

# Why networking is vital to future proof your career

By Kara Atkinson



I believe in the idea of a meritocracy, where top-performers are handsomely rewarded, low performers quickly exited and new blood is sought out. Any organisation can change into a culture of high-performance given enough time and organisational will to let the wrong people go.

Top-performers are always in demand, they are contacted with other employment opportunities on average 4.3 times per year (Qualtrics). The key question is - how do you keep your High Performers?

## Be the steward of a rockstar culture

High performers want to work for high performing leaders. One of the earliest lessons I learned in the headhunting game, was that people don't work for jobs. People work for people. People don't quit their jobs. They quit their leaders. B and C players don't mind working for other B and C players. In fact, they prefer it, because it allows them to fly under the radar.

High performers are a different breed. They are thoroughbreds and working for B or C-player managers are anathema to them. They're going to get frustrated and lose their inspiration for their work. They're going to feel held back, and when high performers built for success are held back, they leave. This is why exiting weak managers should be a new executive's mission #1

when taking over the reins of an organisation...

High performers will keep you honest. If you want your team to be high performing, you better bring your A-game, and be constantly improving. High performers will keep you accountable and will call you out on your bullsh\*t. They will make you a better leader over time but you need the stomach for honesty.

Hire those that are so good, it's almost intimidating. High performers will force you out of your comfort zone and stretch your leadership capacity.

## Compensate aggressively

While money may not be the number one thing keeping a high performer on your team (because let's face it, there will always be someone willing to pay more), it is certainly a high priority. The problem I see with many rem structures is that when performance is not directly tied to revenue, companies don't offer enough variable compensation to truly motivate top-performers.

If we know that top-performers will leave an organisation for a 15-25% increase in annual salary, then why are most organisations insistent on giving 3-5% annual salary increases? Instead of giving everyone a paltry increase that will satisfy no one, give your high performers the 15-25% increase; funded by not giving increases to the low and middle-of-the-road performers.



Fair compensation, tied to performance, shows high performers that you believe in and value them, and keeps them from being lured into "the grass is always greener" mentality that so many workers have in today's economic boom.

## Provide challenge and a career path

High performers have an innate need for self-actualisation. Even if they're highly compensated, if you don't provide a career path, they will have a wandering eye. High performers get bored easily, and while average and low performers are more interested in long-term stability, true top-performers find monotony, punctuated by an occasional Hawaiian shirt Friday to be a fate worse than death.

High performers want to blow past the basic goals, and to be handsomely rewarded for it, and have the opportunity to be challenged more. Along with challenge comes a clear career path. They want new job titles, new skills and new responsibilities. A 2018 study by the Australian Government said the number one reason people leave their jobs is because of lack of career growth.

With the rise of the internet, and specifically social media, we have a world where the divide between the best and the rest has never been more profound. We know who the best are, and good headhunters can easily find them.

Conversely, these high performers have more open access to salaries, market worth and employer reviews than ever before. They know what you're paying and with unemployment at historic lows, with an economy that's running on all cylinders, competition for talent has never been higher; it will keep increasing over the next 12 years as 40% of the current workforce retires.

Right now, the good headhunters are:

- Crafting client's EVPs to make them no-brainers; mapping out every top-performer in your city
- Sourcing contact info (social media handles, phone numbers, work and personal emails, addresses)
- And developing a plan of attack to get that EVP out to every Rockstar through social media, email, phone calls, texts, direct mail, even smoke signals if need be.

Headhunters have their sights set on your high performers. Don't give them a reason to leave. When they call, you want your high performer to say, "Thanks but no thanks, I've got too good of a thing going on here to give it up."

### About the author

Kara Atkinson is Founder and CEO of The Sales Recruiter, a 12 year old recruitment organisation specialising in all levels of sales roles.

After seeing a gap in the market, Kara founded a second company SPARC | The Sales Leader Network, the only network in Australia for Sales Leaders.

Kara is fuelled by the opportunity to help people build and transform themselves through their career.

To find out more visit  
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