

Running head: Track A, B and C Employees

Enrichment for Workers in the 21st Century  
Evaluating Alternative Solutions in Talent Management

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*Abstract*

The objective of this paper's focus is to provide several alternatives to address the current Talent Management predictions of the 'A' track leaving their posts. The main focus is to understand the differences between the A and B players and why it is important for companies to invest resources into developing the B track employees and yes C players as well. If there were a possibility to drive productivity up by 1-1/2 percentage points it would be worth the value in the investment in both the B and C tracks of employees rather than incur a cost to replace them. The burn out factor is a real issue for all employers and employees today. Any type of training to assist in motivating the B and C players and acknowledge their efforts is a good people investment provided the person is in the right role for their strengths.

In reviewing an HBR article, *Let's Hear it for the B Players* (2003) Delong and Vijayaraghavan provide some concrete evidence as to the value of the B Players. It is true, that the equalitarian mind-set looks at being equal across the ranks of employee tracks – and yet there is an argument that says that the equalitarian mind-set doesn't make sense. Yes and I believe it would make 'cents' and sense for the company in increased performance, perceived value of equality and good will to produce an increase in the output. An increase would reflect a huge difference to the bottom line of the organization and help retain their employees.

*Keywords: Tracks A, B and C Employees, Investment in all Employees to increase performance, class-diversity and equalitarian mind-set.*

## Introduction

Engagement and enrichment in the lives of all workers to improve an organization's efficiency is a concept worth investigating as an alternative rather than to invest and focus only on the track A or high-potential employees. Due to the exodus of the high-potential employees leaving their current employers now, if there are alternative solutions to retain those employees or other employees who have stepped up to the plate during the crisis over the past few years, it would be a good time to revisit those ideas now. How can an organization reach out to all these employees to reignite their passion and get them committed to stay with the company versus leaving as currently projected?

There are several alternative solutions to consider and one solution would involve a change leadership plan. CEOs typically like working with their own like-type of person. Typically this would be an A player like themselves. Therefore, they tend to overlook the B player. The B player is truly playing a key role and is supporting the organization. The B player could drive up productivity if there were resources allocated to this person to make them also feel valuable, or they too will begin heading for the door.

All though there are not many that see the value in the 'C' player, as witnessed by the audience and the answer by a speaker at a conference, when asked, "Would you apply the same principles to the C player?" The answer was "No, get rid of them." The same type of question was asked in a class recently attended, the response from a recruiter was the same, get rid of them. The 'C' player may see work as just that, work and not a career. Yet why not find what motivates them, versus what turns them off? The surprise might be the difference of one-half point to a full point increase in their performance and that is of value in production to an organization's efficiency.

In reviewing an HBR article, *Let's Hear it for the B Players* (2003) Delong and Vijayaraghavan provide some concrete evidence as to the value of the B Players. The trumpet sound should be played loudly and repeated often in the ears of the C-Suite executives and for the Talent Managers today as they revise their plans.

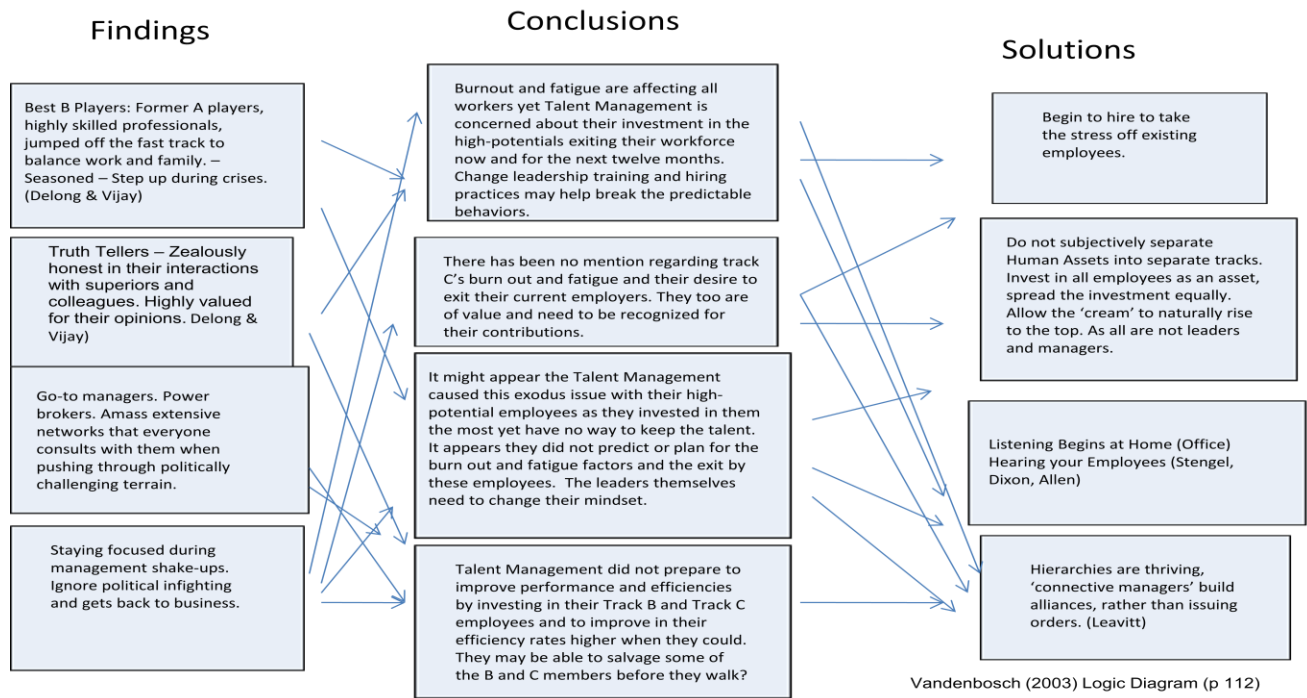
Secondly, another alternative concept may be a subscription to egalitarianism although it is widely known it runs counter to hierarchies. Yes and we could view the hierarchy as the devil that we do know and apply the principles of egalitarianism as the devil that we also know and make the hierarchy more efficient and effective.

Can we leverage both the egalitarian mind-set and the hierarchy as part of the mind-set change for human development and diversity of our workforce for greater productivity with a start point in change leadership? In reviewing HBR's abstract of Harold J. Leavitt's (2008) book, *Why Hierarchies Are Here to Stay and How to Manage Them More Effectively* the hope is to offer additional solutions to the engagement and retention issue. In Michael Lee Stallard (2007) book, *"Fired up or Burned out, How to Reignite Your Team's Passion, Creativity, and Productivity"* he discusses what a connection culture is and what it will take to create one in the work environment. Additionally by using the concept and value of the connection culture, the strengths of the B team and, the hierarchy of blending of the connectivity alliances and building alliances as Leavitt describes. The outcomes of these new alliances are to reflect the two ideas and to restore confidence in the vision, the value, and the voice of the organization to help reignite sparks in the employees as Stallard suggests. In Leavitt's (2008) abstract, "Hierarchies reflect the two ideas, the "humanizing" school, and the systemizing school (p1)." Bring the two concepts together with the ideology of the egalitarian mind-set and is it possible there could be yet another solution?

Lastly, in reading the review of an HBR case study of P&G entitled, *Listening Starts at Home* by Stengel, Dixon, and Allen (2003), the focus is about the lessons leadership learned and how they began to truly hear their employees and listen to their concerns. As another solution to engaging the learner, P&G used surveys, and the feedback response to make changes on the spot. How the factor of hearing this feedback contributed to the morale, business effectiveness, and loyalty of an employee. During the survey process, Stengel discovered if an employee stays with a company during a crisis it depends on how well they are heard and listened to by the leadership team.

Logic Diagram for Alternative Solutions

Logic Diagram for Alternative Solutions in Fortune 500 Organizations



## Proposed Changes

If we review the logic diagram, we can look at the plausibility of hiring and retaining the B player and why they are such a huge asset to an organization, especially during a crisis.

Delong and Vijayaraghavan (2003) researched the value that B performers bring to an organization. “It’s hardly surprising that companies have invested a lot of time, money, and energy in hiring and retaining star performers (p1).” The article goes onto say the reason that CEO hire star performers is that they are most like themselves when they were young and starting out. The CEOs see them as dazzling, quick, and brilliant like themselves and they want to spend time with them. In difficult times, companies automatic belief is that the A team can lead the company in performance. “At the extreme, A players think more about what’s good for *Brand Me* than what’s good for the company (p 6).” They also will be the first to leave a company, as they are loyal to brand me. “Since most leaders are themselves highly motivated A players, they tend to undervalue B players who have a different worldview (p8).” Therefore, the leadership team appears to be making a predictable decision in hiring themselves and overlooking the qualities and values in their B players. The B players counterbalance the ambition of the company’s high-performing stars that can be reckless and that they tend to have volatile behavior. B players act as grounders to this behavior for the organization, they are charismatic and they are very well thought of by their colleagues yet organizations very rarely learn to value them. As a result companies see profits sink and do not know why. (p4) *Duh!* “Companies are routinely blinded to the important role B players serve in saving organizations from themselves (4).”

Delong and Vijayaraghavan (2003) suggest as positioned in the logic chart, the B players are former A players, they are highly skilled professionals; they jumped off the fast track to

balance work and family. The B player is a seasoned worker and will step up during crises. The B players are truth tellers and zealously honest in their interactions with superiors and colleagues. Lastly, the B players are highly valued for their opinions. They are go-to managers and Power brokers. They stay focused during management shake-ups and are not looking for the next promotion. (p2) Based on Delong and Vijayaraghavan's (2003) case study one can assume that the leadership team understood the ramifications of their actions and that they are overlooking valuable talent within their organization. The recommendation is to focus on having an egalitarianism mind-set and begin to see that there is a potential in all their employees not just the employees that are most like the leadership. In order to do this quickly there would need to be assessments done to determine who the B team is from the C team. To see what can be done to set up meetings immediately for the B team and to reward them for their work. Additionally, the same thing needs to be done for the C team.

As pointed out in the P&G case study *Listening Begins at Home* (2003) Jim Stengel, Chief Marketing Officer at P&G began working with the University of Chicago professors, Andrea L. Dixon and Chris T. Allen. The mission was to put together a training plan for the marketing organization. Yet what they discovered is that a few company leaders provided their view of the diagnosis needed and cure to the reason the employees were unhappy. Briefly, the value was to hear the needs of the employees and true listening to what they said versus believing that a few executives had the cure. Stengel learned there was a need to:

- 1) Start with a clean slate,
- 2) Shadow a sample of employees,
- 3) Conduct a series of focus groups off-site,
- 4) Use a series of in-depth interviews,
- 5) Develop a survey instrument, and
- 6) Examine the prevalence of the issues that exist throughout your

organization. Determine how these issues relate to key outcomes such as effectiveness, morale, and loyalty. (p7)

The reason number six is mentioned is it relates to the organizations effectiveness, moral and loyalty as number six succinctly captures the points made in the logic diagram. Therefore, Stengel made sure to truly listen and hear all feedback from the employees. The recommendation is to do the same thing regarding motivating the current workers to determine what can be done to salvage the current situation.

### Summary

In summary, the immediate goal is to stem the loss of the B team leaving as there is a belief that many of the A team will leave regardless of what can be done for them at this point. It goes without saying that there would be an effort to retain the A team members who have intentions of staying. Therefore, find immediate ways to provide rewards the B players have brought value to the table. Recognize also the C players. Put together a full plan as outlined by Stengel and listen carefully to what is truly needed and wanted by the employees. Set up time after there have been some short-term measures put in place. Bring in a consultant to design a change leadership plan regarding diversity and awareness that others bring to the table that may be different from themselves. Create an egalitarian environment where the leadership, management, and talent management can begin slowly to change the culture of the organization to accept the value that we all contribute in an organization. Help develop a connection culture to help the organization thrive.



## Resources

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