

# 9 box matrix - A tool for Business Managers

The 9-box matrix is an effective tool for workforce planning and development in organisations. This tool is designed for HR professionals and senior management teams to evaluate workforce productivity and design strategies to optimise potential and improve performance. The 9-box matrix combines current and potential performance of employees using three distinct ratings; (Low, Medium, High) which translates nine potential combinations for talent.

The matrix is designed to achieve these objectives:

- Identify employees that require developmental support
- Assess the current capabilities of the workforce and pinpoint gaps
- Develop the workforce for current and future organisational needs
- Identify critical talent within the workforce

## Defining Performance & Potential

Measuring performance as against an individual's potential can be a bit tricky; performance would usually be a quantitative outcome while potential is mainly dependent on assumptions.

Performance of individuals need to be assessed over time to gain a better perspective to behaviours when equipped with new responsibilities or carrying out multiple roles, in other words, performance should not be measured using only the current situation as it would not give a broader view of the individual's capabilities.

Potential can be defined as the individual's willingness to learn from past and current experience and successfully apply the knowledge and skills gained from this experience to new, higher-level situations.

## 9-Box Grid

Potential Axis	High	Low performance /High Potential	Moderate performance /High potential	High performance /High potential
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Dependent on rules, procedures and displays a low level of creativity.</li> <li>» Delivers a low to moderate level of work output in a wide variety of circumstances.</li> <li>» Learns and adapts quickly to challenging situations.</li> <li>» Committed to the values of the organisation and operates at this level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Applies creativity in dealing with a variety of circumstances to achieve results</li> <li>» Learns and adapts quickly to challenging situations</li> <li>» Consistently operating in the best interest of the organisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Delivers outstanding level of work output in a variety of circumstances.</li> <li>» Applies creativity and innovation consistently to solve and implement solutions.</li> <li>» Consistently operating in the best interest of the organisation.</li> <li>» Consistently learns and adapts quickly to challenging situations.</li> </ul>



Potential Axis	Medium	Low performance /High Potential	Moderate performance /High potential	High performance /High potential
		» Highly dependent on rules, procedures and displays a low level of creativity.	» Delivers a moderate level of performance results in a variety of circumstances	» Consistently delivers a strong performance on a wide variety of circumstances
		» Delivers a low to moderate level of work output in a wide variety of circumstances.	» Occasionally implements creative results	» Applies creativity and innovation consistently to solve and implement solutions.
		» Not able to implement creative solutions as required	» Committed to the values of the organisation and operates at this level	» Committed to the values of the organization and operates at this level
		» Achieves success through the application of new skills.	» Applies new learnings and skills to achieve success.	» Applies new learnings and skills to achieve success.
		» Committed to the values of the organisation and operates at this level		
	Low	Low performance /High Potential	Moderate performance /High potential	High performance /High potential
		» Delivers a low to moderate level of work output in a wide variety of circumstances.	» Delivers a low to moderate level of work output in a wide variety of circumstances.	» Consistently delivers a strong performance on a wide variety of circumstances
		» Over dependence on set rules and procedures. Does not take initiatives.	» Uses proven methods to achieve results and implements creative solutions.	» Applies creativity and innovation consistently to solve and implement solutions.
		» Consistently take actions that are not in the best interest of the organization.	» Not consistently committed to the values of the organization.	» Not consistently committed to the values of the organization and operates at this level
» Finds it difficult to build new skills to improve performance.		» Finds it difficult to build new skills to improve performance.	» Acquires new skills but does not apply such skills to increase performance.	
	Low	Medium	High	
PERFORMANCE AXIS				



The 9-box tool is a visual representation of the organisation's talent.

The lower grid (extreme left) represents talent with low potential and performance while the middle (middle grid) defines employees that are at the moderate level performance and potential. The employee with both high performance and potential would be located on the extreme right of the upper grid.

This grid helps in grouping employees into those that are performing well at their current role and have the potential for greater responsibility and also for those that may not be well suited for the organization. To illustrate this, employees that are high performers but with low to medium potential show that they are meeting their job expectations at their current role, organizations are required to reward as well as develop their capabilities in order to be able to assume higher responsibilities.

Employees with high potential/low performance rate are not suited for the role assigned to them, supervisors and assigned leaders are to take discussions further to identify opportunities that are well suited for such employees. Low performance/low potential poses an unsuitable fit for an organization and actions are to be taken with regard to the exit process of such employees.

Employees rated with high performance/potential are ready to be promoted and be equipped with higher responsibilities.

Identifying where employees rank on the grid provides an opportunity for assessment and improvement in terms of learning and development by adopting different ways of closing the skill gaps. HR leaders and business managers are required to develop a good competency framework to address performance gaps and fill vacant roles that have been identified by the virtue of utilizing this tool.

Developing the competency framework requires some level of capabilities in this regard and your organization would need the support of trained consultants and professionals to provide strategic guidance. If you need to discuss how best to address the talent and skills gaps in your organization in order to achieve business objectives, please feel free to schedule a call with us at [hello@staffingandco.com](mailto:hello@staffingandco.com).