



## Global Organizations need to look to “The Middle” in Today’s Talent Hunt

**W**hen you think about the “middle performers” in your global organization, do you envision an average Joe or Jane, or do you see a potential super hero?

If it’s the former, and research says that is more than likely the case, you may be suffering from tunnel vision – much to the detriment of maintaining the sharpest competitive edge possible for your global organization.

Terms such as “high performer” and “low performer” are deeply embedded in the employee performance management lexicon. But a strong case can be made that some of these consistent yet overlooked people that fall somewhere in the middle can be transformed into top performers – or at the very least better engaged and enabled to perform more effectively in their roles. The secret lies in the integration of learning, performance and talent management strategies driven by today’s technology. Research and results show it is one of the best ways to transform some of those “average” folks into superstars.

According to research from industry analyst firm Bersin & Associates, consistent performers who fall in the middle of the talent spectrum make up about 74 percent of most companies. From middle managers, supervisors and technical experts, to specialists and other skilled employees, these workers have a proven track record of an adequate or good job performance. However, despite making up a majority of a workforce, Bersin found through interviews that, on average, managers spend only 20 percent of their time focusing on this group.

Employees who fall in the middle represent untapped potential for a global employer. These are the people who play an integral role in supporting a company’s culture, and they can bring substantial business value when properly developed, managed and motivated. In fact, a study from the Sales Executive Council indicates that a five percent performance gain from middle performers yields more than 70 percent more revenue than a five percent shift from high performers.

How can comprehensive talent management strategies and software solutions engage and empower the so-called B players in any global organization?

- **Talent Mobility.** One effective way is through talent mobility, the process that simply gets the right people into the right jobs. Creating a career track for technical experts and non-management positions allows employees with specialized skills and knowledge to build a career while focusing on what they do best. Also, employees have different needs at different life stages. While a new parent may not be willing or able to take on a foreign assignment and a

young and rising star may want to focus on graduate school for a few years before relocating, engaging more people in the organization may uncover some who are both qualified and amenable to taking a global assignment. But he or she needs the opportunity to do so. They need the chance to make horizontal as well as vertical moves, which can drive long-term retention and loyalty.

- **Development-Driven Performance Management.**

Another way for global companies to uncover and engage hidden talent in the middle layers is through development-driven performance management. Performance appraisals are needed, of course, but they are reactive. By contrast, development-driven performance management is designed to be forward looking and to nurture better performance. While many B players may want to contribute, most won’t be able to do so without coaching and development. Automated performance management can facilitate these needs by identifying development opportunities and actively

addressing knowledge and skill gaps. At the same time, middle performers can track performance against goals throughout the year and take steps to reach those goals, rather than being surprised about falling short at annual review time.

Related factors for success that are part of any global organization’s tool kit include career paths, which present clear opportunities for development and advancement. Enterprise-wide social networking and collaboration tools also can level the playing field and give all employees access to information that enables them to do their jobs better and faster – especially for widely dispersed global organizations.

Research shows that with the right technology in place, businesses can gain insight into the performance, knowledge and skills of every employee and determine how to get the most out of seemingly average performers. Discovering and encouraging the hidden superheroes in the vast middle of your global organization can be done. It does require commitment, effort and a talent management technology infrastructure. But more than anything else, it requires an awareness that the talent your organization needs to outperform the global competition can’t all be found in the top 10 percent of the workforce.

Tapping into this under-used and under-appreciated middle talent group can help global organizations grow, innovate and compete in a global, ever-shifting business landscape.

### About the Author

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