

You've just promoted a rising star. Now you're wondering how long before someone else comes knocking at your door with, "I've been here longer – why haven't I had a promotion yet?"

Like most leadership problems, the best solutions come before the problems arise. That's because these situations are just symptoms of more systemic problems related to organizational culture and hiring practices (which are inextricably linked).

Let's look at a few cultural characteristics that can reduce the frequency and severity of these situations.



Culture Traits to Build On

- **Leaders see their job is to make their followers successful.** When your track record demonstrates your commitment to helping everyone on your staff grow, you'll get more grace from someone who gets passed over for an opportunity. Sure, they may still be disappointed. But they know you're doing everything you can to prep them for advancement.
- **The path to promotion is clear.** Everyone should always know what they need to be working on to be in the best position to move up at the next opportunity. They should continually be getting honest feedback about how they're doing. The requirements of the next position should be clear. That makes for a much more objective conversation than assumptions about favoritism, time on the job, and politics. It should also be clear that even if a person is ready for promotion, the company must have a need for someone in that position. We don't make everyone a CEO just because they're qualified.
- **Personal success comes through team success.** True teams (not just groups of people thrown together and called "teams") create the environment for celebrating one another's successes. Each person finds satisfaction in how they've helped others succeed and recognizes how others are contributing to their own success. Personal success contributes to team success. Team success contributes to company success. That flows back down as company success creates more opportunities for team success which creates more opportunities for personal success (and advancement).

The Hiring Fix

The hiring component of the solution comes in developing skills and processes that assure you're hiring people for more than just their technical skills. It's easier to hire people with the right character, values, and cultural fit than it is to create those attributes. Sure, the hard skills are important. But you're better off hiring an employee with the right DNA and a basic set of skills than a misfit with superstar skills. Skills you can train for. No superstar is worth the ongoing cost of a cancerous cell in your organization.

Too Busy Fixing to Prevent?

Creating and sustaining a culture that prevents people-problems takes intentional effort. It also takes a leader who is willing to work on developing culture-nurturing skills (i.e. willing to personally change and grow). If you don't have time to tend to your culture now you never will. You'll be too busy spending time trying to fix your growing people-problems.