



p-TIPS

You don't have to be a star (Let's hear it for B players)

Organizations invest much time, energy, and money in recruiting and retaining star-quality employees (A players). This may lead to dangerous underestimation of the role of the supporting cast (B players). B players may not like calling attention to themselves, or seek a balance between work and family, or love their work more than their job title. While they may not bring in the most revenue, they bring depth and stability to organizations and are less likely to be involved in scandals or make critical mistakes. B players are especially important during times of transition because they tend just to get on with the work. In "Let's Hear It for the B Players" in the June 2003 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, T.J. DeLong and V. Vijayaraghavan give some advice on how to nurture and retain B players.

1) **Accept differences.** Since most managers are A players themselves, they may not sufficiently value B players with a different view of working life.

- 2) **Give the gift of time.** Solid performers often don't demand time with their managers, end up feeling alienated, and leave the organization.
- 3) **Give praise.** B players who are not promoted or given pay increases as frequently as A players should be recognized in other ways to make them feel more appreciated and motivated. A few words of praise in a meeting or a written note can work wonders.
- 4) **Offer choices.** Create a system for coaching and promoting B players with potential. "Sideways promotions" can be effective means to retain those who don't want to go the management route but have valuable experience and knowledge that could be applied in a variety of roles.