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**Inc.**

**Drew Greenblatt** | Inc.com contributor

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## Got a Great Worker? Don't Promote Him

We learned the hard way: Not everyone is cut out for management.



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It's great when an employee does a superior job, isn't it? The person does good work, shows up on time and is pleasant to work with. Over time, it's natural that we would want to promote the person. The progression seems logical, obvious, a way to reward good work.

But more often than you might think, it doesn't work out. Many workers do not have the right stuff to be a supervisor.

The sad scenario plays out like this: We promote a person from the ranks to supervise people who just days earlier were that person's peers. At first, the employee is a bit uncomfortable in the new role. The new supervisor wants to stay friends with co-workers as if nothing has changed, but in a work sense, it undeniably has. The new supervisor seems tentative, uneasy about being a coach. Performance begins to slip. Relationships falter. Attempts are made to "course correct." Sooner or later, it becomes clear that the person does not fit the new job.

Tom Maze of Polaris Profiles, a workplace consultant we've relied on here in Baltimore, says if we had checked the performance profile that we conduct when hiring, we might have hesitated before making that promotion. Our normative assessment evaluates thinking style, occupational interests, and

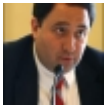
behavioral characteristics. Employers often use such assessments during hiring, but they are informative in the promotion process, too, and can prevent mistakes.

When not handled carefully, the saga worsens. Management moves the person back to the line. He has difficulty re-integrating. He decides he doesn't like working at the place anymore. He quits. It's a double whammy for the employer, who still needs a supervisor, and also just lost a valuable, productive, proven employee. (In one case for us, it didn't end too badly: The person who didn't take to being a supervisor was willing to return to being an operator with no adverse effects.)

A successful supervisor must be an effective communicator, independent and decisive, skilled in prioritizing and monitoring, and engaging. The noted management theorist William Edwards Deming said that if an employee-turned-supervisor doesn't work out, the person was miscast by management for the role in the first place.

The skills that make someone a good worker and that make someone a good supervisor aren't the same. Line workers produce products; supervisors produce products through people. Big difference.

<http://www.inc.com/drew-greenblatt/got-a-great-worker-dont-promote-him.html>



***Drew Greenblatt** is the president of **Marlin Steel**, a U.S.-based manufacturer of wire baskets and sheet-metal fabrications. Marlin has grown 25% over the past three years and has a record of 1,422 days without a safety problem.*

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**Marlin Steel** 2640 Merchant Drive, Baltimore, MD, USA 21230-3307

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