

Leadership: Understanding your team to manage them better

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For leaders, there’s no one-size-fits-all approach you can take to managing your team members. They will all have different needs depending on their personalities, yes, but also their fundamental levels of ability and motivation to do the job.

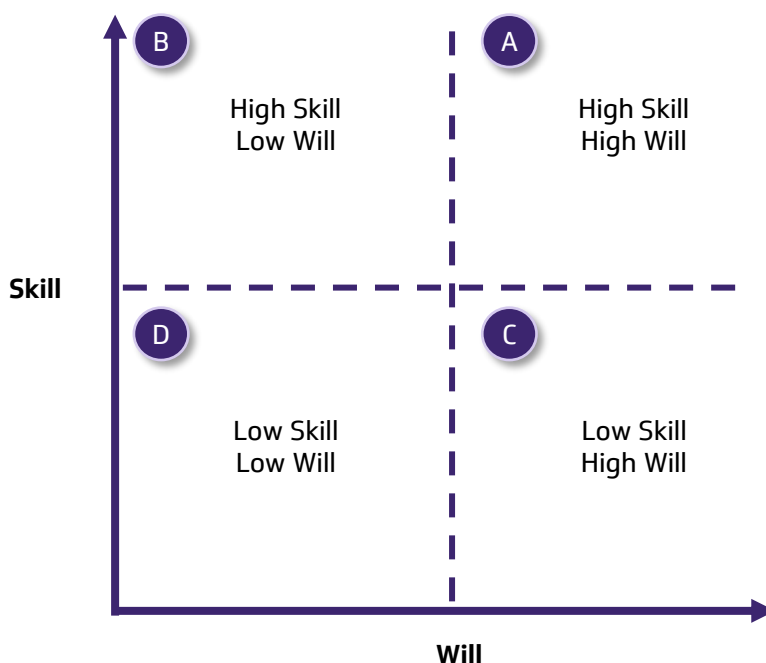
This simple 4-box model will help you categorise your team members according to those two basic factors to better understand what you need to maintain or adopt to become a better manager.

Skill and will factors

First, determine your team member’s *will*. You can gauge this by looking at their “activity”, i.e., calls, client visits, or, where appropriate, e-mails. The key thing is that it must be client interaction that has some actual value.

Then determine their *skill*, which is the conversion of activity into a sale.

Together, these give us our 4 boxes, as in the diagram below:



“As”: The future leaders

Progressive companies will recognise that the *As* are their future leaders and money spinners. They need to be nurtured continually and developed and challenged against other *As*, or given more responsibility and recognition in the organisation to maintain their *A* status. If you don't do this, the danger is that they might become a *B*, i.e., “Low Will / High Skill”.

“Bs”: The good and the bad

So what to do with the most challenging group in the matrix – the *Bs*? There are, in fact, two categories of *B*: “Good *Bs*” and “Bad *Bs*”. I call the former the “fallen angels”. They used to be starts but have now drifted away from the high activity they once put into the job. Often, this happens because they are still producing good results, so the fact that their activity level has decreased goes unnoticed. A switched-on manager would address the situation explicitly and put the right incentives in place to reignite the desire to become an *A* again.

The “Bad *Bs*” are those who've been in this category for too long and now feel resentment. This could be because, in their view, there are too many changes too often in the company, and so they complain, often! They regularly speak up on behalf of the individuals who are performing more poorly, highlighting the faults and problems in the marketplace and waxing lyrical on all the issues they're facing and everything that the company isn't doing for them. While they may have good intentions, they actually have a detrimental impact on the *Cs* (and other categories for that matter) around them.

Developing the “Cs”

The *Cs* (usually newer team members) need a programme to help them develop. This could be an onboarding/induction programme, regular mentoring, shadowing, sales or master sales courses, workbooks, word tracks and Playbooks, downloadable videos or podcasts, or short Lunch & Learn courses. To keep the focus on learning, you can even run these during sales meetings, in the hope that your *Cs* will soon become *As*.

Dealing with the “Ds”

And what about the *Ds*? You may have your own thoughts about them. People often suggest that they need to be dismissed. Whether that's fair will depend on why they're in the *D* box to begin with. Is it because they're simply not a good fit for the organisation, or could it be that the company is not, in fact, providing the right tools, processes and systems to bring them on board and then help them develop and excel? I'll let you decide.

In a *B*-led environment, *Cs* can develop their skills and become an *A*, bypassing the *B*. However, if they don't pick it up quickly, they might eventually become a *D*.

The skill will matrix in practice

No doubt, as you've read this, you've thought about members of your own team who fit into each category. Why not take it one step further and formally consider each individual in terms of this matrix? Then, you can work with them to develop the right next step.

You can even share this with your colleagues in other departments, as it applies to all teams, not just those in sales.

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