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I Can't Fire Him Now, I Need Him

All companies experience an employee whose performance has continued to slip and, even after multiple interventions, continues to underperform. But when bosses are asked why they haven't fired him or her, they always have excuses. Here's why excuses are not good enough to keep a poorly performing employee around:

First, managers spend a disproportionate amount of their time managing poor performers. They have to monitor them, redo some of their work, and repair issues that arise as a result of mistakes being made. This is not a good use of your manager's time. Time costs money.

Second, you put yourself at risk of having a major mistake happen. You could lose a customer, destroy a database, or wreck a piece of equipment. This is an unacceptable risk in a business environment.

Third, if performance is an issue, you can bet that your other employees see it as well. At best they may be sympathetic to the employee. But if their perspective is that you are tolerating poor performance, you may be generating resentment and the low morale that will follow.

Finally, while you are in a mode of tolerance you are wasting valuable time that could be used to seek the underperforming employee's replacement. It may not be easy, but the long-term benefits of terminating a laggard will be worth it.

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