



North, South, East, or West Which Employee is the Best?

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How many time have you heard yourself say; “Why can’t everyone be like _____
(fill in the blank)?

Not everyone on your team will be effortless to manage but some are more worth the effort than others. You need to develop a management style based on the needs of your team. What skills to they currently have, how do they like to be rewarded, what motivates them, where can you develop them? If you have more than one method for communication, training, and staff development, your team has the opportunity to excel.

But first you must evaluate who is on your team and if they can be developed to your level of performance expectation.

Think of the points of a compass, north, south, east, and west. Now let’s put attributes to those positions and develop a plan.

Northbound – the employee you love! This person is motivated, dedicated, focused on the goals of the practice and a self-started.

Westbound – the employee who you love working with but there is always a little something missing. This employee is also motivated and dedicated but can lose sight of the goals and sometimes needs a nudge in the right direction.

Eastbound – the employee who just can’t seem to consistently perform well. This person is not motivated but can get the job done, they are more dedicated to themselves than the practice and they are not focused.

Southbound – the employee who just isn’t working out. This person has no motivation or dedication and seems only focused on stirring up trouble, with patients and/or co-workers.

Who would you like to have on your team? Who do you have on your team? Create a list of all your staff and indicate which direction they are traveling on the compass. Now let's consider actions you can take with each individual team member.

Northbounders: These employees are hard to find and once we find them, we can neglect them because they are so effortless for a manager. This is a mistake! Refocus on your Northbounders and make them feel valued by the practice. Simple steps would be **words of affirmation**, tell them you notice their outstanding performance, and love having them on your team. This should be done at a minimum once a week, pay attention to their positive abilities and let them know. How about a simple **gift of appreciation**, a card to Starbucks, or some other small token of your appreciation? Another option would be to **invest in their growth and development**, sends them to training and education programs, give them the opportunity to accept a more challenging role. Patients love Northbounders!

Westbounders: These employees are a little easier to find and take a bit more effort for the manager but they are well worth the investment in time. Spend some one-on-one time with your Westbounder and develop a plan with them. They need to know you're paying attention and want them to succeed. **Give them clear direction, have goals with accountability, and reward their successes.** A Westbounder can head North if you manage their development well or they could head South if left unattended. Patients value Westbounders.

Eastbounders: There are more of these employees in the workforce than we'd like to believe. They take a lot of work and may not give you a return on your investment. If you currently have Eastbounders on your staff, give them the opportunity to excel by **setting very clear performance expectation levels and holding them accountable on a daily basis.** If they step up to your expectations, **acknowledge them**, if not, **terminate them.** An Eastbounder can perform well but only if they choose to. Try to screen out this performer during your interview process and terminate them early if they don't achieve. Patients will avoid an Eastbounder

Southbounder: These employees will damage your practice. They are not going to change, no matter how good their manager, they will do what they want to. If you have them on your team and choose to give them an opportunity to achieve, begin the process with a **serious discussion of performance expectation** and stay on top of them all day every day. Once they are clear that you will not accept their substandard performance level **they often resign or will be terminated.** Too often, we keep a Westbounder to the detriment of our practices. Patients will leave the practice because of Southbounders.

We all have employees that we love to work with and we have employees that try our last nerve. Why do you think that is? Is it us? Is it them? Yes it is! Who you have on your team and how you develop them will determine success or failure. The goal is to learn from your mistakes and screen for the best employee for your practice and patient needs.

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