



Diploma Delegates



Performance Enhancement

The 9 Box Performance/ Potential Tool

Article - 20 min read



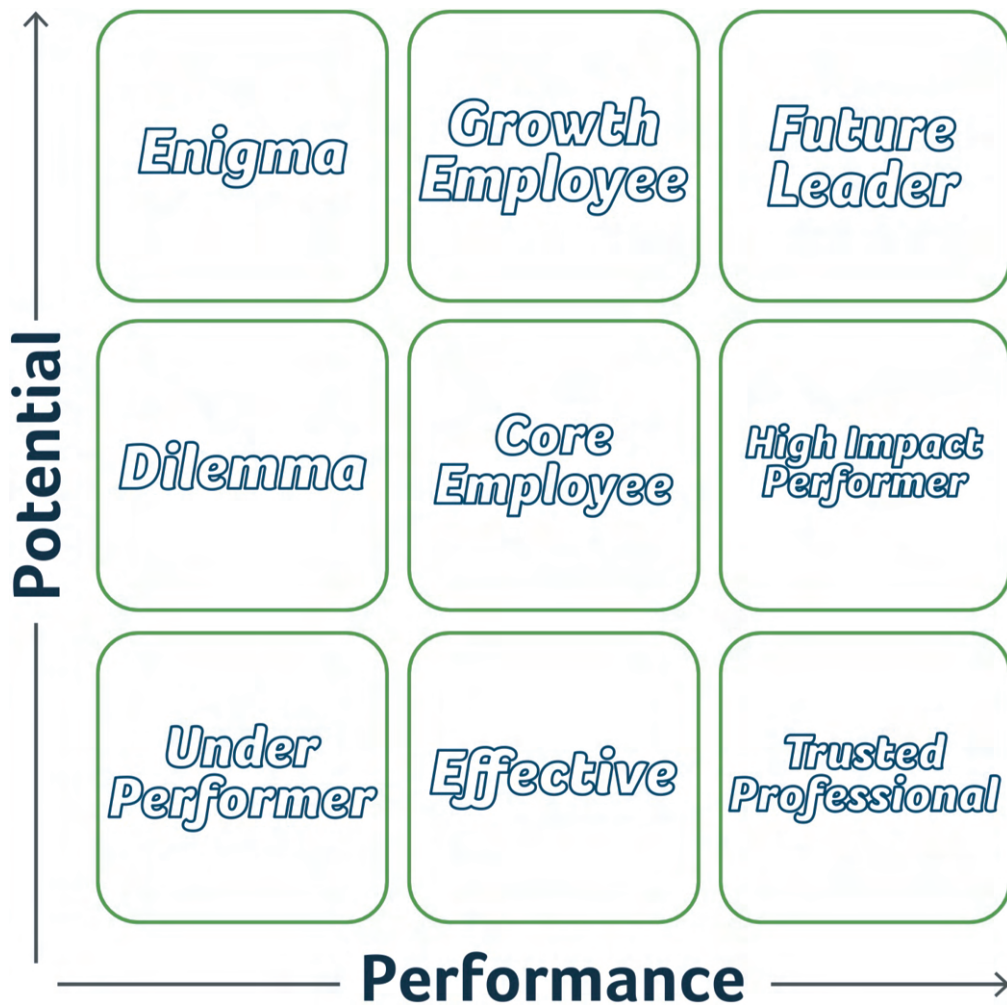
By the end of this article you will have been introduced to the 9 Box Performance/Potential tool. The 9 Box Performance/Potential tool is a simply yet effective way for Manager's to examine the needs of a team against the demonstrated performance.





What Does It Look Like?

The tool is made up of 2 axis: with “performance” measured across the x axis and “potential” across the y axis. When mapping an employee along “performance” you are considering the employees past performance and when mapping against “potential” you are considering the potential for future performance. It then contains 9 employee categories you can correspond against the axis.



As you can see; each broad category in which you could place a team member may then be able to influence decisions regarding ongoing development activity, performance management approach, and other considerations such as succession planning.





Here are some suggestions on how to approach each section of the matrix...

“The Enigma” – High Potential/Low Performance

Enigma

This space is most likely a new starter or new-to-role individual. They possess the potential to perform but have a barrier to moving up the scale of performance. Conduct an audit (with them involved) of the skills & knowledge required for the role and build a development plan to set them up for success.

The performance management approach is one of development – formal instruction, mentoring & “buddying up”, orientation, and relationship building.

“The Dilemma” Reasonable Potential/Low Performance

Dilemma

The likelihood is that this area will be populated by more long-standing, experienced employees who have demonstrated some level of potential but appear to be under-performing. Find out the root cause for the poor performance; is it internal or external factors influencing the performance? Is their potential being mis-directed in performing the wrong responsibilities? Are they bored? In collaboration – build a plan together to move the performance outputs up the scale.

This area, for the moment, is primarily a development approach to performance management, but clarity around expectations and timescales is an absolute must when working with individuals in this area.





“The Under-Performer” Limited Potential/Under Performance

The grim reality in this space is that we have an individual who is simply in the wrong role.



We must adopt a more stringent performance management approach, one that will likely engage with more formal frameworks like Performance Improvement Plans.

Consider your input with this individual first: have you made expectations crystal clear? Have you been providing sufficient remedial feedback & coaching? Have you helped remove any performance barriers, such as streamlined admin processes? Have you been explicit about the performance that requires improvement? If you are uncertain; put some of these in place.

In time though, it may be worth considering re-deployment or dismissal for this area.

“The Growth Employee” High Potential/Reasonable Performance



For individuals you’ve mapped here you will want to capitalise on the high potential and seek to move their performance higher. Therefore, the focus is on the competency gaps that will move them from good to great performance.

Good performance management practice here would be to explore motivations, facilitate with the team member seize-able opportunities for improvement, provide feedback & coaching, and develop a recognition strategy that drives momentum.





“The Core Employee” Reasonable Performance/Moderate Potential

Core Employee

This individual may not be eager to advance, or have reached the limit of their skills, so our performance management approach is one of maintaining consistency and introducing the occasional opportunity to stretch.

Your recognition approach is important here: are you doing enough to make them feel engaged and valued? Introduce opportunities to praise effort as much as achievement, open up forums to discuss their ideas, and check-in regularly to demonstrate that you value them. Don't make recognition entirely about the High Performing, High Potential team members.

“Effective” Low Potential/Reasonable Performance

Effective

For individuals and team members who perform but don't demonstrate potential then it is simply a case of maintaining their coaching & training needs to sustain performance and, as above, considering our recognition approach to involve them.

We also need to be honest & transparent, when asked, about opportunities for advancement if this is something the individual is interested in, and possibly seek to facilitate their career growth in other directions.





“Future Leader” High Potential/High Performance

Is this your successor? On the day you hit the jackpot and leave are they well positioned to act-up?

Future Leader

Your performance management approach with this individual, in addition to adopting some of the approaches discussed above for other High Performers, should include some next level exposure too.

Give them the opportunity to shadow you and others with additional responsibilities. Maybe give them some of your key responsibilities while you are on leave.

Regularly discuss their aspirations and how you can work on them together to keep them engaged and maintaining their current level of performance, but be sure to re-enforce the performance expectation in the current role.

“The High Impact Performer” High Performance/Reasonable Potential

For team members in this area of the matrix we need to examine the possibility of growing further potential – is it a case of experience & readiness for larger roles and increased responsibility?

High Impact Performer

Assign a few limited stretch assignments to see how they respond, maybe a “fix it” task to improve a process or initiate an idea. Meet regularly and discuss how they have got on, paying careful attention to new skills they’ve had to employ, how they built cross-functional relationships, how they worked within the team.

Keep them engaged and motivated, these can also be a retention risk, and, as with others, consider your recognition approach in your performance management strategy.





“The Trusted Professional” High Performance/Low Potential

Here we tend to find experienced individuals who have found their niche and have settled into it, and don't demonstrate potential for future advancement or career growth (and may not want it either).

First; consider whether they are a retention risk and adopt reward & recognition practice that keeps them motivated and engaged. Assess their commitment and facilitate a deeper level of loyalty to the organisation.

Trusted Professional

Then; explore with the individual how they can broaden & deepen their capabilities in their role. Perhaps they have some ideas we can adopt in our working practices, or we can give them some additional responsibilities that position them as a valued “Subject Matter Expert” who can teach & mentor others.

This is a risk area for the organisation too – be careful not to assume that a high performer in their role is automatically suited to advance – the best administrator does not always make the best Manager of administrators, for example. Again; we must be honest about the skills & knowledge they possess and focus their development on being great at their role, not necessarily upward mobility through the organisation.

