

Kelley study looks at how organizations can create and keep stellar performers

By Kat Carlton

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Employee performance doesn't follow a normal bell-curve distribution, and companies probably have more top-performing potential than previously thought. That's according to a recent article by Indiana University Kelley School of Business researchers Herman Aguinis and Kyle Bradley.

The pair recently published the article, "The Secret Sauce for Organizational Success: Managing and Producing Star Performers," in the journal *Organizational Dynamics*.

"Star performers produce more than other individuals, help increase the productivity of those around them and have an important impact on the performance of their organizations as a whole," they wrote.

Their conclusions follow a series of research studies conducted over the past five years with more than 600,000 scientists, entertainers,

politicians and athletes. The researchers found that many top organizations try to restrict people to certain performance measures.

"If an organization implements a performance evaluation system that forces a normal distribution when performance actually follows a power law distribution, several star performers will be rated as average," they said. "This could have demoralizing effects on the individual and result in loss of motivation, drops in performance or even turnover of some of the organization's most valuable human capital."

The pair recommend giving everyone the same opportunity to be a "star performer" by being transparent about behaviors and rewards. One example of this is Chi-



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pote's promotion process, which enables anyone to move up the ladder from making burritos to holding a senior management position. Also, they recommend sharing top performers with

different groups.

"Managers should leverage their star performers in team settings. This can be accomplished by allowing star performers to rotate in and out of teams, instead of keeping them locked down to one specific team," they wrote. "As stars rotate through teams, they will be able to have an impact on several other individuals."

Aguinis is the John F. Mee Chair of Management and professor of organizational behavior and human resources at Kelley, and Bradley is a Kelley doctoral candidate