

The Price of Greatness

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Introduction

I will begin with a bold claim. My numerical email subscription service, **The Lock-On Report™**, packs in more deliverable ability to extract and to build true greatness of performance than any other service, available at any price.

In this article, we will consider the relationship of the **Lock-On Report™** to true greatness of performance. But this will not be our most important focus. Our best objective is to meditate on, and find prospective answers for the simple and perhaps obvious question: **What must you do if you desire all the greatness of performance you can possibly attain?**

If you have already attained greatness of performance then you know that it is a journey and not a destination, and you will probably be better able to benefit from this work than anyone else. I am confident you will read on.

But what if you have not yet attained greatness of performance? It is truly you that I hope to address. I hope you will read on.

True Greatness or Mere Success?

Our first task is to distinguish between greatness and mere success. No success alone can ever qualify as greatness, can it? Do we consider a pop singer from the 60's who had only one top single to have been great? That hit was a success by any measure, but it was clearly not greatness.

Does greatness require nothing but success? By all means not. The deeper the failure we go through on the path to greatness the richer the greatness is. Certainly, when we fall from a state of greatness, into a state of failure, a mark is left upon us. Even here though, we often forgive our fallen heroes, and the more so if they rise again to new heights of greatness.

Clearly then, greatness cannot be the mandate to succeed always and only.

There is a deeper reason, though, why greatness cannot be the equivalent of success. Our successes teach us little. Our successes bear their own reward. We spend the check. A point I make repeatedly elsewhere is the mandate to celebrate our successes. I believe in this point, and powerfully. But the truth is that this is not the key to greatness.

Those of you who know me, or have read many of my other writings should be able to anticipate my answer. I propose that our relationship to failure is the very key we seek.

Learning From, but Never Surrendering to Failure

I believe that the price of greatness is often great failure, and always great learning from our failures. We must remain unwilling to surrender no matter how great the opposition, no matter how many times we may have failed already. Greatness is setting a goal, really a dream for our lives, and then never stopping, no matter what, until we have made that dream a reality. We must learn from every failure along the way, while never surrendering our greater objective.

And what is the relationship of all this to **The Lock-on Report™**?

I recently created a brand new pledge for the subscribers of the **Lock-On Report™**. Although the response has been overwhelmingly positive from our current subscribers, the prospects I have sent this pledge to, for their consideration, have been, well, simply scared. The following word count will help you understand why. I will break the words into three categories, **Negative**, **Neutral** and **Positive**, with their word counts.

Negative – 18

Pain – 4
Failure – 6
Red – 6

Neutral – 9

Learning – 6
Blue – 3

Positive – 7

Pleasure – 0
Success – 0
Celebration – 3
Green – 4

Why this clearly negative leaning? This is the question that I have been asked by prospective users.

Here is the pragmatic answer. No one needs help in cashing salary or commission checks. This is not the part of the job that is difficult. Rather it

is in facing failure that the difficulty arises. All we need do is look to any of the failed careers, or even, amongst our stars, to the limiting factors that keep their performance from fulfilling all its potential, and what we immediately discover is that pain is required for change.

Why do we not attain greatness? Because we deny and fail to learn from our failures. We hate the word “failure” itself. As we work each day, the parts of the job that we do well are not a problem. It is rather the parts of our work that we do not do well where our limitations are determined. What do we do about this? Most of us keep trying to focus more on what we do well.

But the real barriers are not there, really when you think about it, obviously!

One of my least popular messages has always been my insistence that goals must be minimums and not maximums. Recently I discovered an important aspect here that I have failed to include adequately. These goals, as minimums, must be worthwhile, sustainable, and they must be profitable.

I must admit, it amazes me that this must be explained, but it must. If performance does not reach up to a high enough level to survive, if our goals are set so low that survival is not a realistic outcome, then of course we must raise our goals. If we make a good living, and survival is not in question, but have not risen to our peak, then we must raise our goals. And if we have attained relative superiority we then must ask ourselves what we have walked away from, if we allow ourselves to perform to lower standards as a consequence of our relative superiority!

Perhaps the way I have failed in explaining my point about goals as minimums is that this does not mean that they must be low. A high goal can still be a minimum. How?

The answer comes from something I have introduced elsewhere under the name, “**The Emotional State of Lock On.**” This is the key point of the new pledge. The way a goal can be both high and yet a minimum is this: **If, by the absolute moment of its deadline, you miss your goal by so much as a single unit, you must then feel real pain for having missed it.**

As I said, I believe in celebration. But since I know you will cash your check this is not the part of being **Locked On** that requires change. Rather the question is whether or not you will feel real pain if you miss your goal. My new pledge says nothing about high or low goals. It merely focuses on

the commitment that missed goals will cause true pain. It is this that scares people.

True and real pain? Indeed. Pain that will get your attention. Pain that you have to cure. Pain that will trigger analysis and learning and change, right now. Yes, real pain.

It is this pain that people tend not to feel. They enjoy their successes to one degree or another. But the ability to deny failure, to deny the pain that failure generates is pervasive. We simply do not know what to do with failures. What may be worse still is that we do not distinguish between failed attempts, or failed goals, and ourselves. We confuse our identity with our failures. To admit that we failed is wrongly felt as the equivalent of being a failure ourselves, as a person, or as a performer. It is as if true performers, or good people, never ever failed, so therefore we never fail! But of course we do, all the time – as do all great performers too.

Consequently we also lack the ability to identify failures for what they are, and to simply say, “I failed.” The reach of this inner conspiracy of silence is great. We do not develop the ability to be resilient in the face of pain. We are vastly more like to surrender or throw in the towel, rather than to kick into great student and analyst mode. We don’t learn how to find the lesson or lessons hidden inside our failures, and then we don’t have the opportunity to implement and to improve performance on that basis.

And perhaps worst of all, and most limiting for our lives is that we never count the cost of all those missed lessons and lost opportunities. By not dealing with our failures we risk that we will lead lives, as Thoreau so eloquently phrased it, of quiet desperation. We move into the land of mediocrity and we live in the wake of lost dreams and forgotten hopes. Perhaps you do not see the depression and sadness around you, and for some, inside yourself. But I warrant, if you scratch the surface you will find it. The opposite of greatness is the state of life where the question, “Is this all there is?” hides within and underneath all of our daily activities.

That’s not you, you tell me. It isn’t most. Most of us do not live the pure opposite of greatness. We draw closer to and then further away from greatness, but have the happiness and fulfillments of our lives and do not question them. I ask you though; do you feel you may have unfulfilled potential? If so, then I propose that finding and learning from your failures gives you the greatest probability of rising to the next level of greatness.

Of course the most difficult place to get this message through is where, on a relative basis, an individual is performing above everyone else. The truth is that superior performance, even if merely relative to those around us, is a safe haven, and rightly so. Yet this makes the point, rather than stands as an exception. How so? It is very, very difficult to get such a performer to alter his or her patterns of performance, precisely for the lack of pain ensured by relative superiority! We will return to this question of stars, more than once.

What is the price of greatness? My answer is pain, study and non-surrender. A goal that you are truly serious about. How serious? So serious that you claim no right or privilege of excuse. No right to blame external forces. So serious that you choose not to take any protection against the pain, but rather feel the pain all the way through your heart into your very soul. You feel this pain so keenly, but without ever giving up, that you learn each and all the lessons hidden inside your failures. You feel this pain so keenly, but so resiliently, that you learn your way through, immediately implementing the lessons to the point of success, in order relieve the pain. In this manner your performance reaches to ever higher levels.

What is the price of greatness? A goal that is so serious that you never, ever surrender, no matter how great the pain, until you have attained it. A goal that, no matter how high or worthwhile, is simply and always an absolute minimum, and never a merely hoped for, wouldn't it be wonderful if, maximum. Never a ceiling that you will bounce back beneath the moment your performance scares up anywhere near it! A goal, your dream of greatness, is a minimum to the degree that, when you get near or God forbid beneath it you scurry like hell and do whatever it takes to return to the state of hitting your goal. When you correct your performance to the degree that you hit or exceed your goals, then you have a goal that is a minimum, no matter how high it may be.

But greatness? Indeed, I believe that these steps are the essence, the price of greatness.

But what about Survival? How can I be a Great Recruiter if I don't work in this Field Anymore?

Why don't people survive in their recruiting careers? Because their real goals, the ones they correct against, are simply too low.

For telephone professionals the most important example really is time spent on the phone, in the market, selling. When sales professionals spend less than 50% of their working hours (less than 4 out of 8 hours) connected and in the market selling, they are spending the majority of their time in non-producing endeavors. More seriously, in destructive and detrimental habit building. They build the habits of failure.

When you show this to them, many of them will quit before they are willing to change their destructive behavior patterns. Of course, these behaviors never feel destructive. They analyze every call they make. They analyze every call their next door desk buddy makes, together with their fellow performer. They perform planning tasks, and research on the companies they may call, and decide who to call and who not to. All of this feels perfectly well like work.

What were the non-survivors unwilling or not able to do? They were unwilling to set a higher, yet still minimum goal as a real goal against which they would correct. They were, regardless of missed billings goals, unwilling to label 3.5 connected hours – just 43.75% of their working day – a failure. They often refuse to identify even just 10 hours in the market out of 40 – merely 25% of the work week – as failure. They couldn't face the fact that what felt like work was actually a collection of destructive habits that guaranteed that they would not survive. They denied their failures.

And what about stars who don't get in intense connect time? First, let me tell you, for all the stars you can show me who come in with low phone times, I can match you with stars whose connected time in the market leads the field. But really, what about the top performers who are coming in at the bottom of the connect time field? It is a tough question, no matter how you cut it. I am ready to concede, at the beginning of this question, that while you have no one competing at their back end level there is little that you can, or should do. You must recognize and be grateful for their performance.

The best answer for the moment, having conceded that much, is that you should work to find competitors for your stars, who will raise the bar to higher levels. Find and hire those who will hit the highest activity targets and then master their practice to the point of extracting results that meet and best your current stars' best performances. That, by the way, wouldn't be a bad definition of greatness in managing! But we will return to the question of stars again in a few pages when we look at their performance roller coasters.

As opposed to stars, what about those who are on the phone at least 50% of their work week and more, yet still do not survive in the end? Is this not the consequence of market cycles and forces beyond their control? No, it isn't. Why not? Because we have so many examples of even collapsed industries, such as telecom right now, where thriving takes place among the few who find their path to success in the face of the worst economic cycles possible.

How is this done? Time on the phone must generate productive results, again as minimums.

- Sufficient candidates must be found and their qualifications, passionate dreams and desires, and their hot buttons and decision making urgency must be discovered.
- Sufficient openings must be found, as well. Here the desired skill and personality set, the dreamed of performance profile must be identified – and these openings must be tested for management level performance pressure to make a timely job offer.

If these minimums are not found the performer must not believe that it is a consequence of market conditions, but rather of skill not learned, knowledge not mastered, focused attention not paid, planning not performed, and not performed at the right time and in the right way, work not completed.

And if candidates and openings are there, but not send outs and placements? How about the match between the candidates and the openings? This too is a skill and a knowledge base that must be mastered. I believe this is the third great cause of failure in recruiting. The three are:

- 1. Denial of failure.**
- 2. Not spending enough time connected in the market.**
- 3. The failure to understand – and the failure to count – presentations of potential candidates to hiring managers (Employer Presentation on Existing Job Orders or EPOEJOs).**

And if you have these five: time in the market, candidates, openings, good matching presentations and even send outs, but not sufficient placements?

- Then the first thing to realize is that the placements are coming, or are even there simply waiting for a small amount of additional energy to be invested before they pop into place, snapping your send out to placement ratio back down!

But what if those placements just don't come?

- Then all five domains of performance are being performed inadequately.

Lessons are there, but they remain unlearned. Each area must be scanned for lessons. Lessons must be found, and faith must be held until the lessons learned result in placements. I'll leave the pragmatics and theory to attack this kind of dilemma to the rest of my Curriculum. If you master the theory and practice outlined there you will get past this kind of painful situation!

But if failures are not admitted, not even identified as failures, lessons will not be learned. **This denial itself is the true cause of non-survival.**

Mere survival. Wow, when you think about it there is something great about mere survival, isn't there?

But what of true greatness beyond mere survival alone? Here the point must be made; true greatness is only possible for those who survive. But enough about survival!

True Greatness: Rewards and Contributions

True greatness has two components. The rewards of greatness are the easiest part to think about, and the first place most of our minds turn when considering greatness. Income, and in the case of recruiters, real wealth. Prestige. Power. Respect at home and in the community. Great vacations. Beautiful homes. All the rewards of capitalism. More deeply there is the sense of pride and fulfillment that for many extends all the way to their spirit. There is the honor of having made a contribution.

But that last item is the second and more important component of greatness. It is actually the real definition of greatness. Rather than being measured by rewards taken, true greatness is measured by contribution rendered. Personally, I believe that the recruiting profession offers the greatest path of contribution there is, anywhere in the business world today. I have mapped out this belief in my article, **The Consulting Recruiter**.

I must also refer you to Dr. Brad Smart's epoch shifting book, **Topgrading**. The message you will find there is that the process of finding and hiring the

best performing people is the ultimate core competency of the firm. It is this competency that you serve.

We can also look back to the very beginnings of capitalism, to the father of the field of economics, Adam Smith. His key discovery, as outlined in his book **The Wealth of Nations**, was that through the organized division of labor companies are able to both fill the needs of society and improve the lots and lives of every member of society as a result of the wealth created.

The recruiting profession improves the division of labor. You help find the best person for the job. Your contribution optimizes the match between challenges and the person best suited for those challenges. When you read Brad Smart's work you will see, and clearly, how much the survival and greatness of the companies you serve depends on properly matching challenge to best possible performer!

It is this contribution that defines your greatness both as a profession, and as a professional within this great profession.

But what specifically does greatness look like for you as a recruiter – and how does it look for your boss, or for those of you who manage and own recruiting firms?

Individual Performance Greatness

Consider again – you may wish to reread it, in a moment – our discussion of survival. By the way, there are two video tapes that, while made an eon ago in the mid 80's, go a long way to painting a fabulous picture of individual recruiting greatness. They are Bob Marshall's two tapes, produced by Bob Bassman, **Your Desk as a Manufacturing Plant**, and **The Concept of the Inverted Cones**. I must also refer you to my own growing list of articles on the subject; especially those described in my article, **Are You Locked On?**

These tapes and articles map out the basics of recruiting performance. Why might you turn to these, now? Because there is true greatness in getting the recruiting arts mastered, at their most basic of levels. Along these lines I have a simple and beautiful vision to share with you.

Here is my very favorite vision: **Where your ceilings were, there shall your floors be, forever!**

Here is an example of what I mean. Consider that you have maxed out at, let's say, \$50,000 of billings in your best quarter ever. The first step toward greatness is for you to re-attain that level. Then you need to repeat it more frequently. Then it needs to become no big deal, and eventually a floor beneath which your performance no longer falls!

No, I don't envision your connected time in the market rising forever, at least not personally. But if you go the leveraged route of hiring people to help and support you, and if you consider their time in the market a part of your own, we can surely see your market connect time rising in the same manner, right?

But let's stick with just you for now. If your time in the market caps out at the recommended 50 % mark of 20 hours per week, then the thing we want to rise forever is the amount of billings per connected hour. Do you see it? Here's the math from our example above:

20 hours x 13 weeks = 260 hours (for the entire quarter)

\$50,000 / 260 hours = \$192.31 (per connected hour in the market)

One wonderful measure of greatness in your career would be your perpetual ability to keep this number rising.

But that really reflects the rewards you take, not the contribution you make, doesn't it? Yes, it really does. Except when we extend it over the course of years. How does that work? No one can fool the market forever. If you can extend your ever rising performance over the course of many years then you have to be delivering something of value to your market.

Other measures of greatness I propose for the individual recruiter are:

- The maximum number of placements in a single account, and
- The number of key accounts you are able to serve in total, and
- The average number of years you serve those key accounts.
- And yet another is the job title of the people you serve in your accounts – not so much of those you place, but rather of the key strategic relationships you build at the highest levels of the organization. Although the two do tend to follow one another.

To be a truly great recruiter you must transcend merely tactical placements and claim your entry into the land of strategic relationship – but here again I

will refer you to my article **The Consulting Recruiter** if you are interested crossing in this line.

Returning to the tactical placement side, though, there are other ways we can measure your greatness. This comes down to your ratios, and to the consistency with which you can set and hit your goals.

- What is your Job Order to Placement ratio?
- Your Send Out to Placement ratio?
- Candidates to Send Outs?
- Your Average Fee or Dollars per Placement ratio?
- Your Dollars Billed per Connected Hour ratio?

If we can count on your ratios to be predictive, and if we can count on your front end activity levels to be in perfect accord with your goals, then you have earned the right to claim tactical greatness. Of course, especially on your Dollars per Placement and Billings per Connected Hour ratios, we would love to see ceilings turn into floors repeatedly, quarter after quarter!

Maturity itself can be a form of greatness. For me, maturity as a performer means a clear understanding of and focus upon controllable front end activities as opposed to back end results and rewards. If we see that your front end activity hits appropriately high minimum goals, but with results that are merely adequate to sustain survival, this too is a type of greatness. Here, survival buys us the time we need to learn how to improve our ratios, and learn to climb, ultimately, to full performance greatness.

A key form of tactical greatness is demonstrated by a performance level that was fallen away from, and then, through learning re-attained! I never really believe in any level of performance until I see it fall beneath the floor where we measure and feel the performer's pain and learning. Next, does he or she find and implement the lessons hidden inside failures? Can this performer use these lessons, right now, to bring performance back up to the floor where it stabilizes? Nothing could be better than that for me! It is then that I can really start to believe in a performer!

And a warning here as well. Early, but unrepeatable success is one of the worst fates you can suffer! I have often found early success to the bane of performance and the death of what might otherwise have been careers of true greatness. A success that was struggled and fought for and only won after passing through the valley of despair is far better than any success that came too easily, but then could never be found again!

But what about stars, and the question of greatness? The ultimate key to overcoming the star syndrome is to never rest upon laurels. The point for stars, perhaps more than for anyone else is to replace ceilings with new, higher floors of performance. This is why I am always amazed at the \$300,000 top biller in an office, putting in 10 and 12 connect hour weeks, who never rises to compete with the \$400,000 or \$500,000 performers, and higher. I cannot help but ponder upon how tiny the effort required to reach the next plateau would be.

And here is my greatest complaint against the stars. You really are there, putting in 35 to 40 hour weeks as it is, already. But rather than punch it up to your highest levels of production you luxuriate in non-productive habits for more than 50% of your working day's time.

Oh, last point here – not only do I know top performers who are high in the connect time field, I know those who are the highest. I am talking 25 hours and more, including up to, at times, even 29 hours of connect time in a single week. And averages as high as 25 over entire quarters with lows that drop down to 22 or 23 hours per week – I repeat, over entire quarters. How much do these guys bill? You can ask them yourself, or look them up on the ranking sheets. Two of them I can name for you here are Paul Millard and Jon Bartos. Check it out; you'll see I am not making this up.

Is it possible, if you are such a performer that you may be walking away from more than you are billing? Is it possible that by climbing up to 50% of your work day on the phone in the market you might bill, rather than \$300,000, \$700,000 or even \$800,000 or more? What would an extra 6 to 7 hours connected per week accomplish? I can tell you, if I were your manager I would find out! And I can tell you, as a salesman myself, I have always had to know, for myself.

But perhaps the real question is how do you define stardom? And I am here to tell you, for all my disagreement with leaving anything on the table, especially for lack of discipline, planning and focus during work hours, if you head up the shop my hat is off to you! How much more greatness can we get? Sure I want to know. But I am here to congratulate you, and to celebrate the greatness you have attained. I give you my heartfelt respect.

Three Steps to Greatness for Managers

Did you do a good job reading the previous vision of individual greatness? This is the source of management greatness as well. A great manager supports greatness for each employee. Ah, but this is also where the pain of greatness extracts its most difficult price! You will never support the greatness of your employees if you fear to let them go over performances that are less than great.

1. Survival

But before we delve into management greatness, we must first turn back to the question of survival, for managers. If you are a billing manager, and if you are dependent upon your own billings for any aspect of your survival, then you must learn to protect your billing performance time, on the phone in the market. Obviously there is an infinity of distractions and interruptions that can put your very business at risk.

There are two ways to look at your billings. One, less common and more painful, is that you cover all costs of your own and your business' survival through your billings. This includes the rent at home (I know, usually a mortgage) and all the costs of your life, as well as the rent and payroll (and all other costs) at the office.

If you do not know your break even numbers, both personal and business, you better get all over these numbers just as fast as you possibly can. In tough times survival will demand that you lower them where possible. For some this even means working totally solo. If so, then so be it. Know your over head!

The second, more common and more enjoyable way of looking at your personal billings is simply as the basis of your own personal take home pay. As long as you are not feeling like you're going backward at work – not tapping out the check account, not worried (or panicked) about every accounts receivable check coming in the door, you should feel free to think of your billings in this manner. You are surviving, so this is okay.

But after survival, greatness? Indeed. I have seen scores of MRI franchisees who have survived for years, and yes decades without ever coming anywhere near greatness. Some of these (the majority) were indeed billing

managers. But many, many non-billing managers do not accomplish the kind of greatness they dreamed of when they purchased their franchises.

After survival, the first line of greatness you must cross is to foreswear the state of being a hostage to your employees.

The finances of this commitment are those of hiring new people.

- How much does it cost you to hire a new person?
- How long will you employ a new person while you are still investing money, and if they quit or you fire them, losing money?

In the stock market they have something called a stop loss order. Once a stock has hit a certain price point, beneath the price of purchase, at a certain percentage of loss, traders can use a stop loss order to trigger an immediate sale. Doing this ensures that they take a loss, but they have a plan for this, and as a consequence they limit the amount of loss they suffer.

A good trader will surely have a few victories and it is there that the percentage of gain must, of course, well exceed the sum total of the losses.

You have to know how much money you can afford to lose on a new employee. And you have to know how much money you will be able to sustain, against all the new employees you hire, as well as before you throw in the towel on any specific newly hired individual.

In fact money to lose on new hires is, for my vote, the single most important capitalization required for your business' health.

Once you have covered the capital requirement the next, and really the most important thing of all, is your own personal confidence quotient. I have seen managers go into tail spins lasting many quarters, and even years, after losing a key employee whom they loved and had, emotionally, bet their futures on. The devastation of the loss cannot be overstated!

In such instances the manager has made an emotional investment into the employee, and this relationship carries greater risk than the manager can bear. The ceiling here is the manager's ability to replace this loss. A manager's faith in his or her ability to replace performing people is the most significant limit on the destiny of the business.

Almost invariably, the managers who suffered most had no plan for hiring, and that will be our focus in just a moment.

But let's take a leap here and consider that you have protected your billing time, and that you are surviving in your business. Or if you are a non-billing manager you have that minimum number of performers coming in with enough production, just consistently enough so that you are not wildly afraid of going out of business. Well let me tell you, if this is the case, you should be dancing in the street! Think of those around you who are no longer there, around you anymore! Think of the pain and agony of pure defeat, of closing up shop and throwing in the towel. Picture that for sale or lease sign over your front door. Wow, that hurts, doesn't it? Well that is the picture right now, for how many hundreds of your former competitors.

And more. Consider the life you have built and secured. You are the boss. You have the freedom of your choices, and the life of your own results. Pause and consider. You have a wonderful life. Is this not greatness? I'll say. And I am here to tell you not only do I share this gratitude with you, I celebrate it myself. And I urge you; do more than just think about this. Find a way to express your gratitude for the fabulous life you live. It's more than just about the money.

2. Ongoing Hiring

The single step of committing to an **Ongoing Hiring Practice** – yes a continuous interviewing and recruiting process – is the greatest transformative step in the management of any professional services firm. If you do not continuously recruit and hire new talent you are a hostage.

What about solo practitioners? You are a hostage to your own performance profile. If you are a great performer, then being a hostage to yourself is not only no problem, but maybe even a great life. That, in fact is the way I look back upon the fifteen years of my own practice so far. But we solo operators cannot afford to mistake our status – we are indeed hostage to ourselves.

In MRI franchisees of my experience though, the true hostage status occurs as a result of love felt for current employees. And where it isn't love what it devolves into is an addictive and truly unhealthy dependency. The only cure for this disease is perpetual recruiting and hiring.

And what exactly is the positive aspect of this perpetual investment? The mandate I propose for you is that you build the finest firm to work for within commuting distance of your office. The very finest firm, period. What type

of business offers greater rewards to its successful employees than yours does? What greater contribution can a professional make, while building wealth and happiness for self and family?

I believe that if you will pay the price of perpetual hiring, seeking ever higher quality performers, you can claim the spot of greatest firm to work for in your franchise territory. If you did that surely no one could argue that you had failed to attain greatness, could they?

But what if you feel you have always been on a hiring merry go round for all these years, as so many of the clients I have served have felt?

3. Performance Based Firing

Performance Based Firing is the answer to that dilemma, and the last step to greatness that we will focus on together in this article. Come on, admit it now. If you do not feel that you own a truly great business then I can absolutely and without hesitation conclude, on the basis of that data alone, that you do not fire people over performance – at least not when you should, and not with the consistency that you should. But realistically I really do know that you just don't do it. People quit, you don't fire them. When you do fire people it is exclusively over egregious behavior. You catch them calling phone sex lines or something else just as bad, and bam, they're out of there! But, this is not what I mean by performance based firing.

Our consideration of stop losses above points in the right direction. Remember, you must ask yourself:

- How long can you go before you fire a new person who has not performed?
- How much money will you invest before you call it a loss?
- And what levels of front end activity must be there for you to maintain your faith that investment will convert into profitable return on investment?

Here, as with account executives who deny that their 10 and 12 connected hours in the market per week is a failure, or at least an inexcusable ceiling over their performance; denial is your worst enemy.

But holding onto the wrong new people is not the most detrimental factor preventing greatness. Rather, it is not firing barely profitable or formerly profitable account executives that you have grown dependent upon.

The price of greatness here is that you must decide for yourself, you must answer the following question: **What is the lowest level of performance you can accept before you diagnose yourself to be a poor or at best mediocre manager?**

No, don't go into shock or denial. If you do not fire people over their too low levels of performance you cannot and will not ever be a great manager. If you do not know what too low a level of performance is, then by definition you are not a great manager. If you do not know what level you will fire someone over you are at best a mediocre manager, and probably, I am sad to say, a poor one.

And for my money's worth, I would much prefer that you fire people over their front end activity weaknesses, especially when they intransigently refuse to raise these activity levels, than over their back end dollar billings failures. Here you have to think carefully through how you serve your stars.

Your stars' performances run in roller coaster cycles, and it is the ruts in the cycles that kill their careers. If you allow and support the profit taking your stars exhibit without the front end activity during the run, you will simply be very unlikely, probably wholly incapable, of getting the needed front end activity during the rut. The roller coaster is driven at the front end, and only destroys careers when its consequences hit the back end, when of course it is usually far too late to correct the problem.

Here though, by way of the roller coasters of the stars, it may well be that "death of careers," as real a threat as it may be, is a bit past what we can feel, and I would understand that. And maybe the real damage isn't so much the death of the career, as it is the limits that have been accepted! I asked before, of the stars themselves, how much are they leaving on the table?

Here I will ask you managers the same question, but in this variant: How much money have you cost your stars by allowing them to sell you that they don't need to put in the same effort as your other people? How much have they cost you in their own lost performance? And maybe worse, how much have they cost you by being lousy role models for under-performers who simply couldn't afford, for lack of talent or other reasons, not to put in the high levels of front end activity that your stars didn't have to put in?

I urge you to dream higher for your stars, and to find out how much more they can achieve by placing them under robust activity level expectations. I believe they will thank you in the end if you do.

I can cut you some slack here, though. How so? It isn't over the stars that your greatness or mediocrity is determined. If you fail to fire non-performance; if you fail to know what line of underperformance will trigger the ending of a relationship; then you have chosen your fate and, if you choose not to change, you make your home in the land of mediocrity.

Conclusion

So what does greatness of management look like? Confidently assured survival is the beginning. Then perpetual hiring for greatness comes next. And last, firing that is clearly defined in advance by the absolute vision of your ever evolving, all star team. You know you have reached greatness when you see your team's ongoing replacement of performance ceilings with new and ever higher-level floors.

And what of my service, **The Lock-On Report™**, and its connection to the question, and the price of greatness? I said at the beginning of this article that I believe its value offers more, here, than any other product. And I believe strongly that if you get to know my product well you will agree with me completely. Not so much because of the fun involved, although we end up having lots of fun. Rather the benefit derives from the power to find the truth of our failures (performance failures for individuals and survival, hiring and firing failures for managers) and the resulting ability to learn how to correct these failures. We correct them, all the way to greatness!