

# TOUGH SITUATIONS

## Degree of Difficulty: Tougher

### SITUATION:

You supervise someone who is ambitious and wants more responsibility and advancement but feels frustrated because he hasn't been promoted or given opportunities for additional responsibilities.

### YOUR MISSION:

Maintain or restore his/her high level of motivation.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD DO OR SAY (Part 1):

“Let's have a discussion about what needs to happen to get you promoted and what you can do about it. First, as homework, I want you to complete this chart (see below).”

Chart 1

I do these things really well:	I need to improve these things:	I need to learn these things:

Once he/she has completed the chart, steer any discussion about advancement along two tracks. The first track should focus on what he/she does really well and what he/she needs to

improve upon or learn to get promoted or advance. What are his/her strengths when it comes to performance? What does he/she not do well that he/she must do well in order to advance. You want to get him/her to agree with you as you discuss each of his/her strengths and areas for improvement as well as things he/she needs to learn.

The second track you want to discuss is what's called the sandbox. Use the diagram below and ask him/her to list for you and him/herself the things that he/she can control (What's in my sandbox), and the things he/she cannot control (What's not in my sandbox). I've given an example below and also included a blank example for you to use or copy:

Diagram 1

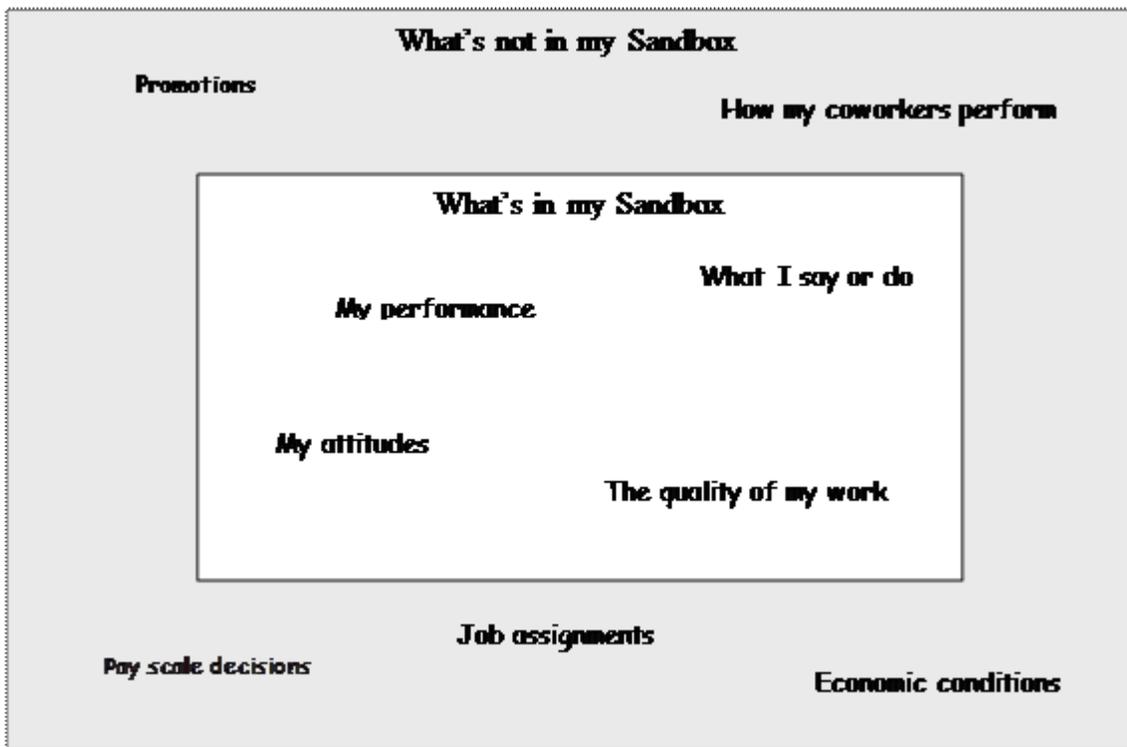
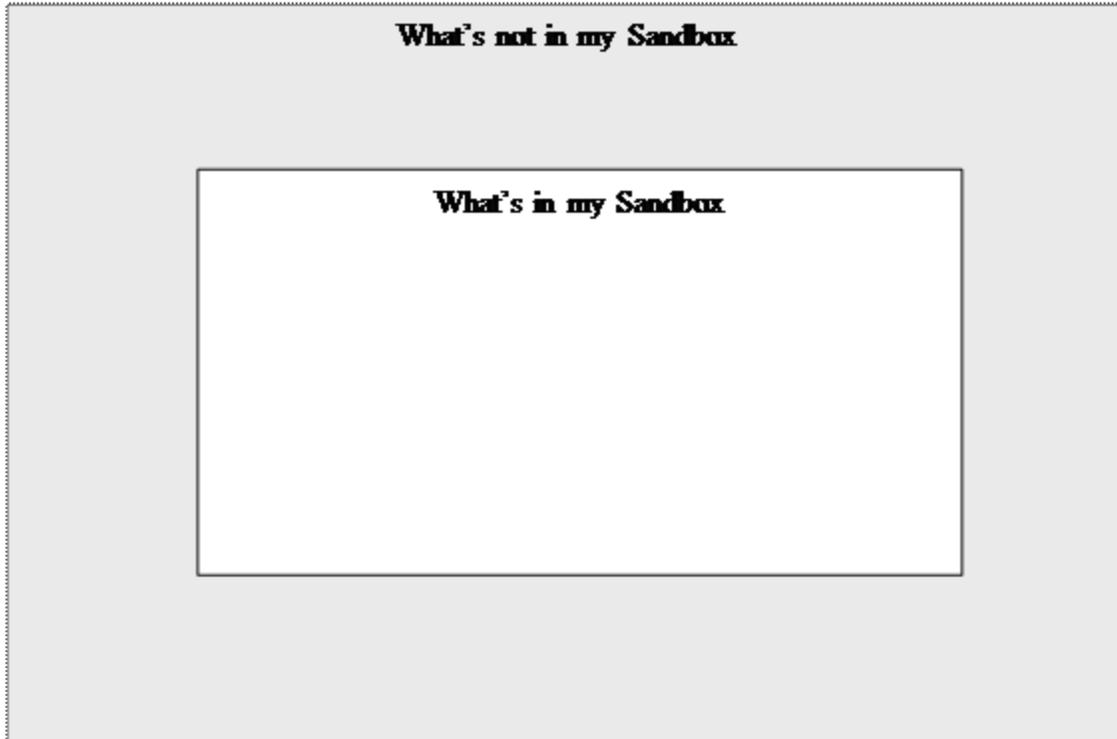


Diagram 2



Use the completed Chart 1 and Diagram 2 to discuss with him/her how you see his/her performance. Ask questions to clarify your understanding. Questions to clarify your understanding may include:

(Chart 1)

“I see you wrote that you feel you need to learn more about how to lead team meetings. Tell me more specifically about what it is about leading team meetings that you want to learn more about.”

“Tell me how you take advantage of your attention to detail as something you do well.”

“You wrote that you needed to improve your writing skills. Specifically, what do you want to work on?”

(Diagram 2)

“You wrote that *your attitudes* are inside your sandbox. Tell me about your attitudes toward your coworkers. How do you feel about them?”

“You wrote that *job assignments* are outside your sandbox. What is your view about how job assignments are made?”

Remember, your mission is to maintain or restore his/her high level of motivation. Once you understand and both agree on his/her responses on Chart 1 and Diagram 2, answer this question for yourself: *Do I believe this person can be advanced or promoted now?*

If the answer is *yes*, follow the guidelines under “YES”. If the answer is *no*, follow the guidelines under “NO”.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD DO OR SAY (Part 2):**

**YES**

“I’m going to recommend you for promotion. I believe you are ready to perform at the next level and are ready for more responsibility. We need good performers like you to step up and contribute to our company.”

**NO**

“As we look objectively at your performance, including the things you do well, the things you need to improve, and the things you need to learn, I want to focus on helping you get better at the things you need to improve and learn. You’re a highly motivated person and that’s what is going to lead to your success. I believe in you, I have faith in you, and I know that if you continue in the same direction you’ve set for yourself you’ll get promoted. I’ll provide you more opportunities, starting tomorrow, to learn what you need to learn, and work on what you need to improve. Let’s develop a checklist of what you want to work on and a timeline for when we want to get each thing accomplished, ok?”

Use Chart 2 for the checklist.

Chart 2

Things to Improve On:	Completed by (date):

**WHY IT WILL WORK:**

People who are ambitious and want to advance are goal-oriented people. Setting goals *motivates* them. In some instances, they may allow themselves to be distracted by temporarily feeling like a victim, that some external force is aimed directly at them, keeping them from achieving their goals. It’s important to refocus their efforts by getting them to realize they do control what will determine their advancement and futures to a large extent. That’s why it’s important to ask them to perform the activity in Chart 1.

Asking people who are goal-oriented to perform a simple self-assessment (Diagram 1) is the beginning of an energy renewal for them. Putting it in writing, on paper, makes it more real when they see it. It's important to allow them to do this without much help from you. The activity in Chart 2 should be performed with you working with this person. It aims them toward the future and allows you to confirm for them that if he/she is successful, he/she will be promoted.