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## NURTURING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS

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December 11, 2013

A focus on developing and managing high-performing teams might be a mistake if the goal is to improve the performance of the business as a whole, according to Hays, the global professional recruiting group.

In an edition of its [online journal](#) earlier this year, it argued that while top talent needs and thrives on nurture, many HR professionals now argue that nurturing the average band of workers would prove a more effective investment in the longer term.

It says that focusing on the top performers can be satisfying in terms of providing high-level and high-profile achievements, it can be a risky strategy overall. “Many mid-performance staff stay at that level not because they lack potential, but because those defined as the top maintain their own level by not providing information that might help others to follow in their footsteps,” says Hays.

Line managers can continue to perpetrate this fundamentally elitist structure “by creating a culture in which the top level are promoted, regardless of whether they are adding value in reality or keeping to the company’s value”, according to Hays.

When it comes to setting targets at different levels in the organisation, it suggests there are further minefields. Not only does “striving for the unachievable” become “disengaging”, it can “lead to extreme behaviour such as increased risk-taking”, says Hays. At the same time, those at the top “are likely to underperform, even on easy goals, if their only reward is likely to be setting harder goals.”

Barney Ely, director of Hays Human Resources, says: “How people behave within an organisation also plays an important role. On occasions, bad or damaging behaviour can be overlooked if the individual is high-performing. If all employees are genuinely regarded as talent, then staff will see that high performance really is something for everyone and not the preserve of the privileged few.”