

Micro-Management: A Recipe for Mediocrity

By Brian Canning
"Sapient Ramblings"



Frequently I write articles that represent issues or challenges experienced by our clients or our coaches. Being productive, hiring the right people, profitability, leadership and identifying long term market trends would all qualify as concerns in the business world. A consistent issue that I run into would have to be that destructive species of leader, the micro-manager. I have seen far too many of these individuals over the years, twice worked for a world champion micro-manager and would enthusiastically cry the plague of inadequacy with which they infect the business world.

Business owners, or for that matter senior managers, who would do it all themselves, who would find it very difficult to trust their employees, who try very hard to control and monitor the minutia and minute detail that make up their job or business are destined to be frustrated and fall short of their goals and expectations. Along with the difficulty they have in trusting people, they are generally unappreciative of those who work for them and in their manic drive for perfection, they discourage initiative and often suffer huge turnover. Do not hate these poor, lonely, lost souls but run like hell if you see one and abandon any ideas of changing or redeeming them. You will find them decidedly uncompromising and resistant and they will see your attempts as proof positive of your inadequacy. They are entirely happy in their misery.

I have witnessed loud, boisterous business owners and senior managers stand in front of large groups of angry production workers, technicians or administrators and not only move them but have them happy and anxious for the journey and also seen soft-spoken business owners have crews tripping over themselves to accomplish all that has been asked of them and more. That is the positive effect of leadership that you have heard me expound on many times over the months and is key to any of us in achieving our goals. Effective leadership is driven but caring, consistent and adaptable.

An effective leader will allow his people to contribute, will provide an environment that sets expectations and holds people accountable, and is tireless in accomplishing his or her goals. It is a tough world out there, with regulation, government oversight, and very tough market conditions. It is incredibly important that we be able to rely on our people to take on many of the tasks that make up our business operation, to allow them to grow and improve and feel the satisfaction of a job well done. Their growth and improvement contributes to the total effort, their individual successes contribute to the team victory.

A micro-manager could accurately be described as an anti-leader in that he has little or no use for the people around him, is only willing to employ people because he wasn't born with eight arms and would never do something as vile as complimenting extra effort or a job well done. If he compliments, he might have to give a raise and if he were to do that, he might give the employee the idea that he was something other than hired help, but most frightening of all, the employee might show initiative or pay attention to detail and expect to get compliments all the time. Nothing good could possibly come of that right? When our employees do not feel a connection with us, with our business, a very natural result is turnover. Can you afford this? Is the constant turmoil worth it? The micro-manager sees turnover as the result of unfortunate human failing, and with little effort toward understanding why he has such difficulty in holding onto staff or earning their loyalty, he quickly finds his low opinion of people reinforced again and again and again. He just doesn't get it. Very often, due to the necessity of having some permanent staff, he ends up paying exorbitantly for key personnel and generally suffers disappointment even in these courageous souls. They just never seem to measure up. The truth, of course, is that the micro-manager is never satisfied and pretty much dislikes people due to his lack of trust and his inability to lead or inspire. He is, and will forever remain, his own worst enemy.

I do not care if we are running a quick lube or General Motors, we need to lead, motivate and grow our teams and succeed through our collective efforts. We need to delegate, we need to be willing to set standards and hold people accountable, and we need to be willing to demand excellence. In my experience, the human being is the greatest as well as the most challenging creature on earth. People are frustrating, at times beyond understanding, but remain by far our most important asset. They will surprise you with their capacity to grow and learn and improve, but just as easily they will confound you and for good or bad they are the absolute key to our success. Love them, guide them, trust them and lead them. I promise they are worth your greatest effort.

Leadership is defined as the process of influencing others to accomplish the desired results by providing purpose, direction and motivation. Sounds simple enough, however leadership doesn't happen unless you are willing to jump in, unless you have a mission and somewhere to go. Aim for the stars, be a leader and take your people along for the ride.

About the author:

Brian Canning is as a leadership and management coach with the Automotive Training Institute (ATI) in Savage MD. After serving as a tank commander with the 1st Armored Division in Europe, he started his career as a Goodyear service manager in suburban Washington, D.C., moving on to oversee several stores and later a sales region. He also has been a retail sales manager for a large auto parts distributor, run a large fleet operation and headed a large multi-state sales territory for an independent manufacturer of automotive parts. His passions are history and leadership.

This material is copyright protected. No part of this document may be reproduced, in any form or by any means without permission from weLEAD Incorporated. Copyright waiver may be acquired from the [weLEAD website](#).