

CEOs are Leaders, Not Doers

02/28/05

An anonymous business owner in Fairfield County, who has 20 employees and whose service industry business is growing recently asked the following question, "As my company grows, how do I make the transition from hands-on doer to great manager? I find it frustrating when things are not done the way I want or in the things are not done that way I want or in the way I would have done them. However, I admit they are making progress, just not making the progress I wanted. It's so hard to know what to do when I see someone making costly mistakes and wasting time and materials."

You're absolutely right, if you want to grow your company, you must be a great manager. Otherwise, you will burn through personnel, stifle innovation and flatten the company's growth curve. Unfortunately, most business owners don't spend enough time in management school, learning to be effective managers. Some of us were lucky enough to work in big, well-run corporations before stepping out into entrepreneurship. Others learn through trial and error. Some never learn and continue to live in an environment where they yell, get frustrated at poor results and get burned out alternately rescuing or blaming people who are actually trying. If you don't like the results you're getting, find someone to work with you, to teach you a new set of skills.

It sounds to me like you might want to look at three different areas and look at the problems this way:

- Letting go and accepting that your role as chief executive officer is to lead, not to do
- Accepting that nobody, including yourself, is perfect
- Knowing what to do in different situations to help people progress

To effectively lead people, you must manage your own emotional response and figure out what to do in a given situation to get the outcome that will best move the company forward. Focus on making progress and minimize the blame. If you depersonalize the situation and look at it as just a problem to solve, that may help.

Remember very few people want to fail. It's our human nature to want to succeed. You as a manager need to respect that reality and help employees figure out what's holding them back from getting the success they want. If you're frustrated, look at what's bugging you so much. What would be so wrong with accepting someone else's way of doing things, even if you can step back and admit your employees are making progress. If you can keep doing it, you may find that despite the mistakes, they are getting things accomplished that you haven't, and they are talking

things you might never even attempt.

Look at what's missing in the situation. Are the goals and expectations clear? The best way to be sure is to write them down on paper. How well are you communicating? Are you using many "it's" and "that's", as in "it's wrong," and "that's not what I want." Listen to yourself. If I'm your employee, how am I supposed to know what you want?

As a manager, you need to be able to switch tactics from educating to teaching to coaching to delegating, depending on the person and the situation. Most people are good at one of those four tactics and do that one thing all the time. That means that in three out of four situations, it's likely you're doing the wrong thing. If you don't know how to switch tactics or select what to do in different situations, get someone to teach you. It will boost your management effectiveness.

Finally, learn to give feedback appropriately. Corrective feedback is short, sharp enough to get the person's attention, delivered one-on-one and is followed by encouragement and positive reinforcement. If you find yourself in a situation where you're yelling at someone repeatedly, stop. Try something different.

CEOs are Leaders, Not Doers

02/28/05

Look at the overall situation in your company. Are you yelling at everyone, dissatisfied with everyone's results or is it just one or two people? If it's just one or two people, you may want to have a conversation about whether they are a good fit for the company. Better to help someone move on, than to let things degenerate.

Look at yourself. Do you shift dissatisfaction from person to person, depending on who's in your line of sight? Do you tend to get frustrated at a specific time of day or day of the week? A healthy dose of personal insight may help you identify what's not working inside yourself. Most good managers understand themselves very well, and are honest about what gets to them, internally.

Remember, you must set the stage for positive relationships. As the owner, that's your job. You are the leader and your tone is likely to become the tone of the organization. Your best bet is to approach your managerial job as an educator, coach and mentor. If you let your frustration show through, you are likely to discourage people from giving you their utmost. If you insist on doing things the way you have always done them, you will stifle innovation. If you don't allow for errors and learn from mistakes, you are likely to create an organization that doesn't take risks.

Looking for a good book? Try "the Art of Managing People", by Phillip Hunsaker and Anthony Alessandra, person – to – person skills, guidelines and techniques every manager needs to guide, direct and, motivate the team.

Business owners regularly turn to Ask Andi and Strategy Leaders for advice on how to grow profitable, successful companies. They find what they need time after time. Specific advice is available at www.AskAndiBlog.com. Ask Andi is also published weekly in the Westchester and Fairfield County Business Journals and Hudson Valley Business. Written by Strategy Leaders President, Andi Gray, the Ask Andi column is a rich source of advice for owners of established, privately held businesses.

*If you are a business owner and you have a question or would like to discuss some aspect of your business, call **1.877.238.3535** or send an email to AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com.*