

Topgrading: Are You An 'A' Player?

by ANN GOLDEN EGLÉ

A players are vital to the success of any organization. They are essential members of the executive team or are climbing the ladder quickly. Smart leaders keep their eye out for these up-and-comers and promote them rapidly.

The average company today hires only 25 percent 'A' players, promotes only 25 percent 'A' players and has only 25-40 percent 'A' players in management. (Source: *Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win By Hiring, Coaching And Keeping The Best People*, by Bradford D. Smart, Ph. D.)

Perhaps it's not entirely the economy to blame for these companies' lower revenues when putting 'A' players in key roles produces greater results.

The concept of 'Topgrading' is to fill every position in your company, from the CEO through the ranks, with an 'A' player. Appropriate compensation and support is mandatory to recruit and maintain these sought-after contributors to your success.

Allowing positions to remain filled with 'B' or 'C' players to save the cost of turnover or higher salaries is settling for mediocrity.

It's important to note that 'B' players can become 'A' players with high level mentoring and coaching.

What is an 'A' player? He or she is among the top 5-10 percent of those available for the specific position in your industry and location.

What percentage of 'A' players do you currently have on your team? Consider these criteria:

- **Vision:** creates and communicates a strategically sound vision
- **Intelligence:** performs complex tasks and analysis; a quick study
- **Passion:** driven to succeed; tenacious; extremely high energy level
- **Track Record:** constantly exceeds employee, customer, shareholder expectations
- **Resourcefulness:** possesses an impressive ability to find ways over, under, around and through barriers
- **Customer Focus:** extremely adaptive to stated and unstated customer needs
- **Leadership:** initiates needed change; highly adaptive and able to inspire the organization to change
- **Team Building:** creates collaborative, results-driven teams; energizes others

• **Oral/Written Communication Skills:** excellent

• **Integrity:** ironclad

If you are a business owner or leader, an afternoon analyzing each member of your staff with the above standards will be well spent. You might find that some individuals are in the wrong position or that while their skills are strong in certain areas, they need to be enhanced in others to be at the top of their game.

If you are an employee who doesn't understand why you're not climbing the ladder faster, do your own inventory. Rank yourself with the above criteria.

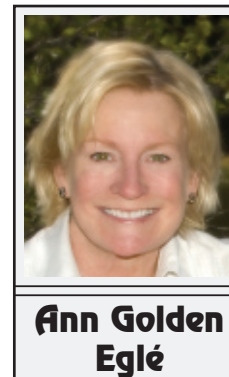
Are you an 'A' player? If so, let people know. Select your most impressive skill and demonstrate it. Ask for a new project where you can excel. Show your leadership in suggesting a project that will benefit the company, and then lead it to success. Be the creative, resourceful, optimistic voice in the face of negativity.

If you are currently a 'B' or 'C' player, the game's not over. Go to work on the skills you need to enhance in order to become more visible to your superiors.

For example, if you're not seen as a collaborative team member, add more positive comments or suggestions in meetings; ask more insightful questions; support associates publicly and privately; suggest win/win projects you can work on together.

Life is too short to settle for mediocrity. The economy is too challenging to have anyone but the very best represent you and your company. Outside help is always available. All you have to do is ask.

Ann Golden Eglé, Master Certified Coach & President of Golden Visions & Associates (GV&A), Coaching for Executive & Leadership Success, est. 1998; can be reached at www.gvasuccess.com or 541-385-8887. Subscribe to Ann's weekly 'Success Thoughts' e-zine on her website.



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