



Dear Chief

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COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I’m a manager in my organization and I’m struggling with how much control I should exert with my subordinates. Climate assessments in the organization indicate that I’m on edge and micromanage too much. I do it, though, because I’m ultimately responsible for everyone’s work and when they don’t do their jobs right, I’m the one standing in my boss’s office explaining things. And quite honestly, it happens way too much. How much control is appropriate?

MICROMANAGER ON EDGE



DEAR MICROMANAGER ON EDGE: As a manager you should exert the minimum amount of control necessary to allow your people to accomplish tasks with as little supervision as possible. Your degree of control and supervision should be relative to the degree of the skill and will of your people. Exert more control when necessary and less control when appropriate.

If your people are lacking in skill and will, you need to get them properly trained and motivated. Review your

Ease up boss, they got this!

hiring process as well. Are you hiring highly motivated people with proven skills? If not, you should bring qualified people on board so you can confidently delegate tasks to them with little worry.

Here are some things you should or shouldn’t do to be a successful manager who won’t need to micromanage:

1) Issue mission statements or task directives that make sense, are clear and easy to understand, and are simple. Avoid complexity because it usually leads to confusion, tasks being done incorrectly, and you standing in front of your boss explaining things, which in-turn, causes you to micromanage.

2) Don’t issue long and winded reports. Most people don’t read them all the way through and therefore don’t get the full message you intended for them.

3) Don’t distribute memos every hour. People should be busy working and not worried about what may or may not be in their email or in-boxes.

4) Unless someone’s life or large amounts of money are on the line with a critical task, don’t be afraid to let people make mistakes. Mistakes are simply an opportunity to learn. (Making the same mistake more than once warrants your attention though.) With critical tasks, trust is still essential but a check-and-

balance system may be necessary to prevent a catastrophe.

5) Don’t sweat the small stuff. Even though it is commonly inferred that the “devil is in the details,” learn to trust your people and lighten up. Your people will be more motivated and probably do better work if you’re not constantly breathing down their necks.

6) Don’t bully people. Period.

Managing to the minimum degree is all about getting more by easing up. You’re still the boss but it’s more like steering a ship--the tiniest touch of the wheel is enough. You swing that wheel violently from side to side and you’re off course immediately and it takes a mighty effort to get back on track.

There is an old Chinese saying: “Govern a country the same way you cook a small fish,” i.e., don’t keep fiddling with it or it falls apart. Manage your department, team, or company in the same way--gently, discreetly, and unobtrusively.



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