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## Are the stars still there?

Although spotty, I have memories of a couple of childhood trips with my mother to a conference center in Wisconsin. Most prominent among my memories is the taste of the best ice cream I'd ever eaten in my life. (And, trust me. Even then, I was quite the ice cream connoisseur.)

I also remember stars...tons of them. They seemed to appear from nowhere on those summer nights and just twinkle and dance on a velvety black backdrop. Wow, it was beautiful!

So, you can imagine my confusion when I returned home to New Jersey after these mid-West adventures.

"Are the stars still there?"

It took some convincing to help me understand that the same stars were in the New Jersey sky that we'd seen in Wisconsin. The difference was that the lights and the pollution and even the clouds concealed them. They were still there; they were still shining; they were just hidden.

Every workplace has stars too. Sometimes they shine brightly and appear plentiful. Sometimes they are obscured by one thing or another. And, unlike celestial stars, sometimes human stars do vanish because the environment isn't right.

In this month's edition of **EA Insights**, we tackle the issue of stars...the ones in the workplace, that is.

Read on. We've got some tips for how to keep them in place and how to keep them shining brightly!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

## Quotes

*"[She] has been a terrific partner. I've gotten to know her well of late, [and] I can only see her strengthening her relationship with us[.] I counsel with [her]. She's constantly helping me search out ideas."*

~James Adamson

*"It's always good to talk to someone who knows what you're going through."*

~Anne Brown

*"His presence ... is just amazing. He's well prepared. He's intelligent. He knows what he wants to do out there. I just think he's going to be a star[.]"*

~Gary Carter

*"You want to keep it fresh and you hopefully can keep doing new stuff that's going to continue to stimulate and keep people interested."*

~Joel Coen

*"People have really rallied[.] It seems like, when you invest in your employees, they really appreciate it."*

~Mark Gibson

*"There is a difference between a manager and a leader. Anyone can be a manager and tell others what to do; there is no investment and no reward. It takes a unique person, however, to be a leader. Only a true leader can invest into a person and reap the rewards of their investment at later time."*

~Travis Hedrick



## T-I-P-S to Keep Your Team's Stars Shining

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Ask supervisors about how they divvy up time with staff members, and many will report that the lion's share of the effort flows to those who are struggling. Unfortunately, much of the time that's devoted to thinking about, and working with, staff members regarding performance is focused on overcoming problems.

*But, what about the stars?*

On any team, there are some who shine. On any team, there are some who produce...consistently.

However, on many teams, these are the very folks who get lost. Though stars, they are unrecognized. They're often the neglected ones when it comes to supervisor time, energy, and input. And, often, as a result of being overlooked time and again,

performance or attitude may suffer. In the alternative, a promising tenure may end prematurely, as the star departs for new frontiers.

What can be done not only to keep stars but also to keep them shining? Here are four **tips** for supervisors.

### **Talk with them.**

Feedback, input, interaction...these are just as important for your stars as they are for struggling members of the team. Stars, especially, want communication -- open, honest, and frequent. They want to hear what you're thinking, know why the business is moving in a certain direction, and understand how their work fits in. They want to know that you recognize and appreciate their efforts. They want to debrief with you about what they've just accomplished -- what went well and how to do other things differently, for even greater results, in the future.

Stars are hungry for interaction, for creative thinking, for validation, and for camaraderie. If you starve them, they won't shine as brightly or they will find another source for the feeding they need. So, develop an ongoing practice of talking with these high-performing staff members.

### **Invest in them.**

Investments aren't only appropriate for correcting problems or filling gaps. Investments also are essential for sparking continued development and acknowledging accomplishments.

Stars need to know that, just as they invest in you and your work, you are willing to invest in them. That investment may take many shapes -- offering time and/or resources for that star to learn a new skill, engaging a coach so the person can continue to grow professionally, granting a promotion, etc. Whatever its form, show your star that his or her consistent excellence is seen and appreciated. Do this not just through your words but also through your willingness to pour back into him or her.

### **Plan with them.**

There's a tendency, when you find a star, to want to hold on for dear life. Yet, trying to tie a string on a star is a big mistake. When you discover a star, you've got to fuel him or her to do great work while with you, but you also must become a partner with that person in planning for the future.

So, learn your star's aspirations. Use your knowledge of your field or industry to help the person clarify or expand his or her planning. Your star's desire may be to shine brighter and brighter right where you are. On the other hand, your star may want to use your work as a critical milestone on a path to something else. Don't bury your head in the sand or hold on too tightly. You'll find that becoming a partner in the planning -- supporting the person to make the most of today and to prepare for tomorrow -- yields a happier, more devoted star.

### **Stimulate them.**

Stars crave interest. Stars get bored with the mundane.

If you want your star to shine, offer stimulating experiences. (And, these experiences become even more meaningful if they align with your star's plans for the future.) So, assign your star a unique business challenge to resolve. Delegate a project. Let the person lead a team or committee. Actions of this nature communicate your trust, your appreciation, and your desire to see the person grow and have new opportunities.

Paying attention to your stars makes great business sense. Paying attention to your stars eases the pressure on you at the team level. Paying attention to your stars raises your stock as a supervisor.

So, what are you waiting for? If you've got stars, or fledgling stars, pay attention, and help them to shine!

Let us help you make an investment in yourself or in your stars, team, and/or company. Contact us today to explore how **Executive Advantage** can partner with you. [We're here to help you build your thriving business or career.](#)

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*"You have to know exactly what you want out of your career. If you want to be a star, you don't bother with other things."*

~Marilyn Horne

*"In every aspect of life, have a game plan, and then do your best to achieve it."*

~Alan Kulwicki

*"When it gets dark enough you can see the stars."*

~J. Lynes

*"We talk about everything. We give our opinions and theories of everything."*

~Nick Pisca

*"I learned a highly valuable lesson[.] You have to give your stars...the latitude to do extraordinary things."*

~Tom Renney

*"We both agreed that we have to talk about the present and the future now."*

~Gerhard Schroeder

*"I think it's a good idea. Anytime you get more than two people together to talk about any issue, you stimulate the minds and it brings forth ideas that otherwise would not have been thought of."*

~Bob Simpson

*"To be a star, you must shine your own light, follow your own path, and don't worry about the darkness, for that is where the stars shine brightest."*

~Unknown

## **About Executive Advantage**

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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