

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1264 Over-Managing and Under-Managing

We've all heard the term *micromanager*. If you ask a group of people how they feel about micromanagers, it should be unanimous that people don't want to work for one. Today, we introduce two more management descriptions into the mix, and we'll see how you feel about those. I'm Jerry Roberts and that's next on The Extra Point.

My feeling about the topic of micromanaging is well known if you've been a listener to this feature for long. Swimming upstream against popular opinion, I would tell new hires that I am a micromanager...then I'd watch for the look of doom and gloom to wash over their face.

Once I saw that, I'd explain that I was going to be working closely with them right up until the moment they proved to me they knew how to get the job done. After that, I'd step back into a support role.

I did this for two reasons. One, I indeed needed to know they could handle the work. Two, I wanted to demonstrate that I hired them for their ability to think and solve problems. If they didn't want a micromanager hovering over them, it was up to them when that stopped. I was good to my word. When I knew they knew how to get things done, I backed off.

Micromanaging is getting a new name. I've recently seen the term "overmanaging" pop up in articles. It's the same issue. Sometimes, the manager is more controlling because of the reasons I mentioned, and I see positives in doing that.

In other cases it's simply about control, or is more due to a lack of trust. If you tend to overmanage, is it because you worry about losing control, or is it because you don't have confidence in people to get the work done right and on time?

I think you have to answer that question for yourself, and for the benefit of your team.

In my opinion, it's a better idea to build up competencies across the board in your team, then become a master delegator. The goal is to give up every task that doesn't require your specific skills.

You're the team leader, and you probably have the best view of the big picture, which allows you to make decisions other can't make. The high-level tasks stay on your plate.

Parcel everything else out to others, holding them accountable for results. At the same time, accountability demands that you also give out full or partial authority to make decisions about the job. This builds capacity to handle more.

This leads us into area of undermanaging, a condition that can be as problematic as its counterpart, overmanaging.

If you take a more hands-off approach and something goes wrong because you failed to realize the problem in time to avert the trouble, who is accountable? Just because you hand off a job, that doesn't mean it leaves your radar screen.

Why do some managers undermanage? In some cases, they have a strong trust in team members to deliver results. Workers know the boss believes in them. It doesn't mean things won't still go sideways on you, but the reason is a positive.

Another reason is that the manager feels the less he/she is seen as "in control," the more they will be liked. While I understand how the psychology works in this case, it's not the way to go.

Successful managers know that whether one overmanages or undermanages is dependent upon who we're dealing with. Some workers need more attention and other need less.

(Con't.)

To be totally rigid one way or the other likely won't be good for the team, the organization, or the manager.

I was upfront with new hires on how things would go. I suggest you do the same. Let them know why you chose your particular method, and what — if anything — they can do to influence your decision to change.

If your experience is anything like mine, workers will grow to respect your process.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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