

# Putting the Best with the Best by John Maxwell

Imagine that you get a call from a nationally respected headhunter. She represents a company that wants to hire you. In fact, she's offering a signing bonus and a 20 percent pay increase. Your authority would increase, and you would get an ownership stake in the company. It's a job you know you could handle with responsibilities you know you would enjoy.

The drawback? You would work on a team with a reputation for mediocre work. It is known in the industry for doing no more than what it takes to get by, and there's no indication that the leadership at the company plans to change that. Mediocrity is so much the rule at that company, in fact, that you're a little concerned that they would want you. Do they really think you'd fit into that culture?

Despite the material benefits, many of us would turn down such an opportunity, rightly recognizing that it fails to satisfy one of our most basic needs - the desire to work with people who share our commitment to excellence.

The best want to work with the best. In fact, just one weak link can dramatically influence an otherwise strong team - ultimately leading to turnover among the best producers. So if we want to recruit and keep the best people for our teams, we have to recognize the importance of a strong weakest link.

We can demonstrate the impact of the weakest link with some basic math. If you have a five-person team and all five people are "10s," then you might add that up and say your team is a "50." But what if one of those people goes into a funk and becomes a 5. Now your team is a 45, and its effectiveness drops by 10 percent.

That's a pretty big impact, but it still falls short of reality. In the real world, synergy exists, so our impact on a team is more like multiplication than addition. One and two doesn't equal three in teamwork; with synergy, one and two can equal ten.

Consider the previous example but with multiplication. 10 times 10 times 10 times 10 times 10 equal 100,000. But 10 times 10 times 10 times 10 times five equal only 50,000. One weak link reduces the team's effectiveness by a whopping 50 percent.

Clearly, the way to keep good people is to keep them around other good people. When good people find themselves working with people who are not carrying their share of the load, dissatisfaction creeps in. Pretty soon, the productivity of the really good people begins to fall off too. They lose motivation for excellence or they just get worn out from carrying someone else's share of the work. Eventually, the best leave for greener pastures.

Everyone on a team needs to add excellence, which means leaders first need to place people in roles that make the most of their gifts and talents. But a person with the right skills and the wrong attitude is still like the proverbial bad apple that spoils the whole batch. So if you want a team that experiences low turnover and high success, fill it with people who are both capable and committed to doing great work.