Create Your 9 Box

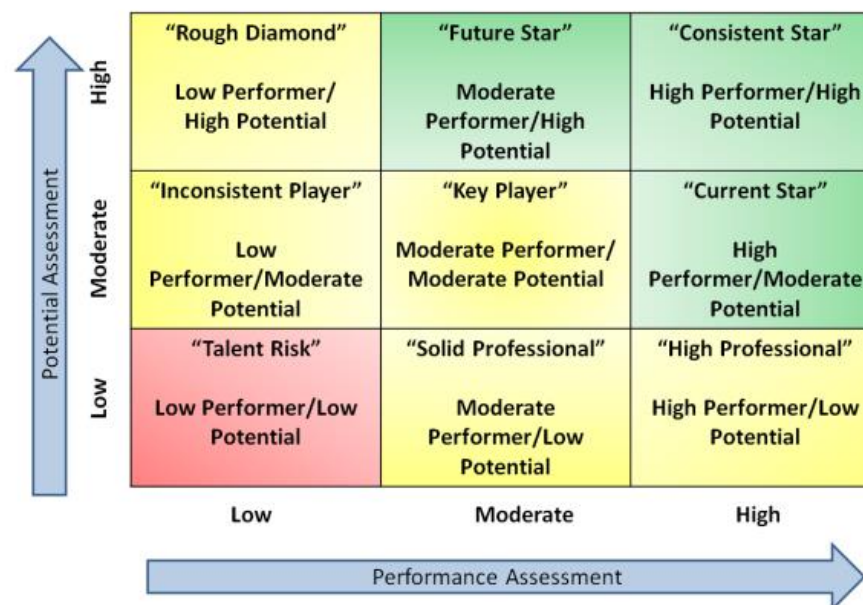## Toolkit for Creating a 9 Box Chart for Your Company

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The 9 Box Grid is a simple, yet powerful tool that can be used to support all aspects of the Succession Planning Process – from assessment and talent review through development and talent planning. The 9 Box Grid is a matrix; the 9 boxes in the matrix are defined as a result of the relationship between Performance and Potential when both attributes are defined at three levels (e.g., Low, Moderate, High).

The 9 Box becomes most powerful when the descriptions that define the 9 Boxes or 'categories of talent' are clearly articulated. Clearly defining both Performance and Potential at all three levels will provide a common language and set of standards by which talent can be discussed, assessments can be calibrated and succession planning decisions made. Talent review discussions will actually be focused on strengths and opportunities versus clarifying terminology are debating the meaning of labels.

The constructs of Performance and Potential can be defined in a variety of ways and most organizations seek to incorporate their organizational values and culture into the definitions. This Toolkit was designed to help you create a 9 Box Grid tailored to your organization in three easy steps:

1. **Define Performance Behaviors**

2. **Define Potential Behaviors**

3. **Build 9 Box Category Definitions by Plotting Behaviors**

Once your 9 Box Grid is created, you have set the stage for a successful Talent Assessment and Talent Review process. Build support for the definitions by soliciting feedback from leadership stakeholders in advance and you ensure productive and comprehensive talent review discussions.

Step 1: Define Performance Behaviors

While a leader's most recent performance evaluation should be included in an assessment of performance, it should not be the only factor that is considered. One performance review is unlikely to provide a "complete picture" of leader performance. Considering an individual's record of performance over time, reviewing how they behave while learning new responsibilities, or how they performed in multiple roles will shed light on how the individual will perform in the future.

Tool 1: Sample Behaviors to Define Performance on page 3 provides you with a list of performance factors, defined at three performance levels (Low, Moderate and High), to consider including in your definition of Performance for the purpose of Succession Planning.

- Upon review of these sample behaviors, you may decide that behaviors *a* and *d* fit your organization's culture the best. In that case, you can select those behaviors and transfer them to your 9 Box Grid in Step 3.
- If you decide that something is missing, craft your own behaviors and insert them into row f in the table of Tool 1. You will transfer those behaviors to your 9 Box Grid in Step 3.

Step 2: Define Potential Behaviors

The construct of Potential is often poorly defined and can be the source of disagreement among organizational leaders in the review of talent. Potential can be defined as an individual's ability and willingness to learn from experience and successfully apply the knowledge and skills gained from experience to new, higher level situations. Potential is often confused with Readiness. Readiness should be defined as the degree to which an individual's skills, competencies, experiences, knowledge and motivation meet the requirements for a specific job or group of jobs. As such, an individual with a high level of potential can be more 'ready' for some jobs than others. The discussion regarding the Readiness of an individual for a specific position is distinct from the discussion of Potential.

Tool 2: Sample Behaviors to Define Potential on page 4 provides you with a list of potential factors, defined at three performance levels (Low, Moderate and High), to consider including in your definition of Potential for the purpose of succession planning.

- Upon review of these behaviors, you may decide that behaviors *a* and *d* fit your organization's culture the best. In that case, you can select those behaviors and transfer them to your 9 Box Grid in Step 3.
- If you decide that something is missing, craft your own behaviors and insert them into row g in the table of Tool 2. You will transfer those behaviors to your 9 Box Grid in Step 3.

Tool 1: Sample Behaviors to Define Performance

Low	Moderate	High
a. Delivers a low to moderate level of performance and results in current role.	a. Delivers a moderate level of performance and results in a variety of settings and circumstances.	a. Delivers consistently strong performance and outstanding results in a wide variety of challenging settings and circumstances.
b. Performance has remained consistently low or has declined over time.	b. Has maintained consistently moderate performance over time.	b. Performance has remained consistently high or continuously improved over time.
c. Struggles to consistently achieve goals and/or meet performance expectations for his/her current position.	c. Occasionally exceeds goals and/or performance expectations for his/her current position.	c. Often exceeds goals and/or performance expectations for his/her current position.
d. Over-relies on rules and procedures; fails to identify or implement creative solutions when necessary.	d. Achieves results by using proven methods or practices; occasionally identifies and implements creative solutions.	d. Consistently uses creativity and innovation in solving problems and implementing solutions.
e. Viewed by others as underperforming; cannot be relied upon to achieve results.	e. Others view this individual as a solid performer.	e. Others view this individual as a role model for high performance and seek out their guidance and assistance.
f. INSERT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR	f. INSERT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR	f. INSERT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR

Tool 2: Sample Behaviors to Define Potential

Low	Moderate	High
a. Does not consistently demonstrate organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are not always in the best interest of the company.	a. Acts in accordance with organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are in the best interest of the company.	a. Consistently demonstrates organizational values; always operates in the best interest of the company.
b. Motivated to do what is needed in current job; exhibits little/no interest in taking on greater responsibilities.	b. Is motivated to succeed; accepts new challenges and responsibilities when assigned.	b. Drives to succeed; actively pursues in creased opportunities to influence decisions and inspire others.
c. Fails to consistently collaborate with or earn the trust of others across the organization.	c. Has earned the trust of others; effectively collaborates to achieve results.	c. Demonstrates the ability to earn the trust of others in all levels of the company; effectively operates at the highest levels.
d. Keeps current skills up-to-date, but demonstrates little effort to build new skills or apply lessons learned to increase performance.	d. Learns and applies new skills when the job calls for it; applies lessons learned to enhance success.	d. Learns and adapts quickly; applies skills and lessons learned to challenging situations.
e. Demonstrates critical and strategic thinking, and leadership skills that are acceptable or below current organizational level.	e. Demonstrates critical and strategic thinking, and leadership skills that are expected for current organizational level.	e. Demonstrates critical and strategic thinking, and leadership skills that are expected at the next organizational level.
f. Fails to consistently demonstrate emotional intelligence (self awareness, self management, social awareness, and social skills) to achieve results.	f. Effectively applies emotional intelligence (self awareness, self management, social awareness, and social skills) to achieve results.	f. Role models and coaches others to apply emotional intelligence (self awareness, self management, social awareness, and social skills) to achieve results.
g. INSERT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR	g. INSERT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR	g. INSERT YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR

Step 3: Build 9 Box Category Definitions by Plotting Behaviors

Once you have selected the behaviors that define both Performance and Potential, you can build your 9 Box category definitions by plotting those behaviors in the appropriate boxes in the matrix. **Tool 3: Sample 9 Box Category Definitions** on page 7 illustrates an example of how you can create your own 9 Box using the behaviors you selected. In this example, we selected behaviors *a* and *d* for performance and behaviors *a* and *d* for potential. The combined definitions of Performance and Potential create clearly articulated definitions of each of the 9 Box categories.

Using the 9 Box in Talent Assessment

Armed with your new 9 Box Grid, you are ready to enhance the accuracy of the Talent Assessment process. During the Talent Assessment phase of the Succession Planning process, organizations typically ask employees to provide important biographical information and ask managers to evaluate the overall performance, potential and retention risk of their team members. Provided with clear definitions of Performance and Potential, managers will be better able to evaluate their employees on these key factors.

Succession Planning software can make the Talent Assessment process easier by offering managers the ability to reference historical performance data and other important talent information while making their ratings. *viaPeople's Succession Planning Solution* provides organizations with Talent Assessment templates that can be easily configured to meet your organizations needs. Assess performance, leadership potential, and retention risk using simple assessment tools developed by Industrial Organizational Psychologists. The behaviorally defined rating scales for Performance and Potential can be presented to managers during the evaluation process. Once the ratings of Performance and Potential are made, an online system will present the placement of individuals in the 9 Box Grid. Gone are the days of the big white binder...everything that leaders need to make accurate evaluations is in one place.
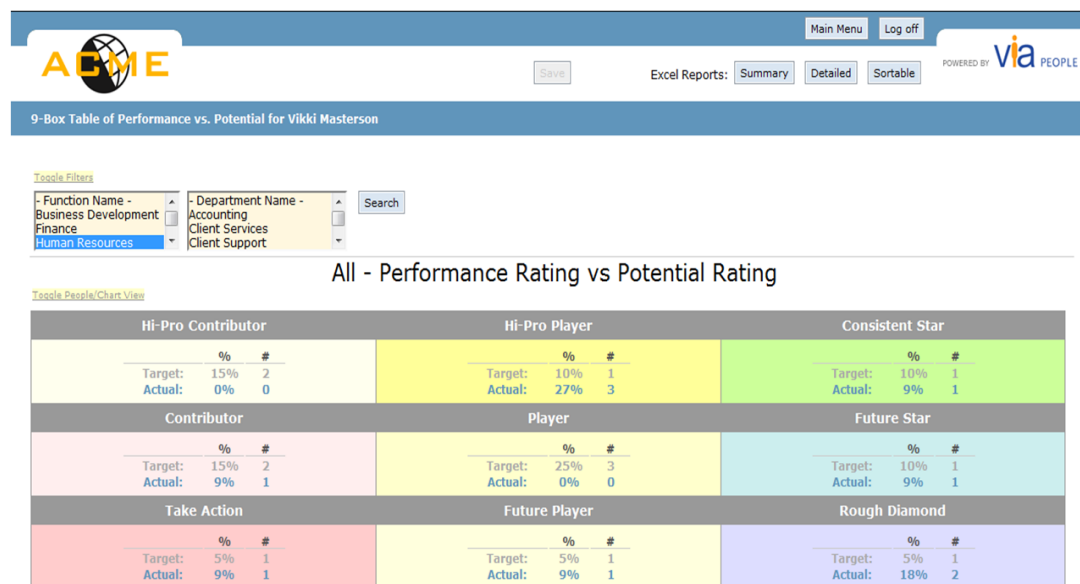
Using the 9 Box in Talent Review

Talent Review discussions are a critical part of the Succession Planning process and should include a meaningful discussion of the strengths and development needs of leaders and teams. Without a set of clearly defined criteria upon which to evaluate Performance and Potential you run the risk of becoming distracted and unable to build consensus around talent plans for the future.

Your 9 Box Grid, complete with behavioral definitions of each talent category, will serve as your guide in reviewing and discussing talent. *viaPeople's Succession Planning Solution* facilitates efficient and thorough Talent Reviews. Organizational leaders will have the insight they need to make succession decisions using viaPeople's Reporting Dashboard and dynamic 9 box talent grid. Leaders can use the definitions in your 9 Box Grid to support their decisions and can reference the matrix as they create talent development plans for the future. As a result, Talent Review discussions become valuable and productive versus stressful and antagonistic.

Tool 3: Sample 9 Box Category Definitions

Low Performer/High Potential	Moderate Performer/High Potential	High Performer/High Potential
• Delivers a low to moderate level of performance and results in current role. • Over-relies on rules and procedures; fails to identify or implement creative solutions when necessary. • Consistently demonstrates organizational values; always operates in the best interest of the company. • Learns and adapts quickly; applies skills and lessons learned to challenging situations.	• Delivers a moderate level of performance and results in a variety of settings and circumstances. • Achieves results by using proven methods or practices; occasionally identifies and implements creative solutions. • Consistently demonstrates organizational values; always operates in the best interest of the company. • Learns and adapts quickly; applies skills and lessons learned to challenging situations.	• Delivers consistently strong performance and outstanding results in a wide variety of challenging settings and circumstances. • Consistently uses creativity and innovation in solving problems and implementing solutions. • Consistently demonstrates organizational values; always operates in the best interest of the company. • Learns and adapts quickly; applies skills and lessons learned to challenging situations.
Low Performer/Moderate Potential	**Moderate Performer/Moderate Potential**	**High Performer/Moderate Potential**
• Delivers a low to moderate level of performance and results in assignments and responsibilities. • Over-relies on rules and procedures; fails to identify or implement creative solutions when necessary. • Acts in accordance with organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are in the best interest of the company. • Learns and applies new skills when the job calls for it; applies lessons learned to enhance success.	• Delivers a moderate level of performance and results in a variety of settings and circumstances. • Achieves results by using proven methods or practices; occasionally identifies and implements creative solutions. • Acts in accordance with organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are in the best interest of the company. • Learns and applies new skills when the job calls for it; applies lessons learned to enhance success.	• Delivers consistently strong performance and outstanding results in a wide variety of challenging settings and circumstances. • Consistently uses creativity and innovation in solving problems and implementing solutions. • Acts in accordance with organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are in the best interest of the company. • Learns and applies new skills when the job calls for it; applies lessons learned to enhance success.
Low Performer/Low Potential	**Moderate Performer/Low Potential**	**High Performer/Low Potential**
• Delivers a low to moderate level of performance and results in assignments and responsibilities. • Over-relies on rules and procedures; fails to identify or implement creative solutions when necessary. • Does not consistently demonstrate organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are not always in the best interest of the company. • Keeps current skills up-to-date, but demonstrates little effort to build new skills or apply lessons learned to increase performance.	• Delivers a moderate level of performance and results in a variety of settings and circumstances. • Achieves results by using proven methods or practices; occasionally identifies and implements creative solutions. • Does not consistently demonstrate organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are not always in the best interest of the company. • Keeps current skills up-to-date, but demonstrates little effort to build new skills or apply lessons learned to increase performance.	• Delivers consistently strong performance and outstanding results in a wide variety of challenging settings and circumstances. • Consistently uses creativity and innovation in solving problems and implementing solutions. • Does not consistently demonstrate organizational values; makes decisions/takes actions that are not always in the best interest of the company. • Keeps current skills up-to-date, but demonstrates little effort to build new skills or apply lessons learned to increase performance.

Succession Planning and 9 Box Resources

[Build the Talent Pipeline: A Four-Step Guide to Implementing Succession Planning](#)

[Succession Planning During Economic Downturns](#)

[Assessing Performance for Succession Planning Made Easy](#)

[The Succession Planning 9 Box: A Powerful Tool To Be Used Wisely](#)

[Potential Confusion in the Talent Review Process](#)

[Development at the Top – Use the 9 Box to Develop Talent in Succession Planning](#)

[Developing Future Promise – Use the 9 Box to Develop Talent in Succession Planning](#)

[Limited Potential Does Not Limit Options – Use the 9 Box to Develop Talent in Succession Planning](#)

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