

## Moving People Up in the Company

08/06/07

We have a couple administrative people who have asked to move up in the organization. They've been here awhile, but we're not sure if they're ready for the next step. Also, in the past, we've been pretty informal about how we move people around, and we'd like to get better at doing that. What do you suggest?

Promoting people is an important task for any business. You're right to want to do it correctly, and to be careful to get the right people into the right jobs. Here are some suggestions that may help.

You want to insure the person you're promoting has groomed his or her replacement. You also want to be sure they're well prepared for the next job they'll be going into. You'll need to deal with salary issues. And they will probably need help re-establishing themselves with their peers and, possibly, new subordinates, as they settle into the new job. Finally, you and the newly promoted employee will want to be clear about expectations and timeframes.

Any time someone in the organization asks for a promotion, your first question of them should be, "Who's going to replace you in your old job?" One of the beauties of promoting from within is that the person moving out of the job can train the new person coming in. If you have to hire a new person, assign that

responsibility to the person being promoted, obviously with your oversight and approval. Don't take filling that opening onto your shoulders. If someone wants to get promoted, they can put the work in to filling their old slot.

At the same time, you want to be sure that the people asking for promotions are, in fact, ready for that step forward. Have each employee interview with the manager in charge of the new position. Don't make any promises or interfere; let the two of them work it out. If the people asking for the promotions are ready, and the hiring manager is satisfied they'll do a good job, move ahead.

If the candidates aren't ready, or the hiring manager isn't satisfied, ask the hiring manager to explain his or her concerns to the candidates. Ask the hiring manager to lay out a plan of action, documenting what the candidates would have to do to become qualified. If the candidates still want to pursue the promotion, have them meet monthly with the hiring manager, to discuss progress with their plan of action.

If the hiring manager has to fill the position before the candidates are ready, you have two choices. You can discuss with the hiring manager putting the candidates in as trainees. Or, you can have the hiring manager move forward with recruiting externally and see

if you find a stronger candidate on the outside. If you do find someone externally, let the internal candidates know that they will have to wait for the next opportunity, and can use the time to prepare themselves. Then, see if they do so.

Let's assume your internal candidates are ready to move up. You need to figure out what to do about salary. Since the candidates are moving up into a job for which they were not previously considered, it's likely that they'll be at the bottom of the salary range for the new position. If you don't have salary ranges for jobs, you can search on the internet to get an idea of what's appropriate for the job.

Look at the candidates' old salaries, and the income range for the new position. Typically, a 15%-20% increase from one job to the next is a lot, and 50% is probably more than you want to hand out at one time. If there's a huge gap, you may want to take the promotion in stages, monitoring progress in the new position before handing over the total increase.

Spend some time thinking about how the people moving up will reestablish themselves with their peers. Moving from administration, which is typically a support position, into an exempt position, for example, can be a challenge. Be sure to announce the promotion to everyone in the



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organization. Changing desks is often a good idea, as a way to break the old job from the new one. Assign a mentor, to help coach the person moving up.

Be sure the newly promoted employee is clear about expectations and timeframes. Set up 30, 60, and 90 day check-ins, just as you would with a brand new employee. Even if the people being promoted were stellar performers in their old jobs, expect breakdowns as they work to master the new job requirements. Make time periodically to ask how things are going— they'll appreciate encouragement as they move from a job they knew well into new and challenging territory.

Looking for a good book? Try *Crisp: Systematic Succession Planning: Building Leadership From Within*, by Sandy Porkas.

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