

# **The Lucky 13**

## **13 Strategies for Becoming & Being a Great Leader**

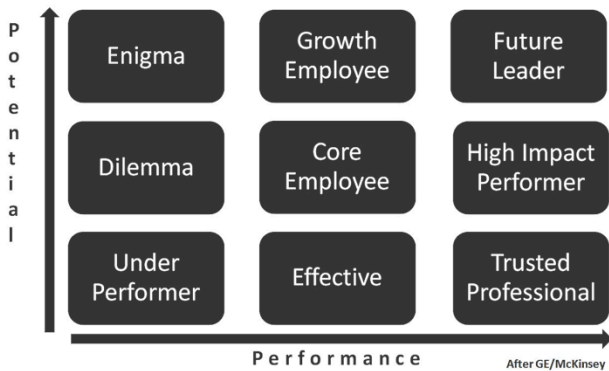
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### Chapter 2

#### **Nine-Box Jumping and The Lucky 13**

When I started working in corporate environments, I began hearing about "the nine-box." I didn't know its meaning then, but it popped up in many conversations about individuals and their performance.

## The 9 Box Talent Model



I soon understood that the nine-box grid represented a tool, standard in many corporate environments, for succession planning and staff evaluations. It categorized their strengths to determine how a given employee's talents could best scale in the environment, either in the present setting or in a potential corporate strategy. A grid of nine boxes intersects

the critical aspects of potential and performance.

The Lucky 13 concept provides a "box-jumping strategy" designed to assist others in advancing in leadership levels.

Based on my experience and success in the business world, I developed and applied the Lucky 13 approach to help navigate my long road to success. Using honesty, openness, and conscious determination, I absorbed as much as possible and used that information to fuel my personal growth and those around me.

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Before defining the Lucky 13, let's first break down the nine-box system.

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The nine box moves from right to left, top to bottom. The one box is the upper right box.

According to the nine-box, you are a rockstar if you occupy the number one box, performing at your best and reaching the apex of your potential in your current role. People who achieve box-one status can start thinking about new challenges within the organizational structure, as well as personally. These are the people at the top of their game who can be perfectly comfortable moving onto something new while being fully confident that they've

mentored those below them to fill the void when they leave.

People falling into the second box are *future* rock stars.

They may have skills or leadership aspects to master on the performance side and are approaching their highest potential within the organizational strategy. Box-two people have shown a determination to succeed, along with a desire to learn and to be coached/mentored. They're primed to move up to box one when the opportunities are presented.

Third-box people can be best described as diamonds in the rough. They have a virtually

unlimited upside but do not consistently perform at the highest level for various personal and professional reasons. For example, some possess a skill set that doesn't quite fit their current position; or perhaps they recently transitioned into a new, unfamiliar role and haven't had ample opportunity to showcase their performance and leadership skills. Nevertheless, third-box dwellers are well-advised to remain receptive to coaching and mentoring from first and second-box people to jump to the next level.

I refer to those who've reached the fourth box as

"current stars." They are often efficient and reliable performers, yet it may not be easy to recognize the individual's potential beyond their current position. As a leader, it's critical to push fourth boxers to expand their potential and guide them toward moving up to a new box by all means available. In other words, a leader needs to stretch the development of people in this box, continually develop, continually challenge, and always push them to the limits of their potential.

The fifth box, or middle players, are solid on performance and potential. These

are key personnel because whether they rise or fall from their current position depends largely on leadership. Fifth boxers are well-placed and not bored or overstretched in their work. They can meet extremely high goals and generally deliver results in a practical business sense. Additionally, these types demonstrate, from time to time, all the core competencies of a potential leader while maintaining corporate values consistently. Those in the fifth box are among the highest priority since they offer the most potential for personal and professional growth and simultaneously high potential



for failure, which would ultimately be my failure. The only exception would be someone in a brand-new role and now back down in box five as well placed.

Sixth-box players are usually defined by inconsistency and low performance. These people display moderate potential but lower-than-ideal performance. Therefore, they require extensive coaching, mentoring, and a watchful eye. As a leader, dealing with a sixth-box employee means continuous observation and oversight in the workplace and laying out performance plans backed with plenty of positive reinforcement. By simply

communicating a sixth boxer's potential, you lay a nurturing foundation that will significantly improve their chances to jump to the next level. In short, extra time and effort go into people in this box, intending to allow them to mature into their roles.

I've seen many people fall into box seven. These staffers perform at a lights-out level yet do not want to move up in the organization. They do the job they're paid to, excel at, and are content with that alone. Many of the best in specific areas are seventh boxers. These are the experts who find contentment in achieving

expertise in one thing while showing little interest or potential in expanding that area. Their job often defines them; they feel good about that without needing more significant challenges. It's not bad to sit in box seven; you may know who you are and what you want. As a leader, you should know your employee's goals and align an action plan accordingly.

Box number eight people are often solid professionals. They are consistent contributors with limited potential. They, too, require extraordinary observation and motivational efforts, even knowing their lack of potential. The hope with

eighth boxers is that the light will suddenly click on one day via constant coaching and mentoring, leading them to the path of greater success. Someone occupying this space is similar to a baseball pitcher with a golden arm but no control and only one pitch to throw out hitters. If the pitcher wants to be great and allows coaches to teach new pitches and approaches, the possibility for greatness exists.

Finally, in the ninth box are those with short business life spans if they fail to advance rapidly. Ninth boxers routinely fail to meet performance goals and equally fail to demonstrate

much potential or personal motivation. These I consider talent risks, to put it bluntly. As a leader, the best course of action - perhaps the only course - is to focus on and nurture performance rather than potential. Failing that, the only other option would be finding a more suitable role within the organization where the odds of success may be improved simply by virtue of change. In the baseball analogy, this would be a pitcher who may be able to get by with one pitch for a while, but if not, it may be better to cut him loose or trade him for a draft pick.

Fully understanding the nine-box theory and which box you occupy can be critical in determining your career path. This is where the Lucky 13 strategy comes into play. It provides an objective insight to identify your current box and the methods and attitudes for "jumping" to higher, more success-driven boxes. I honestly believe the Lucky 13 - or 13 Core Competencies - is by far the most effective way to precisely calculate box placement and guide people to advance forward in the box system.

The Lucky 13 allows individuals seeking leadership

roles to be accountable for their actions and career path. I have diligently practiced the Lucky 13 for more than three decades and have discovered a legitimate path to success, both professionally and personally. And that is precisely why I'm offering my experiences as a disciple of the Lucky 13 to those interested.

At the grocery store one night with my wife, we dropped a carton of milk, spilling it all over the tile floor. I asked my wife to continue shopping as I alerted the cashier of our mess. The cashier thanked me sincerely, noting that most people wouldn't have bothered

mentioning the spill, leaving it for someone else to deal with or possibly slip on. The point of this anecdote? I made a conscious choice early in my life to be accountable for my actions - even the accidental ones leading to nasty messes. I am far from perfect, but I will be accountable. How you do the little things is exactly how you will do the big things. Make no mistake; this is 100% true.

In the professional world, the Lucky 13 translates to a much higher meaning. With my philosophy, employees from top to bottom will enjoy a fully supportive environment steeped in openness, honesty, and



transparency. If leaders - supervisors, managers, top executives, and even owners - practice the competencies, employees will likely emulate the same behaviors and reach their highest potential. Just watch your productivity and company morale skyrocket, too!

In short, the Lucky 13 offers a proven integrity-based recipe for building leaders in business environments. But it must be done on purpose.