

The Starfish Story ... An Organization perspective

(Original Starfish Story by: Loren Easley)

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked "What are you doing?" The youth replied "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die". "Son" the man said "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? How can you possibly make a difference?" After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said "I made a difference for that one."

In this post, I wish to draw a parallel between the above story and the role that organization leaders and HR play to nurture and enhance the performance and potential of new employees in an organization. *After all, if we have selected a good candidate, we must make sure that he/she becomes a top talent in the organization.*

However, it's a wonder that even after applying very stringent hiring criteria to recruit the best talent, we find the new employees differentiating themselves, within a couple of years, into 3 distinct categories – Top Talents, Mediocre and Laggards. So, assuming that the interview and selection criteria were robust and equivalent for all the selected candidates, what's the reason for this differentiation?

If one spends a few moments reflecting on this issue, it becomes evident that the Top talents adapted to the new organization culture and environment faster than the others and with much less 'hand holding' and support. It's probably their innate ability to adapt to change and manage their environments better. ***Do most hiring processes check this? Probably not! Can this be checked? Sure, it can be! HR can facilitate this testing process through a battery of psychometric tests! Is it expensive? Not really!***

Coming back to the 'mediocres and laggards', HR and organization leaders can facilitate the adaptation process through various interventions and initiatives so that like in the Starfish story, they "make can make a difference". I conjecture that even if they make a difference to a few and turn them into top talents, it value adds tremendously to the organization.

The question I leave you with is that are you aware of the ways people in your organization are "making a difference" to new employees and setting them up for success? What initiatives are in place for that?

Your Comments please?