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Business Boosts

Micromanaging is a tactic, not a style

By Nathan Jamail

One of the greatest misunderstandings in leadership and coaching is the term "micromanaging". Most leaders never want to be thought of as a micro manager. In fact, it could be considered an insult or weakness of any manager. When micromanaging is used as a coaching or leadership style it will most likely deliver bad results, stifle creativity, limit employees' self-worth and without a doubt limit productivity. On the other hand when a coach or leader must deal with a bad performer it is imperative to help the employee either become a better performer or help them find a job that is a better fit. Leaders should strive to be a coach who when necessary, uses micromanaging activities to improve specific areas, but uses coaching skills when getting the team ready to win.

Why micromanaging and coaching are often confused

Micromanaging and coaching are often confused because from the surface, the activities and the leader's involvement look very similar. The key difference is the leader's intent and desired goals of their action. Both require the involvement of the leader; setting clear expectations, well defined activity management, accountability and a huge time commitment from the leader as well as the employees. The difference lies in the purpose of these activities. For example: a leader is setting expectations to ensure there is complete understanding of what they expect from each employee in order to maximize productivity and limit confusion:

* A micromanager does this with the intent to set boundaries and rules. A coach shows his commitment to the team by holding everyone accountable.

* A micromanager uses accountability to ensure the employee is earning their paycheck [often-times focusing on single employees versus the team]. A coach manages activities to ensure the employees are on the right track and that they are in the best position to succeed.

* A micromanager uses the activities to justify effort or discipline. The micromanaging method is proved wrong when a coach understands it is not the amount of time an employee contributes as much as it is the focus and effectiveness of the time they contribute. The intent of coaching is to develop and prepare the employees to succeed using the leader's knowledge and experience to guide the employees, not to justify actions.

Action item: Don't afraid of being a coach because you don't want to micromanage. Get

involved and share the intent of your actions with your team so they understand your goals for not only yourself, but for them- which ultimately is the goal for success.

Every great coach must use micromanaging tactics

As stated, the main issue with leaders and managers is they misunderstand what "micromanaging" is and is not. Micromanaging is a tactic of coaching [or should be]; it is not a leadership style. Micromanaging should be used as a consequence of those employees that are not meeting expectations or are bad performers. A bad performer does not necessarily mean a bad employee [and definitely does not mean a bad person]. There are many employees that are not performing well because they are in the wrong job, not because they are bad people, or they are not doing what they are passionate about in general, thus have no desire to be successful. By micromanaging the details of such an employee it allows the leader and the employee to make the best decision of what action should be taken next.

When to micromanage and how long

Let's say there is an employee who appears to be unhappy and their activity and results are not meeting expectations. The leader should get involved early to determine if the shortcoming is a lack of desire or ability, or both. To help determine the issue, the leader should implement more disciplined expectations and activities and explain to the employee why this action is being taken as well as the desired outcome. The desired outcome should be to either help the employee reach the expected activities, attitude and results or help them find a role that is a better fit. These micromanaging activities should be short-term activities.

The leader needs to make assessments quickly and take on the continued shortcomings, which results in moving the employee out of the position. In turn, the leaders should also take quick action to recognize great efforts and achievements as warranted. A leader should not have to implement a micromanaging activity for an employee for more than 90 days and can be stopped in as little as 30 days depending on the level of involvement, improvement and accountability, as well as overall attitude and commitment of the employee.

Action item: Micromanaging is a tactic, not a style. When you have a poor performing employee, implement a performance plan of daily and weekly activities and micromanage those activities to help them move up in performance or out

of the position that does not fit them. You owe it to them as their leader and coach.

Why most leaders don't like to coach

All leaders, or at the least the majority of leaders, prefer to avoid confrontation. This is unfortunate as only in constructive confrontations and discussions can progress be made. It is all in the intent of the confrontation. If the intent is to just belittle, or point out all the obvious issues with an employee, then yes that is a destructive and useless conversation and understandable as to why one would want to avoid it. However, in order to be an effective coach, a leader must approach confrontation with the intent of helping the employee.

It is absolutely impossible to coach without confrontation and discussion regarding areas of opportunity. When an employee is confronted by a leader who expresses the desire to help them achieve success, points out areas of opportunity for improvement and suggests a game plan to help them achieve such improvement, the confrontation just took the route of establishing a plan for success. It is a win-win for both parties. Of course at this point it is up to the employee to demonstrate their desire for success and jump on board, but it is also the leader's job to micromanage through the issues until a satisfactory ending is in sight. Is this hard to do? It is, only if the intent is wrong. Is it necessary? Absolutely.

Final thought

Not every hire is the right hire and not every job is the right job, but accepting either one just because it is easier is wrong. Micromanage through the issues by helping your employees either become great at what they do, or helping them to find something they will be great at. Outside of issues with poor performing employees, your job as a leader is to coach your entire team to success.

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