

The scale can always be tipped

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Someone wrote in asking for advice on a tough promotion decision. They had to give a recommendation to promote one of two equally qualified and deserving people. It was tough to tip the scale one way or the other. Are you, as a supervisor or boss, facing the same kind of dilemma? If so, here are some things to consider:

The first thing you should do, though, is try to get both people promoted. Ask the powers to be to give you additional funding to accomplish this. Be convincing and persuasive. Show them how the company or organization will benefit by letting you promote both deserving employees. Whether that benefit is higher profits, increased revenue, enhanced capabilities, better results, improved systems, more effective communications, higher rates of efficiency, or any other increase in the value of something, figure out what it is and be prepared to fully explain and/or show it.

If additional funds aren't available to accommodate two promotions, then evaluate current programs, tasks, or services to see if there are any low-

priority or ineffective activities or functions that can be cut. If there are, get them cut and obtain permission to divert the cost savings into your personnel or human resources budget. This could then pave the way for you to promote both people.

If neither of these two options are approved, maybe you can award two promotions with smaller pay raises rather than one promotion with a larger pay raise if your organization isn't confined with pay/grade scales.

If your best efforts don't result in both employees being promoted, you could always select the employee with higher tenure. No one would question this rationale; however, don't initially lean that way. Higher tenure isn't always a good indicator of the better quality performers. Therefore, I recommend you conduct a fine-tooth assessment and comparison of both employees. Somewhere in that process you should be able to find a factor that can slightly tip the scale in favor of one of them--even if it means you're considering each employee's future potential.

When you exercise due diligence on decisions of this nature, you'll arrive at justified conclusions, reducing or

eliminating feelings of second guessing or guilt. In time, you'll know if the promotion is working out or not. If it's not, you can always make personnel changes/adjustments again if necessary.

On the same day of the actual promotion you should try, if feasible, to have a closed-door conversation with the non-selectee to discuss the painstaking process you went through in making your decision. Let them know how close it was and how much you appreciate their hard work, encouraging them to stay the course. Perhaps you could reward them with a small perk (in lieu of a promotion) such as extra time off (with pay), an exciting assignment that, if performed well, will be held in high regard during future promotion considerations, or maybe you can allow them to go on a company business trip with a participative role. (DO NOT make any promises to promote them next year! Things can change and you never want to paint yourself into a corner.)

So explore these options when making tough promotion decisions. Promoting the best and most deserving people is vital for the health and morale of your organization.

~ The End ~