

So you showed up for work today, and all of a sudden when you walk into your office you realize that your friend's name is on the door. It's been your office for several years, a corner office, great views out two sides of the building, both left and right, one that is assigned to a MVP, not just of the company, but recognized throughout the entire industry as one of the best, in fact for a couple of years – recognized as the best – in the entire industry. But none of your stuff is on the desk, none of your pictures are on the wall. What the ... ??!!% Your boss, a senior ranking executive, not the owner, but pretty high up there in the executive ranks, some call him the general manager, he catches you and asks you to step into the office right next door. It's about the same size, but only has a view from one side, and all of a sudden you realize that your name is on THIS door. WHAT THE ... ??!!% He tells you that they had to make some changes based on your performance this past year, and, although it's been good, it's not quite as good as it has been, or needs to be. He runs through some platitudes about how much the company values you, still wants to retain you as you are a vital part of the team, important to your customers who've grown to love you and value not only your performance, but also your personality. You know things have been off a little, but you want to assure your manager and the owners of the company that you can get your performance back to where it was, that you won't only be a key contributor, you'll be THE TOP contributor. Privately your torqued, I'm updating my resume, I know there are others in our industry that would love me and my skills and what I can bring them. BUT, your wife and kids love this city. You've made life long friends, like the town you live in, have favorite restaurants, know your doctors, and the kids teachers. How could they do this to me??? I was their MVP!!!

*Welcome to the last few months of Andrew McCutchen.*

Sport teams provide a regular set of highly visible talent management actions happening every day. Our own beloved Andrew McCutchen is a perennial all-star and some might say Pirate baseball's equivalent to the Penguins Crosby or Malkin. Regarded by some in the same conversation as Sidney Crosby, regarded as the best hockey player in the game today, but certainly critical to the team and it's most recent historic success. And, let me whisper this so as not to get stoned by the pucksters, someday Sidney is going to have to hang up his skates as well. Lemieux and Gretzky and Howe did and Sid will too – (let's hope it's in 10 years!!!)

Last year was not one of Andrew's better years. Although he has always played Center Field, his batting performance was less than the previous several years by a long shot. What happens when a player isn't performing up to the level you know they are capable? What do you do when an employee isn't performing up to the once stellar performance that you know that they can perform at? The worst thing you can do is ignore it. The employee usually knows that they aren't living up to expectations, and may even know why. To ignore it is to allow the performance to become 'acceptable' not just to co-workers, but to the customers you serve.

It's the same with each of us. In this world you are either constantly performing at an acceptable, preferably higher than acceptable level, or you're at risk 'to have your office moved'. Growth is rewarded, slowing performance is tolerable, while stagnation causes immediate attention, and declining anything, unless it's expenses, always sounds alarms. These are alarms, not bells and whistles – those are sounded for breaking records and top performance. How do you ensure that you don't get 'Cutched' by your company. Contribute in positive ways daily, find ways to improve upon your performance, learn more, stay current with trends and technologies, get more education, look for sound and seasoned mentors and coaches who can advise and direct you, and most importantly realize that you're not always going to be the top performer. But, you can certainly make a difference every day when you come to work.

I applaud Andrew McCutchen for his professional position and grace with which he has handled the change handed to him. He's a class act and will be remembered as such long after his baseball days are over. My personal wish is that he crushes it this year and takes his game to the highest level ever! But as with all things, especially in professional sports, performance is everything. It's obvious that Andrew knows that hard work always pays off. My guess is that the next phase of his life will bring the same kind of reward, especially based on his dedication, positive presence, and passion for success. Good luck Cutch -we'll be cheering for you. Sorry to cut this short, I've got to run, a guy by the name of Roethlisberger is on the other line.