



A Succession case study: how would you manage the Roy empire?

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In an era of fragmented media, HBO's *Succession*, now in its fourth and final season, is a rare example of must-see TV. If you know, you know. If you don't know, here's the elevator pitch:

Logan Roy is the head of an international media empire. At the start of the series we learn he will soon step down and transition leadership of the company to either a member of his family or the highest bidder. As the show unfolds, we meet his heirs-apparent, learn about the strengths and weaknesses each of them has as a leader and come to our own conclusions about who we would put in charge if we were Logan Roy.

Each Roy sibling represents a (heightened) archetype of employees in every organization. Here is a breakdown of who they are and how you should lead, engage and reward them if they are on your team.

Siobhan "Shiv" Roy – The top performer

The profile:

Shiv knows her worth and isn't afraid to throw her weight around when it suits her. It may seem, because she continues to succeed, recognition and rewards aren't necessary, but top performers like Shiv are ripe to be courted by competitors, especially if they're not challenged and recognized for their work.

How to manage a Shiv:

Top performers need to see an ability to grow or they'll quickly move to a new opportunity (and those are hardly scarce). They are ideal candidates for public, glowing recognition. Outwardly, they may brush off your praise, but that recognition will serve two purposes:

1. Deep down, top performers like Shiv need to know **you know** they're an asset, and that affirmation fuels them to continue to do their best.
2. Public recognition means others see what an expert looks like. Now your middle performers have a blueprint for how they, too, can grow.

Kendall Roy – The middle performer

The profile:

There are more Kendalls in your workplace than you may ever realize. The quintessential middle performer, Kendall has flashes



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of brilliance that might go unnoticed if they weren't plot points on a TV show. In a company not controlled by his relatives, a Kendall often has few outlets for his innovative ideas.

How to manage a Kendall:

Kendall isn't the best executor, but he's a great candidate for an innovation and ideas program. These allow him to be recognized for sharing his ideas. He might even be part of an implementation team (just not leading the charge). Leaderboards and stack rank programs are also a slam dunk for someone fueled by competition and who have a sense that top performer status is just around the corner. Middle performers will repeat what gets recognized and reinforced, leading to incremental performance growth.

Roman Roy – **The quiet quitter**

The profile:

Roman would be easy to write off as an entitled coaster, but when he's engaged in something he's passionate about, he goes full speed ahead. His career path is less about growth and more about inspiring him by connecting his skills with his passion.

How to manage a Roman:

Reward a disengaged employee like Roman for training and align them with the targeted programs that best represent their interests and you'll bring out the loyalist in them. Programs that recognize incremental effort and steps to success will keep busy brains engaged. Without attention and engagement, the Romans of the world have the potential to poison the well in a team.

Connor Roy – **The remote worker**

The profile:

While the rest of the family toils in NYC, Connor logs in from his ranch in New Mexico. Initially, Connor seems disconnected, with no interest in the mission, vision or values of the organization, but as time goes on we notice he shows up on every call and by the fourth season he is firmly in line to take the reins.

How to manage a Connor:

Many employees became accustomed to working remotely. Not every employer is able to offer remote work, but things like flexible start times, expanded meeting format options and workday accommodations are not only seen as a competitive advantage



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in hiring and retention, they also help address DEI factors for neurodivergent employees, parents and employees dealing with wellness issues.

Logan Roy – **The toxic leader**

The profile:

Logan is incredibly successful, but his work-life balance skews 100% work. A good leader would analyze the people on their team and pursue a personalized recognition strategy.

Unfortunately, there are still leaders like Logan who rule with an iron fist and create a competitive, hierarchal team dynamic destined to invite conflict instead of collaboration. Each of his children (and his entire leadership team) holds a particular set of skills that, if fostered appropriately, could contribute to the growth of the organization. Instead, Logan is the ultimate fighter, holding on to his own beliefs and watching as his empire changes (or fails to change) and crumbles.

Are you a Logan?

If you're not growing, you're dying.

Invest in leadership training and development. Build an inverse apprenticeship program and create a psychologically safe work environment where employees are empowered to bring forward issues and ideas. Consider tools like BIW's Recognition Advisor to help recognize and engage employees at strategic moments.

Have you identified what makes each of your team members tick?

Learn more about our philosophy behind employee engagement and the [12 factors](#) we have identified as having the greatest influence on employees' relationships with their companies.

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