



ARTICLE

Promoting your top performers—and then abandoning them to the perils of management?

When a New Manager Stumbles, Who's at Fault?

by Gordon Adler

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ARISING corporate star has fallen: Thanks to his success as a sales rep at Bulwark Securities, Rafferty Goldstone (a character in this HBR case study) was promoted to manager. But six months later, his best reps are leaving, his team's barely making quota, and he's floundering in oceans of paperwork. His boss has granted him one week to explain how he plans to turn things around.

Though Rafferty is fictional, his plight is all too real—and common. Why? Many executives wrongly assume that talented individual contributors will master management on their

own. They promote them, then abandon them. Or, they use the “sink-or-swim” managerial-development method: Throw promising candidates into the “pool.” Nurture those who show some swimming ability. Let the others drown.

Either approach exacts a huge toll on managers, their teams, and their entire company. Ill prepared for the realities of their role, nascent managers soon founder under waves of crises.

Six experts comment on Rafferty's fate. Their advice offers a lifeline for any firm struggling to cultivate strong new managers.

THE most successful companies hold senior executives accountable for acquiring, coaching, and mentoring managerial talent. To help *your* new managers swim, not sink:

Ask yourself pointed questions before promoting a talented individual performer. For example, “Is there a match between the individual's skills and motivations and the company's needs?” Many aspiring managers think the role is about power, prestige, and money. It isn't: It's about getting things done through others in ways that meet the company's needs. Does this decidedly less glamorous picture appeal to that star you'd love to promote? Find out now—not later.

Be crystal clear about your company's goals and expectations. Once you've promoted rising stars, establish and communicate your performance expectations. For example, show new managers what behaviors they'd demonstrate if their performance were outstanding. Train them to meet those expectations, evaluate their performance against those expectations, and follow up with commendations or corrections.

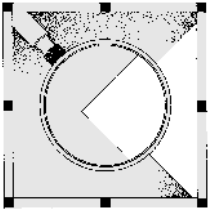
Also, explain your company's big-picture strategy, values, and productivity standards. Tell new

managers what their days should look like and how they should budget their time. Help them focus their teams on your company's future.

Start training early—then keep it up. Ever wished you could give would-be managers a taste of the role—without risk? You can: Challenge them to repair a damaged customer relationship, organize a conference, design and deliver a training course, or coordinate a new product-line launch. Once they're promoted, don't stop at a one-week, theory-based orientation seminar. Offer ongoing training that teaches specific skills.

Provide constant one-on-one coaching and performance assessment. Build a near-term, concrete performance plan based on clear, easy-to-measure behaviors—then lay out the actions to execute it. Every day, observe rookies' behavior, commend successes, and correct flaws—in real time. Don't wait for formal performance reviews.

Encourage new managers to build mentoring networks. Mentors and role models from other parts of the company can serve as valuable sounding boards for new managers struggling with their role.



Bulwark Securities' new managers get a five-pound policy manual. They need a lot more.

When a New Manager Stumbles, Who's at Fault?



by Gordon Adler

Everything was fine until Paul MacKinley, my manager at the Minneapolis, Minnesota, branch of Bulwark Securities, waved me down in the parking lot. It was June 1995. He was standing directly in the bright sun, so I had to squint to make out his features. "Goldstone," he said, "there's a management slot opening up in the Framingham, Massachusetts, branch."

I parked the car and found him ten minutes later, hunched over a spreadsheet. MacKinley cared about the bottom line, you had to give him that. He was fond of saying, Just do your job and don't saddle me with lawsuits. He looked up at me. "If my memory serves me right, Goldstone [he never called me Rafferty], you've

got an M.B.A. from Kellogg, eight years under your belt as a sales rep, and you've been at play in the fields of management, so to speak."

"Uh-huh, I've been coordinator of the Centurion Graphics account, I was Frank Arnold's mentor, and I was a member of the task force for improving sales calls."

MacKinley nodded. "Management's where it's at—power, prestige, money. Are you 40 yet?"

"Thirty-eight."

"Good, young enough to want it bad, and too young to know better."

My father used to say leaders are born, not made. I'd wanted to test his theory for a long time—find out what it was like to take charge. For some time, I had resented MacKin-

ley hounding me about quotas and compliance; after all, I'd been one of the top three reps, averaging \$300,000 per year. I dreamt of having MANAGER on my door. My view back in 1995 was this: I understand sales and the Bulwark line of products. I understand reps. That's all it takes.

That night, my wife, Jane, said that she wasn't sure it was a good thing for us or for Jamie, our son. I remember her exact words. *I don't want to be married to a 45-year-old heart patient.* I tried to bring her around by telling her that Framingham was my hoop dream, maybe my only chance to make the move into management. I could try out my own management philosophy: Do unto the reps as you would have

done unto you. She said we didn't need the hassle. I told her it wouldn't be any hassle – branch manager was nothing more than being lead sales rep, only with more sway and liability. The numbers'll be a cakewalk.

I think often of the image of management I had eight months ago, an image I talked about only to Jane. It's always there, a searing reminder. It's still the only image of management that I like, the only one in which I can picture myself. It's amazing I could have been so wrong.

I signed my new contract on June 30, and on July 17 they flew me and 11 other green dreamers out to Bulwark headquarters in San Francisco for five days of management orientation. It was college all over again. Three hundred pages of theory: strategic analysis, product positioning, performance evaluation, diagnosing personnel problems, setting expectations, delegating, coaching, feedback. A marketing guy told us that customers had been clamoring for better quality and service. Spinaker Invest, our major competitor in the full-service market, had already jumped on the bandwagon, and now Bulwark was repositioning itself as well. He said corporate expected us to unleash our new investment products like the Assurance Funds and, most important, the Plus Service Account. I remember thinking, Great, I'll be spending more time on the key accounts.

On the last afternoon, Bulwark's CEO, Christopher Woodbone, made an appearance. He bestowed on each of us a five-pound policy manual with our names embossed in one-carat gold. When he shook my hand, he gave me a grave look and said, "Apply it scrupulously, follow the Bulwark Commandments, and you won't be kicking off from the end zone." Afterward there was an exchange of cards. Jim Slake, head of human resources, clapped me on the back and told me to call him any-

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time. I had met him during the interview process; he had said the same thing then. He also told me his only management handicap was that he couldn't tell a teaspoon from a tee shot. I said, "I don't play golf, so I don't have to worry about my handicap." It seemed funny at the time.

I spent the last two weeks in Minneapolis messing with details – prepping the guys who would be taking on my accounts, bickering with the real estate agent who was selling our house, arguing with the Country Properties lady who would be showing us around the suburbs west of Boston. Then we pulled up stakes and took a few days off to settle in. Finally, I drove over to my new office. It took me the entire weekend of August 26 and 27 to set it up. When I was a rep, my desk was strewn with scraps of paper, forms, a Rolodex, pictures of my kid, pictures by my kid, a cactus, I didn't care. Now the placement of everything seemed so momentous. The desk was a gargantuan problem. I finally settled on facing it out the window. For head-to-heads, I bought a conference table and four Wassily chairs. I parked the policy manual and the other five pounds of training stuff on my shelf. (Every time I look at it, I wonder if anybody ever uses it. Reading policy manuals doesn't prepare you for real-life jams. And what was I supposed to say in the middle of a conversation with a sales associate – "Excuse me, let me look this up in the manual so I can find out the politically correct way to respond to you"?)

A few days later, I got a card from MacKinley. Good luck, Goldstone. *My commandments: 50% people development, 30% sales and product leadership, 30% administrative compliance. Right – 110%.* I had no idea what he meant.

On Wednesday, August 30, Gloria Ludlow dropped in. She's my regional director. We exchanged chit-chat for about 20 minutes, then she declared, "I'm not going to ask questions on expenses: You can do whatever you want, but you'll be

accountable. You're not being evaluated on how well you produce. It's all in how your reps do."

I told her the reps were already cracking jokes about the Plus Service Account. They weren't exactly enamored of the investment counseling part. Her reply? "You sell Woodbone's policy, you hit quota." I didn't want to contradict her, but I just couldn't stop myself from blurting out that reps sell what they know,

It dawned on me that I'd seen all the sales reps as clones of myself.

and I'd rather not shove the PSA down their throats. She raised an eyebrow. "Rafferty, call me if you need to talk. Don't wait until there's a crisis." I thought, What crisis?

My first official day was Tuesday, September 5. I was so nervous in the morning that I just filed papers, joked around with the support staff, and asked the reps to come by one by one in the afternoon.

Around 1 o'clock, right in the middle of my egg salad, my youngest rep, Juba Puckett, came in. I told her I'd read her updates and thought she should change her strategy for the Cummaquid account. It felt like my first ten minutes of real management. I was smiling like a banshee until she pointed out that I had egg on my tie.

The rest of the afternoon, I asked the reps questions about their goals, ambitions, product ideas, suggestions. Exactly what I always wished MacKinley'd asked me. Three reps wanted to know how I'd pulled off my promotion, a few said they just wanted to be left alone to do their jobs, others really wanted to know my expectations. The interviews went okay, except that as the afternoon dragged on, it dawned on me that I'd seen them all as clones of myself – my motivations, my talents. No way was I prepared for their individuality.

At around 5:30, Bill Durkee came by and apologized for his falling sales. He was having problems at



The management slot in Framingham, Massachusetts, was Goldstone's hoop dream.

home. Durkee's a real nice guy: On the secretaries' birthdays, he brings them orchids that he breeds in his garage. I told him it's tough to balance work with family. When his lips started quivering, I went into a big brother act. "Bill, you know you can come by anytime." He thanked me profusely and shook my hand.

The first weeks whizzed by. It was like driving late at night in a rainstorm, and suddenly you realize you have no memory of the last ten miles. I was poring over the details of the Plus Service Account. (For the reps, the program meant changing how they helped clients with assets of less than \$5,000.) At orientation,

I started with the new commandments: profit, service, compliance. I told them about a minor skirmish I'd had with legal – Puckett had had some problems, so I'd chewed out one of the junior lawyers. It was spooky: They were all staring at me, and a few were actually taking notes. Ten minutes into my sermon, Tony Skrow shouldered into the room.

Take Brando's voice, Nicholson's laugh, add a pinch of Donald Trump, and you've got Tony Skrow. The top performer. He'd been so good for 15 years that there had been rumors, never substantiated, that he was churning his accounts.

He stood at the door, and for a half minute or so, the only sound was his huffing. I was about to repeat my spiel about easing off on our sales pressure when he launched his first strike at me.

He said, "Hey, I'm into traditional investment management. I'm about

as interested in insurance, tax minimization, retirement annuities, real estate – except my own, of course – as I am in Tofutti. I don't make \$400,000 a year advising Granny Clampett what to buy with the \$5,000 life savings she's got in a tomato can."

While Skrow bellowed on, I heard Durkee and Puckett giggling like a couple of delinquent high schoolers in the corner by the drinking fountain. I had a feeling they'd checked up on me, and they knew I was only the second or third performer in Minneapolis.

I cleared my throat. "Not everybody's interested in money and personal gain." Skrow crouched down like Joe Louis and rasped, "I don't like money, actually, but it quiets my nerves."

I pointed out that whether he liked it or not, Bulwark was moving into service. Skrow boomed, "And profit. Without us heavy producers, the company would be nowhere."

I knew I had to do something to counter the damage, so I sent a survey to the reps. One hundred percent checked the box: Manager Should Spend More Time with Me. In the space for comments, they wrote that I shouldn't peer over their shoulders about compliance. Thirty percent were satisfied with my direction; 35% were neutral; 35% wanted more. How was I supposed to deal with that? In San Francisco, they'd told us to set sales and team-leader agendas. I began to wish that Jim Slake and his whole human resources department were working down the hall.

I sent the reps a survey: Each one checked the box, Manager Should Spend More Time with Me.

Slake had recommended that we hold off on the first sales meeting until we'd gotten the feel of the branch. I had this gnawing feeling it was time to show them who was in charge, so I called the first one for Thursday, September 28. I'll never forget that day.

By Columbus Day, 30 reps were vying for most of my time, and the rest was being eaten up by system crashes, conflagrations between reps, and head-on collisions with clients. I felt like I was drowning in waves of potentially relevant information. I found myself making notes on strategic plans at the dinner table and reading budgets at 3 A.M.

One Friday at about 5:30, I really felt like calling somebody. Someone who could help me sort this out. Gloria Ludlow seemed like a natural choice. I picked up the phone. She had years of experience and MacKinley'd told me she was on the way up, express. Still, she was an unknown. She set the quotas. She had her own agenda. And this didn't feel like "keeping her informed." I put the phone back in its cradle and left.

To get control of my days, I bought a deluxe master planner. The owner's manual says, *Don't let irrelevant people and topics interrupt your schedule. Get control of your time. And yourself.* The very next day, between 7:10 and 5:55, I had 41 disjointed conversations that lasted anywhere from ten seconds to 20 minutes. Walking from my desk to the men's room, the only place I seemed to get any peace, I played conversation tag—a pregnant wife, a herniated disk, Durkee's problem client in London, the new training program for the Assurance funds, a malfunctioning keyboard, a call to the guys in Tucson about a loan. My assistant tried to prioritize my time. Too big a job.

Since July, corporate had come up with a wide array of new products. I was raised on stocks and bonds, and now we were talking about derivatives, trusts, even precious metals. My one area of expertise was rapidly becoming my greatest area of ignorance. If you'd asked me, I couldn't have told you where Bulwark should be going with new products. We had reps' meetings every Wednesday, and I felt more and more ignorant at each one. When Skrow deigned to show up, he asked nitpicky questions about new products that only Durkee could answer.

The Friday before Veterans Day, one of our lowest-producing reps

quit. Talk about luck. I knew the top rep at Spinnaker, our main competitor, and I lured him away with the promise of his own corner office, wrenched from finance, which was having turnover problems. I could tell the other reps were ticked off—Skrow in particular, though he didn't say anything.

The morning after my quarterlies came in, Ludlow called me. "Goldstone," she said, "you're under quota." As if I didn't know I'd gone over on my expense ratios. I told her sales were off, reps were doing long hours, a thousand a week. Her answer? "No excuses, Goldstone."

Then she went over every little credit and debit with a fine-tooth comb, talking cut, cut, cut. I wanted to tell her that if we don't bring in the sales, the costs are BS. But in the end, I just said that my brokers didn't like having the Plus Service Account crammed down their throats. She said, "Your reps are your problem, your quotas are mine." I didn't say anything, and she must have sensed panic. After a pause, I heard, "Look, Rafferty, why don't you sign up for one of the employee development programs.

It's usually two half-day seminars. You'll see how other managers handle their loads." "Sure," I said, but when I hung up, I was thinking that's just what I need—a whole day out of the office, wasted.

Ten minutes later, when I had just started working on some expense forms for corporate that were already a month overdue, Durkee came into my office and started blubbing. He was working incredible hours. He sat in the front row at every sales meeting with his blue Eagle notebook. He could quote the PSA stuff verbatim. Customers loved him. He never bulldozed them. Problem was, they never called back and he never sold. I really felt sorry for the guy. He's got two kids, a mortgage, a sick father, debt, and a wife, sort of, and I'm supposed to tell him he's just not made to be a broker.

Boy, was I relieved when he left.

Ludlow called the next day to remind me she'd had complaints from corporate—I wasn't getting my expense forms in on time. I told her I was going to be on quota second quarter because I was doing the forms meticulously.

"From now on, I want them meticulous *and* on time," she shot back. "Have you signed up for a training seminar?"

"Sure."

I filled the gray space between Christmas Eve and New Year's with paperwork—forms for legal I'd gotten behind on and the first performance appraisals I'd scheduled for early in the new year.

I needed to talk to someone about Durkee, but I didn't want to go back to Ludlow. I signed up for a seminar. One full day, the second Monday in January, in New Haven, Connecticut. It was basically a pep talk. Consultants hired by corporate. The expert reminded us to read our manuals. We role-played some, but none of the parts matched Durkee's situation—or mine, for that matter. I talked to two managers from Phila-

I felt like I was drowning in waves of potentially relevant information. I was reading budgets at 3 A.M.

delphia and one from Atlanta. They sympathized. I sympathized. It was touchy-feely. It didn't help solve my problems.

On February 5, Ludlow and I flew out to corporate.

I figured it was a chance to talk with Jim Slake about Skrow and Durkee and explain my first-quarter figures to the financial guys. Instead, I got third degree. What are you doing to keep your people up to speed? What's the size of the market going to be? What did you want your share to be? What kind of expenses can you maintain and still be competitive? What's your projected return on investment? I felt like I was run-

ning my own \$50 million business. I guess I did all right because they said they were looking forward to my five-year plan and half-year results – in two weeks.

After my presentation, Ludlow and I killed an hour in the Faulty Propeller, a bookstore and coffee shop she knew near the wharf. I had been an English major at the University of Michigan, and the more I looked around and sipped at my double espresso, the more I wondered why I'd ever gone into finance.

I wanted to talk about a new sales idea I had, a mailing to our best clients with a personal letter from me. She didn't want any of that. She wanted to talk about my organizational agenda, hiring and firing, training and motivating my people. She said my priority should be developing my people, then maintaining a higher level of customer satisfaction. She pointed out that it's tough to manage someone who has been in the business longer than you have. She said that when someone has personal problems, you need to listen, but you also need to try to get that person to separate work from home; sometimes work can be a haven. She wrapped it up by asking if the seminar had been helpful. I said it had been, but it had eaten into my time. "Well, we'd all like to have more time, wouldn't we?" When I figured out time management, I should clue her in.

We touched down in Boston in an early-morning sleet storm. When I got to the office, I had a sour expres-

sion on my face. One of the reps out front asked if I'd been sucking on a lemon or were the numbers that bad? By lunch, people were talking about overtime and no bonuses.

Early in the afternoon, Puckett appeared and asked how to handle the Middlesex account. I explained over

and over that she needed to get them into the Plus Service Account program and balance their biotech stocks with something a little more stable like munis, but she just wasn't getting it. She kept saying they wanted the growth funds. I kept saying they didn't understand the advantages of the PSA, and besides, if the market dipped, they'd be all over us for not covering their risk. I got dizzy and my face felt like it had caught fire. I led her to my desk, sat down, and called Thorpe, their investment officer. Within ten minutes, I'd sold my first PSA, opening balance 40 grand.

Puckett asked why I was still on customer calls with her and said she really resented it. I told her I was just trying to help. Her voice rose. "Maybe I'm not the best rep on the floor, but I'm not incompetent." I told her I wasn't suggesting that, just showing her a method. She got really steamed. She clenched her jaw and said, "If you want to be the rep for this account, you can have it." She chucked the file on my desk and stormed out of the room.

I wanted to jump through one of those little windows on my computer's screen saver. I dashed after her and whisked her back into my office. And that's when I lost my cool. I plunked her into a chair and started hollering. "You're lucky I'm helping at all."

Her chin started to quiver and then she started to cry.

I went on: "I covered when you couldn't handle that hassle with legal. Why are you worried? The Middlesex sale goes on your account, even though I made it."

The rest is a blur. It wasn't me.

I always figured you had to have a steel reinforcing rod in your backbone and the skin of an alligator to be a rep, but it's nothing compared to management. You've got to keep your cool, you've got to find it, keep it, protect it. Your cool is about all you've got.

Two days later, I made quota for the second quarter. Win one. Puckett terminated her contract. Lose one. She wrote, "PS – thanks for the motivation. I always wanted to work at Spinnaker!"

Last Friday, February 23, I met with Ludlow. She'd called to say that we needed to give some serious consideration to my performance. I'd been expecting it.

She got right to the point. "I pic-

Ludlow gave me one week to figure out what to do about my performance.

ture the story of your first six months as a jagged line. You've had your successes. Reached quota second quarter, hired Vance away from Spinnaker. But there's no point in pulling punches, it's a downward slope. You lost Puckett, you're probably going to lose Skrow, you should have lost Durkee. You're late with forms and there was that fight with legal. I'm up to my ears. I just don't see how I can do any more for you, Rafferty." I asked her what she expected me to do. She gave me until March 1 to figure out what to do about my performance. One week.

Last night, I called MacKinley. He had a plan: two hours a week on improving relations with San Francisco; two more hours starting up regular relationships with the other guys in the Boston area. But politics just isn't my thing. He told me to capitalize on my on-the-job experience. That's like trying to learn from a stomach ulcer. Who's got the time for self-analysis? I'm worn out.

If I stay, I've got to do something about Durkee and Skrow, replace Puckett. Durkee's a tragedy looking for a final act. Skrow's the reason I'm making my quotas. Breaking in a new sales rep is the last thing I need. I can't call MacKinley every morning. I've read the lit, I've got to manage Ludlow.

What's my option?

Go back?

Quitting means defeat.

How will I tell the old man?

You need a steel rod in your backbone to be a rep, but it's nothing compared to management.

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Is It Too Late to Save Goldstone?

Six experts discuss the process of developing new managers.



THOMAS J. DELONG is managing director and chief development officer of Morgan Stanley & Company in New York City, where he is responsible for individual and organizational development.

"Management's where it's at – power, prestige, money." Paul MacKinley's words to Rafferty Goldstone set the stage for this case. A company's managers personify its values and norms. At Bulwark Securities, those values and norms are troublesome and woven with inconsistencies.

□ At management orientation, the trainers – including the CEO – talk theory but not application. They don't teach any specific skills. The human resources staff plays an administrative role rather than a strategic one. How can Bulwark claim that management development is important if its training session doesn't even touch on the practicalities of being a manager?

□ Executives from the CEO down consider the hefty policy manual their bible. If it's so important, why is it a "parting gift" at the end of orientation week?

□ MacKinley hounds Goldstone the sales rep about his quotas and compliance. Yet, in a postcard, he urges

Bulwark's sink-or-swim management training system is no system at all.

Goldstone the manager to concentrate on people development. No wonder the guy doesn't understand. □ Gloria Ludlow lays down the law about Goldstone's responsibilities and says his priority should be developing his people. Then she cuts him loose. He doesn't react well. It's no surprise, then, that Goldstone later issues "commandments" at his own sales meeting – which he calls, sadly, because he has something to prove – and is rebuffed.

Successful organizations often mishandle how they develop their people, and Bulwark is a classic example. The purported philosophy of management at Bulwark is not evident anywhere in its actual day-to-day business. In fact, Bulwark's sink-or-swim management training system is no system at all.

Effective management-development programs give employees opportunities to test their managerial skills – and to reflect on their own situations and ambitions – long before they face the prospect of moving into a full-time managerial position. As Edgar Schein suggests in *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs* (Addison-Wesley, 1978), the multidimensional activities of managing are more complex than meet the eye.

Those activities range from making decisions with incomplete information to having the communicative and emotional competence to deal with "human capital." To learn about the complexities firsthand, with little risk, would-be managers might start by repairing a damaged client relationship, organizing a conference, designing and delivering a training course, coordinating the launch of a new product line, or even managing small task forces. Goldstone had had a taste of that. MacKinley called it being "at play in the fields of management." But then what? Too often such experiences are not evaluated and put into the context of employees' overall career prospects.

Companies should also provide a formal process through which individuals can leverage their strengths (and overcome some weaknesses) so that the learning process is ongoing throughout their career. Frequently, as is the case at Bulwark, training is front-loaded at the beginning of a job with little or no follow-up.

Rigorous, regular performance evaluations are part of the answer. Such evaluations allow employees – from top to bottom – to get at the truth regarding their strengths and weaknesses. And ongoing career-development discussions provide a foundation on which to reinforce organizational values.

Honest feedback on an informal basis is another critical component of training. It sounds so simple. Yet managers' "spinning" the facts – being less than absolutely direct with their employees – is a prevalent problem that leads many organizations to entropy. Bulwark is the epitome of disorder.

If Bulwark's senior managers are committed to building an effective management-development system, they have much work to do. The first steps are as follows:

The company, led by its CEO, Christopher Woodbone, must begin to hold managers accountable for the development of people. For example, Ludlow's compensation should be based, in part, on whether her people grow and develop. The company should make that policy

clear from the start. During her performance evaluations, Ludlow should be asked point-blank: "Under your watch, how have your people changed in the last year?" Ludlow should begin to set specific objectives for her subordinates, saying something like, "I think you should work on developing your presentation skills. Let's meet with our human resources representative and come up with a plan." Three months later, she could follow up to determine if her subordinates have met the objectives.

Few organizations are that explicit about accountability. But adherence to a formal process shows that senior managers believe in developing people. Managers who simply send their employees to human resources for training are abdicating their direct responsibility.

Ludlow and other Bulwark employees who are "bringing up" new managers should begin to offer frequent feedback. Six months had elapsed before Ludlow mentioned "serious consideration" of Goldstone's performance. That's inexcusable. She should be much more communicative. She can start by helping Goldstone develop solutions to the problems that have sprung up in part because of her reticence.

Bulwark's managers and subordinates must create an implicit and an explicit contract that links the career-development process with its employees' positions in real time.

It's probably too late for Goldstone. After six months, he has lost his credibility and his courage.

Such a contract would clarify Goldstone's own path and would give future Goldstones a better chance at a rewarding, satisfying career from the beginning.

Bulwark's CEO must articulate the organization's values. If employee development is indeed an explicit value, then the company must demonstrate that through its ac-

tions, not simply talk about it. Leadership can't be taught; it can only be learned.

Goldstone should meet immediately with Ludlow to determine how success is defined in his new role and to solicit real direction. He should also take advantage of Bill Durkee's technical expertise and have Durkee train both him and the other sales reps in the area of new products. Goldstone might also spend more time one-on-one with Durkee, teaching him the art of closing a deal. Or he could ask Tony Skrow to show Durkee his style and explain his sales methods in detail.

If Bulwark takes the above steps, it will become a stronger company. A well-rounded management-development and feedback system gives future leaders a much higher probability of success. The process of learning to manage becomes more than a long stumble upward.

Unfortunately, even if the company makes outstanding progress along these lines, it's probably too late for Goldstone. Goldstone has been in his new job for six months, and he has lost his credibility and, more important, his courage. Timidity guarantees failure. He is not likely to stay in a managerial position over the long term.

That doesn't mean his career is over, however. Goldstone was a good salesman. Quitting won't mean defeat. Going back to a sales job won't mean that Goldstone is a loser.

Rather, the move might be the beginning of wisdom—for him and for Bulwark. Many organizations face the puzzle of how to motivate productive technicians who think they must become managers if they are to have status and prestige

in the organization. Bulwark's top-level executives may have a chance to demonstrate to employees that they believe that technical experts are every bit as important to the company as managers.

How will Goldstone tell his father? If he's straightforward, he will have learned an important characteristic of successful managers.



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What Goldstone needs is one-on-one coaching, but his managers have abdicated their responsibility for coaching and development.

Bulwark has a problem that extends well beyond Goldstone. If his story is representative of Bulwark's approach to selecting and shaping new managers, then the company's chances of meeting customers' demands for improved quality and service are greatly constrained.

Bottom-line-oriented organizations like Bulwark often rely on a "spaghetti model" of managerial development: After you've boiled it, throw it against the wall; whatever sticks is done. Goldstone and ten other people have been flung into managerial roles, and six months later, their performances are being evaluated; some may be doing fine—they may be "done"—but Goldstone isn't. The spaghetti model surrenders control of the managerial-development process to fate. That's not a formula for improving quality and service.

The organization, as represented by MacKinley, Slake, and Ludlow, appears unconcerned about—or, worse, unaware of—the difference between a good sales rep and an ef-

fective manager. MacKinley is cynical, praising Goldstone for being “young enough to want it bad, and too young to know better.” Slake and Ludlow, meanwhile, keep Goldstone at arm’s length: “Call me if you need to talk.” Many companies rationalize such a laissez-faire posture as empowerment. To Goldstone, it feels like abandonment at a time when he needs help but regards asking for it as admitting failure. The company’s squandering of Goldstone’s potential is the equivalent of undermanaging a portfolio or, worse, putting money in a mattress.

It’s easier to enumerate the sequence of missed opportunities than it is to chart Bulwark’s path forward. First, the selection process is vague and poorly developed. It provides neither a clear picture of the competencies required for success in different positions nor an assessment of performance based on the accomplishments of its best managers. Second, Bulwark’s attempts to help its employees with career management are far from ideal. Employees are given the impression that successful development is all about the “power, prestige, money” that MacKinley cites as the advantages of becoming a manager. Instead, it should be about the mutual realization of the organization’s goals and the individual’s goals through a good fit in a rewarding role. Third, roles and expectations are ambiguous: Compliance is important, but so is pushing new products. Customers want quality and service, but quotas are paramount. Managers can get ahead by developing their people, but they need to manage expenses tightly.

For a mature manager, such apparent contradictions require a series of trade-offs, negotiated with the organization. For a newly minted manager like Goldstone, who is spinning like a top and making himself sick with uncertainty, such ambiguity can be disorienting and paralyzing. What Goldstone needs is one-on-one coaching – a mentor to guide him as he manages assignments and begins to figure out how to act as a mentor and a coach for *his* staff. But his managers, MacKinley and Ludlow,

have abdicated their responsibility for coaching and development to the human resources department in the form of manager-orientation and employee-development programs. Goldstone may be able to pick up some valuable lessons at the training sessions, but that's not where his real development will take place.

Successful companies make the acquisition and development of managerial talent one of the highest priorities for their senior people. At Bulwark, the new managers are given minimal trial-run experiences, the CEO relies on a policy manual, MacKinley advises using politics to get ahead, and Ludlow lets Goldstone flounder for four months before she even broaches a dialogue about what successful management of people looks like. Given their track record and their de facto adoption of the spaghetti model, it's hard to know what will help them change their stripes. In high-growth periods, securities firms like Bulwark lull themselves into thinking that the manager is superfluous; yet in slow-growth periods, they crack the whip as if the manager is the one who makes things happen. Then they scratch their heads and wonder why their managers aren't more loyal.

On the other hand, Goldstone is no paragon of a high-potential manager. With his untested notions of power and "cool" and a management philosophy based on a narcissistic golden rule ("I'd seen them all as clones of myself"), he has made just about every mistake one could make. He's drowning, yet he doesn't know how to ask for or accept help. He's unhappy and the symptoms are apparent to those around him. He's reaching the limits of his credibility and his ability to handle the role.

Yet he has glimmers of insight. Anxiety is making him question his prior assumptions. Carpe diem! Instead of letting him self-destruct, Bulwark should commit to investing in Goldstone. He and Ludlow should build a near-term, concrete performance plan and lay out the actions to execute it. Bulwark should assign Goldstone a coach. (Ideally, that would be Ludlow.) The company should also allow a grace period for

the administrative burden, or it should invest in human or technical solutions to the paper load so that Goldstone can focus on people and performance. The company should encourage Goldstone to seek an ally from within his department – most likely one of his reps – so that he can stay in touch with the pulse of the office. He should also be encouraged to seek technical help about products, sales, and marketing, and he should be given counseling by human resources. Ludlow needs to commit to skull sessions, perhaps two per week, to keep shaping Goldstone's focus and sense of priorities.

If Bulwark were to take these actions, it would be in a position by the next quarter to ask whether it had made the right choice in selecting Rafferty for management. In fact, by then, the company's senior managers might even know him well enough to call him by his first name.



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Bulwark's senior managers must define and communicate the what, when, and how of good sales management. No ambiguities.

Goldstone is only one symptom of a larger management problem at Bulwark. Look into any one of the

company's branch offices and you'll most likely find other Goldstones struggling to learn the ropes while they're on the ropes as well. Bulwark has failed to legitimate management as a career path and to select, develop, and manage its human resources to their fullest potential. Instead, the company continues to promote its top producers and then abandon them, with the unrealistic expectation of a seamless transition and continued success. How shortsighted, considering that an effective sales manager can have as great an impact on a salesperson's productivity as any other single variable.

If Bulwark's senior managers took a moment to think, they would realize that the criteria for success among sales reps are significantly different from those that lead to success in managing a sales force. Good salespeople know that success depends on what they do themselves, whereas effective sales managers understand that their goals are achieved through others' performances. Recognizing just that basic difference, the CEO, Slake, and even MacKinley and Ludlow might then realize that their system of developing sales managers is woefully inadequate. The transition from one job to the other requires changes of mind-set and behavior, not simply a new set of policy books and a few pep talks. But how to reverse the damage? With commitment, it wouldn't be difficult. Effective management development need not be complex. In fact, the solution can be outlined in five steps:

- Define performance expectations.
- Communicate performance expectations.
- Develop through training the knowledge and skills needed to achieve those expectations.
- Evaluate performance against the defined expectations.
- Reward or correct behavior to continually enhance performance.

In Bulwark's current environment, I have no doubt that the first two steps would be interpreted as "Hand the new manager a job description." That's not what I mean. Sure, start with a job description, but then keep going. *Show* the new

managers what behaviors they would demonstrate if their performances were outstanding. *Explain* the company's productivity standards, its administrative standards, its service policy. *Describe* an acceptable level of product knowledge. *Tell* the new managers specifically what they are supposed to do as they conduct day-to-day business with their sales organization. How will their days look? What are some viable ways in which sales managers budget their time?

Bulwark's senior management team must learn to define and communicate the what, when, and how of good sales management at the company. No ambiguities. The mandate must be simple, clearly stated, based on behavior, and easy to measure. Then it can become the "performance contract" upon which all other activities, such as training and performance evaluations, are based.

The next step is helping the new sales managers develop the knowledge and skills they need to meet the company's expectations. Most new managers will have some administrative tasks to master, such as learning the proper procedures for reporting and for using the management information systems, but their training should focus on teaching them how to do with the sales reps exactly what their managers are now doing with them: working through the five steps. (Note that Bulwark's formal training program should be based on the actual experiences of its sales managers; ideally, it should be conducted by successful and credible real-life practitioners.)

For training to be effective over the long term, Bulwark must make ongoing, regular performance assessment a natural part of its culture. Every single time a senior manager walks past a sales manager, hears him on the phone, watches him in an interaction, or looks at a performance report, he or she makes an evaluation. But it makes no sense to observe someone's behavior simply to store it up for future reference. The key is to convert that assessment into a meaningful management tool by commending positive behavior (thereby reinforcing it) and

correcting negative behavior (thereby eliminating it)—in real time. That way, there won't be any nasty surprises or unrealistic ultimatums at formal reviews.

Nearly every employee's failure can be traced to some failure on the part of his or her manager to follow the simple process of setting and communicating performance standards, training people to meet them, evaluating their performance against them, and following up with appropriate commendation or cor-



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Goldstone has fallen prey to an all-too-common paradox. It seems logical enough to reward strong performers in a technical discipline with a promotion to management. The expectation is that their performance in a technical area indicates their ability to perform in management. The problem, however, is that technical expertise alone is not enough to be successful in a managerial role. Being a good manager requires skills far beyond those required in a technical role. A sales representative, for example, succeeds by being driven and competitive and by taking complete ownership of the achievement of results. Although these traits are critical to a

reaction. Bulwark has an opportunity to turn this situation around with Goldstone. And Goldstone, in turn, can and should do the same with his sales reps.

Many fine businesspeople are overwhelmed (perhaps even intimidated) by the prospect of managing people. A simple, logical, systematic approach to performance management can be the winning formula for developing skill and confidence in the line managers responsible for sales excellence.

Goldstone doesn't understand Bulwark's new strategy, so how can he focus his team on a vision of the future?

sales rep's success, who would want to work for someone like that?

Successful management requires a combination of strategic and people-management skills. Unfortunately, Goldstone possesses neither. He lacks strategic skills and therefore cannot see the big picture. It's pretty clear that he doesn't understand the company's new strategy, so how can he accurately focus his team on a vision of the future? Similarly, Goldstone doesn't know how to concentrate his efforts on the important issues that will make a difference to his staff and to his bosses. Instead, he continually attacks the details, which results in a frenetic management style. It's no wonder that people like Skrow have gone off and pursued their own agendas, even though their actions may conflict with the company's mission.

As far as people-management skills go, that's probably an even bigger problem. Goldstone doesn't understand that in his new role, he will be able to achieve results only through his team of reps. His perfor-

mance, in fact, is the sum of his team's performance. He should be retaining high-caliber people and motivating them to perform at their best. Instead, he frustrates his staff by micromanaging them. No wonder Juba Puckett left! Goldstone is taking personal responsibility for everyone's job and problems. If he continues to do so, he will soon be left with ordinary performers who are more than willing to allow him to carry the burden. All his top people will have left the company.

The fault is not all Goldstone's. The company bears blame as well. Goldstone was not properly prepared for his new role. Why? In large part because Bulwark didn't give him any examples of good management to learn from. Having strong role models is key to developing managers in any organization, and Woodbone, MacKinley, and Ludlow are not exactly perfect mentors.

So what can Goldstone do? Clearly, he needs to build his strategic and people-management skills. He should identify a role model or mentor within Bulwark – perhaps someone from another division – to use as a sounding board. He could also benefit from further training in situation leadership. The training course he attended a few months into his new job was not a bad idea, but at the time Goldstone was probably too flummoxed to think clearly about its potential benefits.

He must also move quickly to secure his high-performing sales reps. He needs to figure out the company's strategy and then communicate it accurately to his team. He must also articulate the role they need to play in successfully following it. And he must define the skills that his team will require. If there are deficiencies, then he must arrange formal training for his salespeople – or replace them. MacKinley can probably help him with that. At the end of the case, it seems as if MacKinley is finally reaching out to Goldstone with substantive advice. Goldstone can't afford to pass up the help.

It's not easy to learn management skills all at once, on the job. An initiation such as the one Goldstone is being put through is quite difficult.

But I've been through it – as have many other managers. I had much more support from my company when making the transition between management levels, functions, and countries than Goldstone seems to have had. But Goldstone can get through this process, too, if he keeps his wits about him. He may even be able to reconcile his mental image of the ideal management position with the reality of a rewarding management role.



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In order to turn the situation around, Goldstone will have to find the courage to admit that he is floundering.

Although many corporations have formal development processes in place and use all the right words when describing them, the Goldstones of the world are not rare. Quite often, in fact, management development means testing new managers to see if they are made of the "right stuff," instead of supporting their growth and progress.

I believe that if Bulwark truly valued management development as a

means to create and sustain competitive advantage, the major players would have behaved more like this:

MacKinley: MacKinley would have conducted developmental sessions with Goldstone to discuss his career objectives, including his dream of taking on more responsibility. He would have painted a picture of what it takes to lead a group of sales reps successfully and explained to Goldstone how the task would present both exciting and difficult challenges. He would also have pointed out how important it is to learn how to learn and told Goldstone that learning from his failures would be as important as learning from his successes. He would have helped Goldstone see how valuable it is to have the ability to stop the action at any moment and reflect on what is happening and why. And how important it is to ask, when something goes wrong, What could I have done to be more effective in that situation? MacKinley would have made a sincere offer to act as Goldstone's coach; he would have known that new managers are often reluctant to ask for coaching.

Goldstone: Assuming that Goldstone took advantage of a robust development process, he would have been in a better position to assess the benefits and risks of accepting the promotion in the first place. An individual development plan would have given him a clear picture of his strengths and his opportunities for growth – a useful tool whether or not he chose to take on the new job. Once in the new position, Goldstone would have been more comfortable about asking for coaching when he needed it. His education at Bulwark would have allowed him to appreciate his own learning capabilities and to develop strategies to achieve his desired results. The support and coaching he would have received from MacKinley and Ludlow would have enabled him to be a more effective mentor.

Ludlow: Ludlow would have realized that Goldstone's success would be her success as well; she would have encouraged him to set reasonable goals and then would have supported his efforts to achieve them.

She would have worked hard to build trust between them, and that trusting relationship would have allowed for open, honest communication about the tough issues a new manager faces. Her initial coaching session would have included a primer on the strengths and weaknesses of the sales reps.

Of course, those behaviors are ideal. Many situations are more like the one portrayed in this case. So what should be done?

The responsibility for turning the situation around probably lies with Goldstone. To get the ball rolling, he'll need to find the courage to admit that he is floundering.

Ludlow clearly knows that there is a problem—and she would certainly be happier if Goldstone were doing better—but her future with Bulwark will not be jeopardized if Goldstone fails. Similarly, MacKinley and Slake could simply decide that they had made a mistake without risking their jobs. Goldstone, on the other hand, has everything to lose—and therefore, the most motivation to make things work.

First, Goldstone must step back and analyze his own performance. He must try to understand what it is about this job that is so different from his last one and why he isn't succeeding. Then he must admit to Ludlow that he doesn't know what to do, but he must do so in a way that gives her some solid material to work with. He must not be defensive; instead, he must put enough on the table so that they have a starting point on which to build a solid plan. He could begin by telling her what he learned about the company and its new strategies during the corporate training session. Then he could explain how he has tried to communicate that message and what the response has been. The key is for him to get beyond the surface-level discussions that he has had with Ludlow in the past. Ludlow, meanwhile, should take on the role of coach. She has begun to communicate with Goldstone, but she has a long way to go if she is really to be of any help.

Overall, if Goldstone takes the first step and Ludlow responds, MacKinley, Slake, and Woodbone

should use this situation as a catalyst for rethinking Bulwark's management-development program. Education should be part of the strategic process at every company. Educational experiences should be designed to support the company's goals and linked to the company's success in the marketplace. Training programs should not be designed as onetime events but rather as a systemic way of communicating and enhancing the company's mission. Employees should be given regular opportunities to learn and practice new ways of delivering value to customers. And they should be encouraged to support one another back on the job as they continue to learn how to learn.



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No one thought about the implications of moving a star individual contributor into a management role.

Before any employee is moved into his or her first management position at a company, that person's senior managers should ask the

following questions:

Is there a match between the skills and motivations of the individual and the needs of the company? No one at Bulwark thought about the implications of moving a star individual contributor into a management role. No one had a serious conversation with Goldstone about his understanding of management. No one had a clear idea of his motives and expectations. Goldstone didn't have a clue about what his new job would actually entail. He thought that understanding sales and products was all he would need to succeed. He thought that all sales reps would want to be managed the way he wished he had been managed. If Slake or MacKinley had talked with Goldstone about his views and hopes, they might have identified the potential problems and done something about them before Goldstone was already six months into his new job.

It also seems as if Goldstone was given not only a new job to handle but also a new business to figure out. His appointment came at a time when Bulwark was shifting from being product driven to being customer driven. Everything else aside, it's no wonder Goldstone found himself in trouble. His experience, such as it was, had prepared him to present the company in one way even as the company was changing its position in the marketplace.

Do the people who will be surrounding the new manager make a good fit for him or her? All too often, companies do not think about context when they are moving people into new positions. Bulwark fell short of the mark on several counts here, but consider just one: The company sent Goldstone halfway across the country to work for Ludlow and manage a group of sales reps without having him spend any time with those people before his appointment. He probably met Ludlow during the interview process, but he should have spent at least a few days working alongside her on some sort of project before the company decided to give him the job. The experience would have given him a sense of her style and her expectations

while there was still an opportunity for him to ask questions and consider his options without risk. Similarly, at the very least, Goldstone should have had background information about each of his reps before starting the job. In the best case, he would have met with them a few times before moving and would have had a lengthy discussion with Ludlow about their skills and goals.

Is the organization's training process suited to the individual, and does it provide support once that person has begun in the new position? Bulwark's senior executives certainly did not "walk the walk" when they said that 50% of management was people development. In fact, there were few role models or processes in place to support that notion. Ludlow told Goldstone to call her if there was a crisis, MacKinley called after the crisis had occurred, and Slake was more interested in being glib than in being helpful. Little thought was given to Goldstone's selection, and the company's initial training session did not even begin to address the people- and time-management issues faced daily by those trying to shift from being individual contributors to being managers. What's more, like many companies, Bulwark responded to its new manager's transition troubles by sending him to another training session. Such exercises can be useful but not in response to a problem in progress. For Goldstone, the course was too little, too late.

Having said all this, there is hope for Goldstone and for Bulwark. Over the short term, I would recommend that Bulwark assign someone—possibly Slake—to assess the situation. If I

were called in as an executive coach, I would first interview each of the key players to determine what went wrong and what they think can be done to salvage the situation. For example, I would try to find out whether Bulwark is truly in danger of losing Skrow and what Skrow really thinks of Goldstone and the company's new policies. (I would also try to find out whether Skrow is churning his accounts. If he is, the organization should not look the other way; it should take action to modify his behavior.)

Then I would conduct a 360-degree assessment of Goldstone by collecting information from him and from other members of the organization to determine which problems Goldstone must solve himself and which "belong" to the company. I would try to determine if the manager's job is the right one for someone with his skills and personality. Both Goldstone and Bulwark might be better off with Goldstone in a senior sales position rather than a managerial role.


Perhaps most important, I would make myself available as a resource if Goldstone or any of the other parties wanted to talk. At the very least, these people all need someone they can use as a sounding board.

Over the long term, I would recommend that Bulwark overhaul its entire executive development process so that it is proactive, not reactive. The company should establish career crossroads for the major functions in the organization. Its senior managers should make sure that employees understand how they all depend upon one another to make the company tick. That way,

sales reps who have an inkling that they would like to become managers will learn more about their options—and the realities of the various jobs—before they need to make a decision.

Bulwark's senior management team should also learn what the company's positions call for in terms of skill and personality, and how those positions match up against the skills, personalities, and ambitions of its employees. Armed with that knowledge, they can assess and train employees in advance of promotions instead of throwing someone into a position that won't tolerate anything less than a running start.

In place of—or as part of—the five-day training session, Bulwark should consider conducting a team-building session in which new managers meet with their direct reports to discuss expectations on both sides and the issues the company will be facing in the coming year. As new managers begin their assignments, Bulwark should provide each of them with an internal mentor or an external coach—someone who can serve as a confidential sounding board for the new manager.

Finally, as a part of its career-development effort, the company should establish a process of clear objective setting and quarterly performance reviews at all levels. Such a process would have provided a forum for Goldstone to raise issues with Ludlow—and for his reps to do the same with him—before a crisis could develop. 

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ARTICLES

"Pygmalion in Management" by J. Sterling Livingston (*Harvard Business Review*, September–October 1988, Product no. 1768)

This article focuses on the **power of expectations** to influence new managers' behavior and performance. When executives *expect* the best from their managers, they set a positive self-fulfilling prophecy in motion—as new managers strive to fulfill those expectations.

But to initiate this virtuous cycle, you have to do more than just establish high expectations. You must communicate them as well. Managers often communicate *low* expectations far more effectively than *high* ones—but people can't fulfill expectations they don't perceive. Also, your expectations exert their greatest impact during a new manager's first year on the job. Later, as rookies mature, their aspirations—and your expectations—become colored by past performance. Seize the advantage of that critical first year.

"The Executive as Coach" by James Waldroop and Timothy Butler (*Harvard Business Review*, November–December 1996, Product no. 5343)

These authors take a closer look at the **impact of coaching** on new managers. Coaching—regular meetings to help rookies address any problematic behaviors—is separate from formal performance evaluation and requires time and discipline. But used judiciously, it pays big dividends.

Waldroop and Butler explain how to evaluate problem behavior. For instance, ask yourself, "What does the behavior consist of? How does it affect others? How destructive is it?" They then describe ways to broach the sub-

ject of coaching with a new manager, including sample scripts that can help you safeguard managers' egos. Finally, the authors provide several coaching techniques, such as encouraging managers to learn from mistakes, moving from easier to harder behavior changes, and role-playing prickly scenarios managers may encounter.

"What Makes a Leader?" by Daniel Goleman (*Harvard Business Review*, November–December 1998, Product no. 3790)

New managers like Rafferty Goldstone are often surprised to discover that management requires getting things done through others and, therefore, hinges more on people skills—that is, **emotional intelligence (EI)**—than technical know-how.

Goleman defines the components that make up EI. Emotional intelligence competencies fall into two categories. Under the category of **self-management**, skills include *self-awareness* (knowing one's weaknesses and being willing to acknowledge them), *self-regulation* (controlling one's impulses or channeling them for good purposes), and *motivation* (having a passion for achievement for its own sake). Under the category **relating to others**, skills include *empathy* (taking into account others' feelings when making decisions) and *social skill* (building rapport with others, moving them in a desired direction, and inspiring them to cooperate).

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