

## How To Move Employees From 'I Can't' To 'I Can'

When coaching for improvements in skills, every manager has faced an employee that responded with 'I'm not sure I can do that'. Uncertainty should be expected. We are asking the employee to do something new, and new will be different. Some employees will succeed quickly, others will struggle to improve. What influences the outcomes?

Some employees lack the requisite knowledge to feel confident in their abilities. Others simply lack experience. How employees respond to challenges will be influenced by many factors. One could be the manager's assessment of their abilities.

### Willingness And Ability

If you have an employee with a high willingness to learn and develop, the only missing component might be the appropriate training. If the employee has the appropriate knowledge but shows no desire to utilize their expertise, the missing component might be engagement.

The following graphic separates employee development into two parts; willingness and ability. Some employees will have abilities that set them up for success with the responsibilities you have given them. If they happen to also possess a strong willingness to succeed at their job, you have hired a great candidate. These employees are placed in the green box of high ability and high desire. Managers should strive to develop 'green box' employees.



If you hire an employee with a strong desire to achieve results, but their current skills and knowledgebase will make it difficult to meet your performance expectations, the answer could be as simple as providing appropriate training. A willing employee that acquires the skills to achieve success is likely to become a green box performer. The manager's role is to evaluate the employees willingness and ability, and support growth in the related area.

### Foundational Skills

The context for ability is set by the skills an employee possesses when they are hired or develop during their employment with your organization. If ability is low, spend your time developing skills through education and training.

### Mindset Matters

The other dimension, willingness, comes from an employee's desire to achieve or produce an outcome.

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This is often reflected in an employee's positive attitude, active participation in projects, support of team activities, voluntary community involvement, and proactive interactions with customers and co-workers. While the assessment of ability is usually academic, evaluating willingness is a much softer, human-oriented, skill.

A manager can tell you if they have employees with high or low willingness, but determining how to modify willingness will prove to be a significant challenge.

## Evaluate Willingness

Every employee's willingness can be influenced by something, but it is likely to vary from one employee to the next. Perhaps the best way to understand those differences is to make sure you are having honest, open, and directed conversations with every employee. The kind of conversations that lead to understanding. Willingness and motivation are not the same thing. Work to understand willingness.

## Green Box Employees

It is not uncommon for managers to spend very little time with their green box employees. Why should they? The green box employees have high ability and high willingness. Many are self-motivated achievers. This is exactly why managers should spend most of their time with green box employees. Success is greater when you spend time with your top performers.

## Red Box Employees

Unfortunately, many managers spend a significant amount of their time working to move a red box employee (low willingness, low ability) to a slightly higher level of either ability or willingness. Exactly what they shouldn't be doing. Hire slow,

fire fast is an old adage that has application here. Red box employees will disrupt a team and exhaust their manager. You will improve your situation by simply eliminating the non-performer.

As you invest your time in staff development in 2022, develop some strategies to spend time challenging your green box employees. Identify the training that would benefit your orange box employees and deepen your understanding of the blue box employees.

No matter which box applies to each of your employees today, you can help them become green box employees. At minimum, help each one improve their position in the matrix.

## Start With Your Performance

Challenge yourself to learn something new every day! Make sure you are in the green box and then extend that practice to every employee you manage.

Encourage your employees to learn. Encourage them to ask for assistance. Coach them as they try new skills and learn new procedures. And, trust them as they employ their new knowledgebase. They won't get everything exactly right, but if they know you have their back, their willingness to learn will remain high.

Providing development activities shows your employees that you value them and their contributions. It shows them you are invested in their success. Employees and managers who are eager to learn, bring tremendous value to their organizations. They will be the ones that suggest product changes, innovations in procedures, and improvements in customer experiences.

## Invest In Training

Make room in 2022 for basic and advanced skills training, refresher courses, workshops, new staff on-boarding, and manager training. Education benefits every employee.

Actively support your staff and see how the teamwork, communication and productivity improve. You will be encouraged by the results.

