MARKET DAILY

The Leadership Mistake That May Be Affecting Employee Retention



Nobody Is Talking About It Clearly Enough.

By: Paul Ryan

Ask most senior leaders how they develop their top talent, and they'll very often describe a process. Performance reviews. Development plans. Succession frameworks. Structured programs designed to identify high potential and move it through a pipeline toward greater responsibility.

Christian Marcolli has spent more than two decades inside the rooms where those processes run, and his assessment is blunt. For the people with the rarest and most transformative potential, most of those systems don't work. They weren't designed for Game Changers. And

using them on Game Changers doesn't develop them. It frustrates them, flattens them, and eventually loses them to somewhere that treats their particular kind of exceptional differently.

That observation is at the center of Winning Match, and it's one of the most practically useful ideas in the leadership conversation right now.

The Assumption That Quietly Costs Companies Everything

The most expensive misconception Christian encounters in his work with senior executives is the assumption that truly exceptional talent will rise on its own. If someone is genuinely extraordinary, the system will recognize it, and the person will find their footing regardless of the specific support they receive.

In sports, he notes, this idea would be considered professional negligence. No serious coach in any elite sporting environment would leave their best players to develop without active, specific, individualized attention while directing most of their energy toward the weaker members of the squad. The entire coaching philosophy in high-performance sport is built on the understanding that the best people need the most sophisticated investment, not the least.

Business has not fully absorbed this lesson. The result is that the people with the greatest potential to reshape organizations from the inside frequently receive less tailored development than their low-performing colleagues, who need more support and more standardized processes that were never designed to unlock what they specifically bring.

What Game Changers Actually Need From Their Leaders

Christian is specific about what research and his own experience show Game Changers consistently want from the leaders above them. They

want to be challenged continuously, not managed comfortably. They want regular, honest, constructive feedback, not quarterly performance conversations that tell them what they already know. They want to be in ongoing dialogue with their leaders about the things that matter strategically, not just the things that are immediately operational.

Most of all, they want to feel that the person leading them genuinely sees their potential and is actively invested in helping them realize it. When that relationship exists, Game Changers very often produce outcomes that exceed expectations. When it doesn't, they disengage in ways that are often quiet enough to go unnoticed until the person has already decided to leave.

Christian's framework gives leaders a concrete way to build that relationship. He calls the practice Strategic Leadership Sparring, a structured, ongoing, dynamic interaction that combines challenge and support in a way that pushes Game Changers to develop the insights and capabilities they need to perform at the highest level. It is not a program. It is a practice, built incrementally over time, covering both immediate challenges and the big strategic questions that shape long-term direction.

The Leader Who Has to Change Too

One of the things Christian is honest about in Winning Match is that unlocking Game Changers requires something real from the leader making the attempt. It isn't enough to recognize exceptional potential. A leader has to be willing to deviate from standard procedures to meet it. To make decisions on a case-by-case basis. To resist the organizational pull toward consistency and process when consistency and process would leave a Game Changer uninspired or constrained.

That willingness requires what he describes as a genuine paradigm shift for some leaders. The model of leadership as authority, control, and standardized management runs deep in most organizational cultures. Moving away from it toward something much more individualized, more dynamic, and more explicitly invested in the success of specific people is a different way of understanding what the job actually is.

The leaders who make that shift successfully are what Christian calls Leadership Champions. And the Winning Match relationship between a Leadership Champion and a Game Changer is, in his view, one of the most powerful performance dynamics available to any organization serious about extraordinary outcomes.

Why This Matters More Than Ever Right Now



Christian argues that the conditions in most industries right now make this conversation more urgent than it has ever been. The pace of change, the complexity of competitive environments, and the premium placed on genuine innovation mean that organizations increasingly need people who can think outside established frameworks and generate something genuinely new.

People with game-changing potential are rare. Yet those people exist in most organizations. They are often already on the payroll. What's missing, in too many cases, is a leader who knows how to see them, partner with them, and build the kind of relationship that lets them become everything their potential suggests is possible.

Winning Match is Christian's answer to that gap. Built from twenty years of work across the most demanding performance environments in both sport and business, it is the most complete version of what he has learned about what it actually takes to make extraordinary people even better.

He lived with the cost of not having it early in his career. He has spent everything since making sure others don't have to.

Winning Match by Dr. Christian Marcolli sets out this approach for leaders who want to put it into practice.

Available worldwide through major online booksellers, including Amazon.

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