



# Schachter Monthly

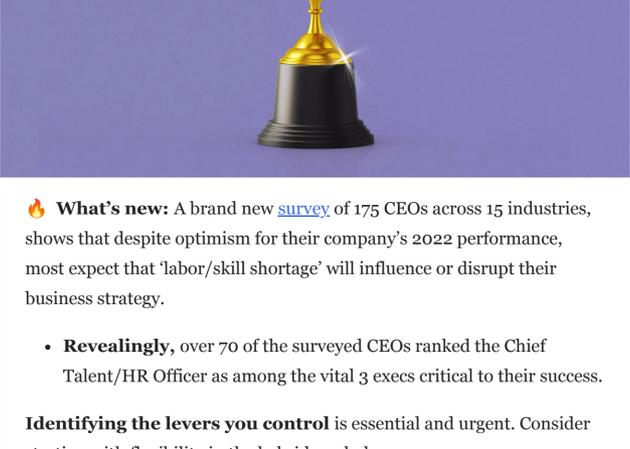
By Ephraim Schachter • Feb 1, 2022  
Smart Brevity™ count: 4 mins... 1078 words

👋 **Happy February.** Great to start the new month together!

- **What I know:** It's on you. Senior Business and HR Executives shoulder their organization's responsibilities and own its outcomes.
- **What I've found:** Execs appreciate help. My clients love straightforward insights and actionable tools & tips.

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## 1 big thing: Great Boss Practices will retain talent in 2022



🔥 **What's new:** A brand new [survey](#) of 175 CEOs across 15 industries, shows that despite optimism for their company's 2022 performance, most expect that 'labor/skill shortage' will influence or disrupt their business strategy.

- **Revealingly**, over 70 of the surveyed CEOs ranked the Chief Talent/HR Officer as among the vital 3 execs critical to their success.

**Identifying the levers you control** is essential and urgent. Consider starting with flexibility in the hybrid workplace.

- Future Forum [reports](#) that 72% of workers dissatisfied with current levels of work flexibility say they're likely to seek a new employer in 2022. Yikes!

⚠️ **Work flexibility isn't enough**, though. We've known for 50+ years, that structural responses are table stakes. They don't create job satisfaction. Rather, their *absence causes dissatisfaction*.

**What other levers** do CXOs control? How you lead and manage. Always.

⚡ **My POV:** Helping your leaders become great bosses will help preempt a talent defection crisis from disrupting your business strategy.

- Researchers have long disputed whether employees will depart simply over a bad boss. Usually not, in my 20+ years of close-up observation.

- **But, ask yourself:** When's the last time *you* left a great boss? It was for a better opportunity; not dissatisfaction with mild irritations.

💡 **What I propose:** Keep it simple. Message your managerial ranks — execs to front-line supervisors — that they are responsible. Rather than expensive training events, task each person with direct reports to answer the following:

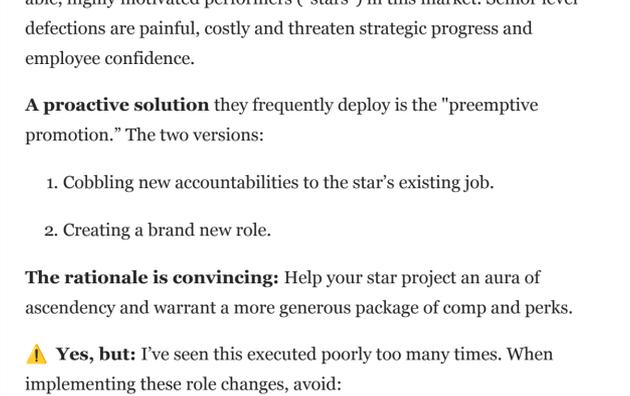
1. Think about two great bosses you've had. What did they do that was so special? (let's call them, Great Boss Practices, "GBPs")

2. What GBPs will you implement with your direct reports? How and by when?

**Build pride in** managerial demonstrations of GBPs. Document and celebrate successful examples.

👉 **Go deeper:** see [Herzberg](#) if you're in the mood for some classic motivation theory.

## 2. One way proactive CEOs sabotage their star performers



*While we're on the topic of retaining talent ...*

💡 **What they're saying:** My clients are finding it hard to retain highly able, highly motivated performers ("stars") in this market. Senior level defections are painful, costly and threaten strategic progress and employee confidence.

**A proactive solution** they frequently deploy is the "preemptive promotion." The two versions:

1. Cobbling new accountabilities to the star's existing job.
2. Creating a brand new role.

**The rationale is convincing:** Help your star project an aura of ascendancy and warrant a more generous package of comp and perks.

⚠️ **Yes, but:** I've seen this executed poorly too many times. When implementing these role changes, avoid:

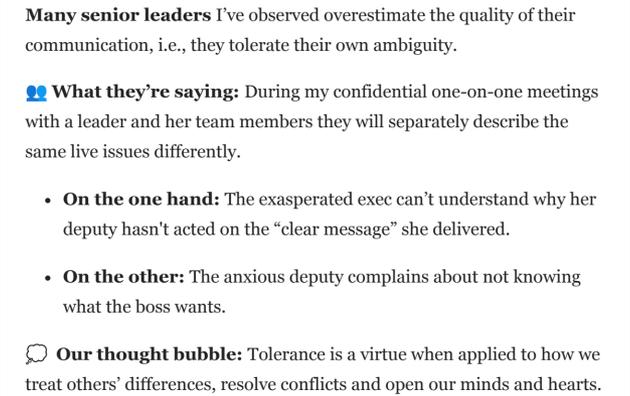
- Creating stakeholder confusion around expectations, boundary management, and accountability.
- Creating the optics of a clumsy gesture to support career aspirations instead of helping workflow and results.

🎯 **My POV:** Before you inadvertently set this trap for your stars, test the promotion against the following criteria:

1. There are *Clear Lines of Authority* and decision rights for all work;
2. The role is *Value Added* to the existing structure; and
3. The job is *Easily Describable* in a few sentences.

🔑 **The bottom line:** If your proposed role can't pass this test, let it go. Instead, tap into your star's set of drivers which likely includes some combination of interesting work, autonomy, and professional development.

## 3. February pro-tip: minimize ambiguity



🚫 **The widely cited** job competency, "Tolerates Ambiguity" is a misguided aspiration. I've got two qualms:

1. It allows that as long as leaders hire well, they're excused from key leadership responsibilities, e.g., articulating an inspiring vision, setting clear goals and providing direct feedback.
2. It implies that demonstrating a bias for action will excuse under-developed ideas, sloppy work or lack of stakeholder engagement.

**Many senior leaders** I've observed overestimate the quality of their communication, i.e., they tolerate their own ambiguity.

🗣️ **What they're saying:** During my confidential one-on-one meetings with a leader and her team members they will separately describe the same live issues differently.

- **On the one hand:** The exasperated exec can't understand why her deputy hasn't acted on the "clear message" she delivered.
- **On the other:** The anxious deputy complains about not knowing what the boss wants.

💬 **Our thought bubble:** Tolerance is a virtue when applied to how we treat others' differences, resolve conflicts and open our minds and hearts. I'm all for it!

- **Ambiguity**, on the other hand, is an often temporary and remediable condition. Like a skin rash, it's something to minimize; not tolerate.

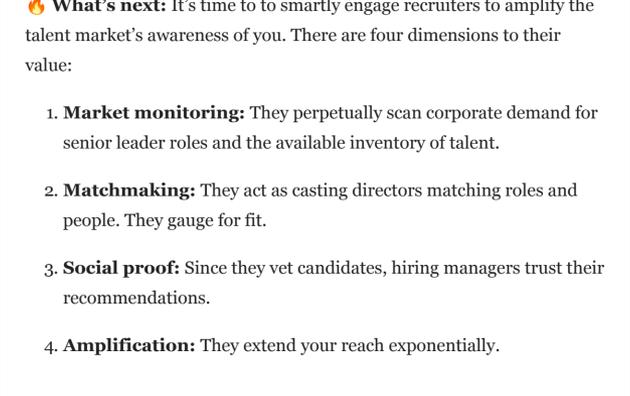
📝 **Minimize Ambiguity** by clearly articulating (and repeating, when useful) expectations, including:

- Short and long term objectives
- Available resources — human, financial, technical
- Connection to the strategic "big-picture"

**Provide direct and comprehensive feedback**, both positive and constructive.

👉 **Go deeper:** my thoughts on feedback, [here](#).

## 4. Career Corner: leverage brokers to promote your value



📁 **In December's issue** of *SM*, I lamented that many senior leaders don't actively navigate their own career. No surprise that they're off the radar when desirable career opportunities arise.

- I recommended you follow the job market and build relationship capital.

**In January**, I gave you the assignment to begin touching base with people you find interesting and/or care about to build relationship capital.

- If you've begun, I'll bet you're feeling more plugged into your community and the information flow. Kudos. Keep it up.

🔥 **What's next:** It's time to to smartly engage recruiters to amplify the talent market's awareness of you. There are four dimensions to their value:

1. **Market monitoring:** They perpetually scan corporate demand for senior leader roles and the available inventory of talent.

2. **Matchmaking:** They act as casting directors matching roles and people. They gauge for fit.

3. **Social proof:** Since they vet candidates, hiring managers trust their recommendations.

4. **Amplification:** They extend your reach exponentially.

**My POV:** Proactively cultivate relationships with recruiters. Don't wait until you are actively looking for work. Do the following:

- Return every email and call.
- Offer recommendations.
- Make them look forward to speaking with you

📺 **Stay tuned:** In March's *SM*, we'll consider how increasing your external profile increases your internal value.

👋 **Thanks for** starting your February with us. *Please invite your friends and colleagues to [sign up](#) for Schachter Monthly.*

- 🌱 See you in March!

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