

## The Crucial Relationship Factor in a High-Performance Workforce

In the first issue of Singapore HR Insights, we advised that in order to build a high-performance workforce, organizations need to get three things right:

- 1** ***Accountability for the Right Results*** Everyone working on what's important, getting it done, and playing by the rules
- 2** ***Trust Earned One Person at a Time*** The people we depend on feel valued and confident, ready to give their best
- 3** ***Opportunity for Impact and Growth*** Skill-building in every assignment and job, guided by business needs

Hewitt's research suggests that leaders and managers in any organization are the conduit for developing high performers. For most employees, their manager symbolizes the organization—employees form their perception of the firm based on the practices followed by their immediate manager.

Hewitt recently conducted a study in order to better understand what inspires top talent (high performers, high potentials, and best talent). The data reveals notable differences in perception among high performers and their managers on the role of the manager in the development, motivation, and retention of top talent. This suggests that the critical high performer-manager relationship may be fraught with misaligned perceptions and challenges. The cost of replacing top talent is enormous not just in terms of money, but also customer relations, productivity and shareholder value. Therefore it is paramount that managers build an environment where high performers excel.

### The Relationship Gap

Our findings show that managers are doing a good job on many fronts, but there remains a difference in how top talent perceive their manager's ability to lead them, known as the relationship gap. Our studies show the following as the top five:

- Empowerment—High potentials want stretch assignments to challenge and test their ability. Managers seem unaware that many high performers feel their managers lack confidence in and respect for their abilities and often micro-manage their work.
- Authority to make decisions—Top talent prefer to be assigned clear decision-making roles and be held accountable. They often feel they are accountable for work outcomes but report a lack of autonomy in decision making.

- Guidance on development opportunities—The best talent are motivated by a desire to grow, develop and improve. Their main complaints are about receiving a lack of guidance when it comes to identifying skills for future leadership roles, freeing up their time and resources for skills training, and providing on-the-job opportunities to apply newly acquired skills.
- Manager's ability to manage—High potentials need active coaching and management to realize their true potential. Only two-thirds of high performers expressed confidence in their manager's ability to manage them effectively.
- Support in achievement of goals—High performers are more serious than others about achieving their life and career goals. However, a large majority are dissatisfied with the support they receive from managers in achieving career goals.

Differing perceptions about what is needed from a manager can lead to mismatched development efforts and devalue efforts made by managers and the organization to develop, motivate, and retain their best people. The managerial challenge is to create an environment that will stimulate and provide opportunities for each high performer to achieve his or her best potential.

Stay tuned to the next issue which will showcase insights on how to close the relationship gap among high performers and their managers. To address this relationship gap and ensure you do the right things to attract, motivate, develop and retain your best talent, please contact [Nousheen Jalal](#).