahead of the pack by keeping his head down and working hard toward his own goals.

So we come to myriad problems for the company. Both Nico and Cal are critical to the company's success, and both are about to leave. Nico, because he is unhappy and Cal, because he has been passed over. Nico wants to sell. He is gifted when it comes to uncovering accounts and turning them into clients. Now the company not only has a frustrated manager on their hands, they have removed their best salesperson from the board. Nico needs to get back to sales and fast.

But Nico deserves a promotion. He has worked long and hard and should be recognized. The answer is lateral. The horizon is always out there, just beyond reach. Nico ought to be reaching for lateral promotions, for the horizon instead of the stars. He will benefit by having more territory, more complex projects or a new incentive plan. He will not thrive for having more direct reports.

Cal is already managing. Let him. Let him take that strength to a new level, with a focus on taking the team to a new level. Let Cal move "up" and watch the whole team thrive. The

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manager is not more important than the team. The person who understands this will be the better manager.

Some people should move up, some should move out and some should move on. The best companies recognize the difference. It's common sense.

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