



How to find employees that **work to a high standard**

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Hiring A-players can often be compared to dating. Upon initial meeting you're presented with highly-groomed face value in the form of a CV, references, and 'gift of the gab'. But, all too often, the hire begins to reveal their true habits the longer they remain with the company.

Fortunately there is always gold in the silver. Believe it or not it isn't *finding great workers* that is the issue. It's *recognising and retaining them* long enough that they'll reveal their true calling that becomes a part of your winning hand, all whilst keeping the weeds from overpowering your company culture and tainting other team members.

From my own experience, project managing 15 employees on remote million-dollar construction jobs, the strategy that worked for me as a vested project manager can be summed up as:

"Retain you're A players; motivate and train your B players; and let the C players run their natural due course (and leave of their own accord, if they can't become high-value team players)."

In construction, C-grade workers are a dime a dozen. They come and go like the wind and often on their own accord. The secret is to use that to your advantage and make sure you create the necessary social and environmental utensils to sieve out the good and great versus the below-average.

And often those gems are already buried within your organization. All you need to do is find them, and polish them up a little!

Here is a short list of key ideas that, from my own experience in the construction industry, helped me build a team of A-players around me.

1. Muck in

Your employees, whether they are 'yours' as such or simply a step below on the ladder, should see you doing their work once in a while. Why? Several reasons...

1. It shows them that they aren't the only ones who can do their job and that they don't hold all the power. This isn't just a declaration of authority, but shows them that you either *a) came from their neck of the woods*, or *b) are interested in what they do within the organization* –both powerful attributes that inspire the career-minded individual that he/she can indeed climb higher and better themselves [on the company ladder].

Key idea: *Convey ability; don't preach it. Show others you are worth following.*

2. It shows them that you are knowledgeable and capable and worthy of following as a leader. As a leader your superiors (or clients) already know you do more than meets the eye but to those who haven't experienced leadership and those who don't understand leadership it can be difficult to recognise or measure. By showing ability in *their area of expertise*, you are solidifying your capability in something that *they can relate to*, and thus better 'articulating' your position as a *worthy leader*. And people will do great things for worthy leaders.

Key idea: *Worthy leaders, are worth the effort.*

3. It gives you a view from their perspective! Are they always 'moaning about this and that'? Perhaps it isn't such moaning as it is a valid call for change. How many times have you seen the *Undercover Boss* realise that employees actually had the raw end of the deal? All it took was a day in their shoes to incite a little empathy and promote the idea that the 'big guy upstairs' is looking out for their personal interests.

Key idea: *Work for them, then they'll work for you.*

2. Be honest and display integrity

I've seen too many small-business trade employers declare job and knock a mere 5 minutes before knock-off; "**We need to get the job finished before we go home!**"

Bad. Move.

Don't wait until last minute and then tell your employees that you're *stealing their time*. And don't forget that term because stealing really is what you are doing when you put your foot down and decree that their personal time belongs to you. They will forever hate you for it.

Solution: Ask. And ask as early in the day as possible. Then what you are effectively doing is asking them "*would you like to earn some extra cash today*" as opposed to the former approach "*give me your free time; and I'll abide by my legal requirement to pay you*". Changing the approach changes the perception radically. Show respect and you'll find only C-players will object to a fair calling of help. All others will respond to your ask for extra help *even when they would prefer not to*, from mutual respect.

3. Work hard too

Hard work cultivates hard workers.

Those who know me have heard (too many times!) my boasts of super-human ability at 'banging in beams'. Arrogance aside, I always walked my talk. I frequently stepped into the shoes of those around me and showed them that I had the ability, and motivation, to do hard work. -*Hard work* being what *they considered* hard work, not the paper pushing, stress and anxiety of my usual day.

What it did? It inspired.

Working hard inspired others to work hard. They wanted something to boast about and tell others of their greatness. And above all *they wanted to feel good about the level of effort they put in*. People are social animals. If everyone stands in a group the outliers will join in. If everyone picks up a shovel and starts digging, the outliers will follow suit. But it's the latter

group that will feel satisfied with their achievement at the end of the day. Working hard and letting it be known, and letting it filter down through the ranks, is a great way to nearly instantly *transform your B players into A players and your C players into B players*.

4. Give decent pay rises

Just kidding!

Well, sort of...

Don't fall into the trap of trying to incentivise with notions of "*if we paid more, then they'd work harder*". It works temporarily; but people always fall back into old habits. Better to leave pay increases as short-term motivators or true reward of excellence.

What else can we do to cultivate motivated high-performing employees?

There are surely a million other techniques and I'm sure my views alone are applicable on only certain situations *but...* hopefully what you've taken away from this is more motivational to improve your own situation as opposed to the solution itself.

So without further ado: All the best with your business endeavours and may your employees be all they can be, so that you can too.