



MANAGING “STARS”

How to Lead Personalities in a Creative
Environment

Latvian National Opera



Latvian National Opera:

What is the Organization?

A unique
organization

A state founded organization that receives government subsidies, provides cultural services, but works as a company in competition with other Opera theaters in the world.





WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE FACED THE OPERA DURING THE RECESSION ?

- Maintain artistic quality in order to preserve its international reputation
- Create new performances with limited financial capabilities
(the budget of the Opera is much smaller than budgets in Opera theaters abroad but the number of performances is the same or greater)



WHAT FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO CURRENT GROWTH OF THE OPERA?

- Talented artistic staff
- Director Andrejs Žagars
 - Ambition to develop the opera as internationally recognizable
 - Enthusiastic leader
 - Bright personality
 - Intuition
 - Ability to attract sponsors





What is a Star?

- Examples
 - Arts and music
 - Academics
 - LANL/SNL
 - Sports teams
 - Many workers in the emerging knowledge economy



What Defines a Star?

- Positives
 - Self-starters
 - Happily work long hours
 - Are creative, have many good ideas
 - Value achievements, especially their own
 - Not prone to groupthink



What Defines a Star?

- Negatives
 - Prima donnas
 - Poor team players
 - Are creative, with many bad ideas
 - Can create excessive conflict



Where Do Stars Come From?

- Most develop on their own—self starters after all
 - Consider ballet—most start training intensively at a young age
- Recruit them based on reputation in many cases
- Often recruit “the best”—do **not** over-define the position!



Critical Issues

- Alignment issues
- Pay and special perks
 - Rare talent, not easily replaced
- Jobs are not easy to define
- Leaders of stars are also often stars



Managing Performance of Stars

- Requires a balance of freedom and control
- With multiple stars, conflicts are inevitable
- Stars can easily be recruited by competitors
- “Sharing” stars? Depends
 - Opera, music, ballet—yes
 - Sports, competitive industries, no



Key Issues in Managing Stars

- Be transparent
- Work with them
 - “Stars” work hard—unless those who lead them do not
 - Very high in nAch, often in nAff
- Give them “room” to excel
 - As far as possible, let them do as they choose
 - Do not micro-manage



Thank You



