

## How Low Can You Go?

In our employee survey of October 2013, respondents overwhelmingly stated that the organization does a poor job in dealing with low performers. In fact, almost 8 in 10 stated that we do a fair or poor job in dealing with low performers.

The effect of low performers is hard to ignore; they directly impact their colleagues, teams and the organization. Some of the noticeable effects include:

- Low performers are often negative or complain. They drain energy from others and the team.
- Team members know who the low performers are and tend to talk about them, perpetuating low morale.
- Supervisors have to devote time to correcting low performers, reducing efficiency and increasing complaints.
- Leaders are often criticized for not dealing with low performers, causing a lack of trust and their leadership effectiveness to be questioned.

So if low performers are so pervasive and have such negative effects, why aren't they swiftly dealt with? Sometimes, supervisors lack the will to effectively and proactively deal with low performing team members. Ultimately, the low performance ends up tolerated or ignored.

Supervisors must deal with the problem. Some of the reasons that low performers cannot be ignored include:

- Low performers collect a salary and the organization isn't getting full value.

- The team will perceive unfairness because others will have to take on more work and feel that they are working harder than others.
- The low performers are ultimately unhappy because they do not have the skills or ability to do the job.
- Supervisors have to devote a disproportionate amount of time correcting and coaching the low performing employee.

Supervisors have three options in dealing with low performers:

1. Be silent about their underperformance.
2. Rant to colleagues or HR.
3. Have a conversation with the employee.

Obviously, option #3 is the best choice. Supervisors can talk to their low performing employees during their ongoing FACE conversations. In these conversations it's important to:

- Reestablish the expectations and set measurable goals
- Provide opportunities for improvement and feedback
- Document the conversations in case the performance does not improve

Low performers exist in every organization. What's important is that low performers are effectively dealt with and their performance is not tolerated. Supervisors need to have conversations with low performers so they can improve and not negatively affect the team and the organization.