



Proffitt

Management Solutions

Volume XV, No. 8

Newsletter

Jump-start Your Leadership and Team Performance

Executives, leaders, and managers are facing tough decisions as we return to work. Newly appointed and seasoned leaders must assess their teams, find the gaps, and fill open positions. Adding to the complexity is the critical task of identifying those who would be better served in a different capacity, often times outside the team or organization. This requires an intricate balance of confidence and humility, as well as skillful communication.

The first few weeks are crucial to build trust, learn, and evaluate, even if you are not new to your role. You see, the pandemic has changed us: we've adapted and grown, our perspectives have been altered, and for some, our values have shifted.

In a recent [Pew Research](#) survey of Americans regarding their experience with the pandemic, almost 90% of the 9,220 who responded reported at least one negative change and 73% have experienced an "unexpected upside."

According to Pew, *"Most have experienced these negative impacts and silver linings simultaneously: Two-thirds (67%) of Americans mentioned at least one negative and at least one positive change since the pandemic began."*

When analyzing the data, they found that Americans were affected in a variety of different ways, both positive and negative, and there was no "typical experience."

As we return to work, we are returning as a new team. We are new leaders, managers, employees, and teams. By asking the right probing questions and actively listening you can jump-start your leadership and team performance.

Assess Your Team

Typically, after spending an average of four years in their position, 25% of managers change jobs.

A Message from Nancy...

Let me ask you:

- Are the people on your team engaged and committed or just collecting a pay check?
- Do you have the right people in the right seats on the bus? Are *you* in the right seat?
- Is the high cost of turnover eating away your organization's bottom-line?
- Are your processes and procedures (or lack thereof) delivering productive and efficient results?
- How comfortable are the members of your senior team managing and leading others?



In today's highly competitive environment, it's no surprise that *"what got you here may not get you there."*

At **Proffitt Management Solutions** we are fully committed to providing a unique blend of team and individual development and executive coaching sessions where participants achieve more focus, a sense of purpose, and better results in their leadership roles.

Find out how services such as individual or team coaching and development, motivational and skills workshops, seminars may help you better answer those 5 questions and benefit you...

Proffitt Management Solutions
326 Maddock St.
West Palm Beach, FL
www.ProffittManagement.com
561-582-6060
info@proffittmanagement.com

High potential leaders and executives make a change every 30-36 months. However, according to research by [Microsoft](#), 41% of the entire workforce has or may make a change this year. This includes the 4 million Americans who left their positions in April of 2021 in “The Great Resignation.” With many companies returning to the office in October, it is critical that managers, leaders, and executives assess their teams.

New leadership—including managers new to their position—will likely find they’ve got the right people on the bus. However, they may inherit people who are not pulling their own weight, including people who are burned out. Rather than shaking the trees (and losing some good leaves with the bad apples), mindfully gather information to make your evaluations.

Ongoing uncertainty and change impacts team dynamics and habitual ways of working. Managers need to be able to determine temporary inefficiencies from ineffective (or poor) assignments.

Evaluation Criteria

While first impressions are important, they are not enough to effectively evaluate your team members. Other factors should be considered and weighted appropriately. For example, after spending time with each individual, assess for:

- **Core competencies:** The employee has the technical skills and experience required for the job.
- **Discernment:** The employee demonstrates good judgment under pressure and/or with supporting the greater good.
- **Energy:** The employee is engaged and contributes appropriate energy for the role and tasks.
- **Focus:** The employee is able to prioritize essential tasks, manage distractions, and complete assignments.
- **Relationships:** The employee maintains healthy relationships with colleagues and is supportive of co-workers and team decisions.
- **Trust:** The employee is honest, consistent, and reliable, demonstrating authenticity and trustworthiness.

Consider ranking each category commensurate with the position, and using a scale to determine areas of strength and weakness. Of course, adequate time and the right questions are critical for a fair and accurate evaluation.

Meaningful Questions and Answers

Meaningful conversations are a collaboration. They require a blend of spontaneity—being

present in the moment and allowing the conversation to unfold—and preparation—asking meaningful questions.

To prepare for individual meetings, create a list of standard questions that you will ask every employee. These might include:

- How would you describe our existing organizational and team strategy? What are your thoughts about it?
- What are our largest short- and long-term team challenges?
- Where are our greatest opportunities?
- Which/what resources could we leverage more effectively?
- How can we improve the way the team works together?
- If you could give me any advice regarding my position, what would it be?
- What should I pay attention to?
- What can I do to help you?

While the questions should be open and may result in lengthy answers, ensure you are able to capture verbal and non-verbal responses, including feelings, thoughts, and emotions. More is often revealed by what a person doesn’t say, or their tone. Pay attention to non-verbal clues:

- What is unsaid?
- Are they open, volunteering information, or wait until asked specifics?
- Is there equal focus on strengths and weakness?
- Do they take responsibility when appropriate, or blame others?
- Are excuses made (for self or others)?
- How consistent is body language with words?
- Which topics evoke an increase of energy?
- When observing the individual interacting informally with others, how do they appear? (Cordial, reserved, judgmental, competitive, etc.).

Evaluate Judgment

It can be challenging to assess an employee’s ability to make decisions and judgments. This is especially true for managers new to their role who have not been able to observe the employee’s ability to make sound predictions and develop good strategies for avoiding problems. One method to evaluate judgment is to ask questions about areas outside of the work place. This could include sports, hobbies, or other areas of interest.

For example, asking about predictions regarding

their favorite team and how they came to their conclusion can reveal how readily they commit to predicting an outcome, or if they more risk averse. Moreover, it reveals their rationale and capability to exercise expert judgment in areas other than work. Be sure to identify an area or topic where they have a level of passion: someone who finds passion in a private domain is likely to do so in a chosen business field as well.

Assess the Team

It is essential to understand how the existing team functions. A thorough assessment requires an evaluation of team coherence. How similar/dissimilar are shared experiences?

An initial study of data, reports from meetings, and any climate surveys is helpful. However, group dynamics observed in first meetings are revealing indicators. This is also true for teams who are returning to the office environment post-pandemic.

Observe how they interact in your presence, and roles people take. Have they shifted? If you are new to your leadership position, notice who speaks easily, who is more reserved, and if there appear to be alliances. Note that non-verbal clues appear each time someone speaks during the meeting.

Key Decisions

If you determine that team restructuring is required to jump-start your team performance, you'll need to make key decisions about your team members. You will need to identify:

- Who will remain in their current role?
- Who is better fit for a different position?
- Who will you retain and develop?
- Who do you need to observe for a longer period of time?
- Who will you need to replace ASAP?
- Who will need to be replaced within a year or two?

Even when poor performance is well documented, letting someone go can be difficult, time consuming, and costly. Great managers and leaders consider alternatives such as a move to another position within the team or organization that is a better fit for their skills. To keep your team functioning, you may need to keep an underperformer in their position while searching for a replacement. Of course, safety is first. Keep an eye on their performance, but be respectful.

As a leader, it is your responsibility to create a safe space. Your employees will feel safe when they believe that:

- **They are respected as human beings; there is, or**

could be, mutual respect for the other.

- **There is regard for their goals; there is, or could be, mutual purpose.**

Clarity is critical. It requires self-awareness, attentiveness, objectivity, and compassion. Even in situations when we don't know the employee well, we send a message about our level of respect and regard. Always treat people with dignity and respect.

Avoid Common Mistakes

New leaders and managers often stumble in their attempts to jump-start their team performance. One of the most common mistakes is to prolong the transitioning period. Hesitancy about letting people go, especially when positions remain open, can feel risky. But failing to act decisively and quickly can lead to derailment. Other common mistakes managers and leaders make include:

- **Inadequate personnel plan.** Within your first 90-days, personnel decisions should be made and communicated to key stakeholders, including your boss and HR.
- **Ongoing team dysfunction.** If you have inherited dysfunctional teams or processes, correct problems and develop options right away. Sometimes, this may require temporary solutions, including temporary staff and resources.
- **Lack of clarity, purpose, and focus.** Your leadership and team must be aligned and clear about organizational mission, goals, and values.
- **Loss of good people.** To retain your best employees, look for ways to recognize their efforts and capabilities. Express gratitude and share all victories—even the small wins.
- **Poorly timed team building.** Ensure you have the right people on the bus before you begin team building exercises.
- **Rushing to decisions.** When it comes to making implementation decisions, wait until core members of your team are in place and include them in the decision-making process. This can jump-start change management.
- **Going it alone.** Great leaders are often seen as independent, trail-blazing mavericks. But the truth is that the greatest rely on experts who can offer sage advice. A qualified business coach and your HR department can help you chart a strategy and navigate the legal, emotional, and company policy complications of restructuring your team.



Proffitt
Management Solutions

Proffitt Management
Solutions
326 Maddock St.
West Palm Beach, FL
33405
561-582-6060