



Topgrading Tips

June 2006

• **BE FAIR WITH YOUR C PLAYERS...**

BE FAIR WITH YOUR C PLAYERS...

Additional Information

- **Brad Smart Bio**
- **Consulting Services**
- **Topgrading DVD Tool Kit**
- **Workshops and Speeches**
- **Topgrading Articles**
- **Contact Us**

OR ELSE!

As thousands of managers have topgraded their teams, I have cautioned them to be impeccably fair with their C players, or they will regret it.

?I know,? the topgrader typically responds, ?I should be fair because:

- our company values treating everyone with respect,
- I hired or promoted Cs, so I must share some blame for their failures,
- if I?m nasty and fire them, they?ll be more apt to look for some reason to sue,
- and besides, earlier in my career I was a square peg in a round hole, an underperformer, a C player?so I should have empathy.?

Those are all good reasons to be fair with C players. We all know that top leaders earn respect by being fair. So, C players are given a real chance to achieve A player

performance. They are given maybe six months to do it, and if they need training or better tools, those are provided. But my main reason for cautioning topgraders to be very fair with C players is this: Some C players who feel mistreated undermine you and they sabotage your topgrading efforts. Many C players are very honorable and do not fit this characterization, but some might feel victimized, do not take responsibility for their failures, and seek revenge.

C players who feel mistreated undermine you and sabotage topgrading.

I've heard the same story again and again: After the C players were gone it became obvious that they were far more creative and resourceful undercutting topgrading than they ever were doing their job!

- 1. There is a very predictable pattern that takes place; sort of a "one-two punch" who gets punched?you!**

Topgraders might become a little intoxicated with their new topgrading skills?skills that enable them to improve from 25% to 90% success in hiring and promoting people. So, instead of "living with" underperformers, worrying that there was only one chance in four of replacing them with a high performer, they aggressively topgrade. No longer feeling as though they have to be patient, they squeeze the C players.

- 2. Some C players, feeling the squeeze, become resentful, bitter, and vengeful.**

It's possible some will want to "get you." They could coalesce into a group, have beers together, bemoan your unfair treatment of them, and pledge to make life difficult for you. Some C players become passive aggressive. You can't see it, but they deliberately

miss opportunities for you to look good. They thrive on ?credible deniability.? They say they are ?trying to? implement your new performance management system, but economic changes make your goals unrealistic. Darn?someone quits, so business pressures caused cancellation of your training session. Too bad when that A player recruit of yours needed a ride to their airport??I just didn?t get the message in time (heh, heh).?

After a C player is gone customers say, ?I didn?t want to cause problems by complaining to you, but Pat really blew that big proposal last year and that?s why you didn?t get the order.? Lower level employees come forth and say, ?I sensed Mr. C Player was out to get you, but I didn?t actually see anything to prove it.?

To protect yourself from the tyranny of C players, you must be fair and be perceived as fair. Here?s how:

- Frequently ask, ?Is there anything else I can do to help you achieve the A player standard of 75 widgets per month??

To protect yourself from the tyranny of C players, you must be widely perceived to be fair.

- If you are quite sure the C players will not rise to A player performance, begin recruiting replacements, but root for the (low performing) incumbents.
- If after a few months your C players realize they won?t succeed, sincerely help them explore other jobs, internally or externally, where they can achieve A player performance.
- Don?t give phony references. If your C player sales manager had been an A player sales rep, say you?ll recommend him for sales, not sales management.

- Coach the soon-to-leave C players to leave on a high note. It's better for a C to quietly find another job than be fired, so encourage taking a day here or there to look. If you sense some hostility, say, "I know you're frustrated, but remember, you need good references."
- Whether the person is transferring to a different department or leaving the company, have an appropriate going away party—a cake at lunch, or whatever.
- Do 360 surveys to become aware of any C player tyranny. In my experience many C players can't resist nailing topgraders in surveys. Read their comments and react appropriately. If you know A players need only bi-weekly staff meetings and you're pretty sure it must be three C players saying you confuse them by not having enough staff meetings, have more.

SUMMARY

Get the most out of your C players until they become high performers or they leave. Take a chill pill, so that you don't condescend and make them feel entitled to get you!

NEW 1-HOUR VIDEO

In July we will release a product clients have been requesting. It's called World-Class Interviewing and Hiring: The Topgrading Advantage, and it's:

- Inexpensive (\$95)
- Convenient (available 24/7 at a website)
- Focused (on the hiring part of topgrading)
- Doubly visual (viewers see me talking and demonstrating techniques, with slides next to me)
- Complete (video is supplemented with downloadable forms/guides)

Bragging Rights

Forgive me for bragging a bit, but the 2005 revision of ***Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping the Best People*** continues to be the world's #1 best seller of over 1400 books on hiring. Only a dozen (or so) business books have remained #1 as long (5 years). Why? Some say the many case studies in chapter 5 prove that companies can improve from 25% to 90% high performers.

Forward Topgrading Tips Article

Sign Up for FREE Topgrading Tips by entering your email address below

Best,
Brad Smart
Smart & Associates, Inc.

email: brad.smart@topgrading.com

phone: 847-244-5544

web: <http://www.Topgrading.com>
