



Dear Chief

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I started my own insurance practice a few months ago and feel it’s time for me to begin hiring a few people. I’m nervous about it because I don’t know if I can afford to do so at this time. At what point is it best for me to expand? When I’m making more money or working long hours? Or should I just hire a few people and forge ahead without worry? I’m caught in the middle of playing it safe and taking a risk. Which direction do you recommend I go?

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE



DEAR CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: Your experience is common for anyone who starts their own business. At some point, when your workload consumes all of your time, it’s time to make the leap and hire someone. David Jackson, founder and CEO of Altos Computer Systems, said, “The real turning point in a company is when you go from one to two people. Then, at least, there’s someone to answer the phone while you eat your lunch.”

When you bring in some help, be sure to hire someone who truly wants to partner with you and is motivated to help your insurance practice become successful and profitable. This means you should consider adding incentive pay for them so they feel invested in your

Expansion requires trust

practice. After all, if you think about it, since they’ll be a key figure in your expansion, it is definitely appropriate to reward and compensate them, almost as much as you!

When you hire someone, properly train and educate them on every aspect of your practice. Ensure they understand your mindset and strategy so you don’t get tempted to do everything yourself. It’s common for many new leaders and managers to be tempted to not trust employees to get their jobs done properly.

John Maxwell humorously (but sincerely) points out the rugged path and frustrations of the insecure leader. He says, “As nearly everyone knows, a leader has practically nothing to do except to decide what is to be done; tell somebody to do it; listen to reasons why it should not be done or why it should be done in a different way; follow up to see if the thing has been done; discover that it has not; inquire why; listen to excuses from the person who should have done it; follow up again to see if the thing has been done only to discover that it has been done incorrectly; point out how it should have been done; conclude that as long as it has been done, it may as well be left where it is; wonder if it is not time to get rid of the person who cannot do anything right; reflect that the person probably has a spouse and a large family and any successor would be just as bad and maybe worse; consider how much

simpler and better matters would be now if he had done it himself in the first place; reflect sadly that he could have done it right in twenty minutes and, as things turned out, he has had to spend two days to find out why it has taken three weeks for somebody else to do it wrong.”

Well-traveled leaders can relate to this experience at one time or another but the successful leaders learned they had to slowly break away from temptations to do it all themselves. Trusting others to get their job done is vital in successfully expanding a business or service.

Therefore, it is paramount for you to hire smartly and develop a team of people for increased production. Can it be a risk? Yes. Will it cost you money at the onset? Yes. Will it pay off in time? Yes--if you build a qualified staff and trust them to act on your behalf. Otherwise, you’ll likely end up overworking yourself and running out of money (because you’re paying people to do nothing with little-to-no return on their part). At that point you’ll already be descending into a crash landing. Don’t let that happen. Build your staff, build your business, and soar!



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.