

Learning to Delegate: How Micromanaging Is Holding You Back

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If you're the kind of manager who likes to scrutinize every detail, every decision, and every email your employees send, you might be a micromanager, and that's not a good thing. It could be costing you untold amounts of time, money, and aggravation.



The good news is that by loosening up on the reigns and learning to delegate, you can boost your bottom line and improve productivity.

The Downside of Micromanaging

Ben Walker, CEO of [Transcription Outsourcing](#) in Denver, used to micromanage, listening in as his employees on calls with new clients and writing them notes as they spoke, trying to direct the conversation. "It was hurting my business because my people thought I didn't trust them," he says. "We missed out on landing new clients because I was distracting them while they were trying to sell."

Harry Hecht, a certified business coach for [SCORE](#) in Miami, agrees "Micromanagement can hurt a small-business owner in a number of ways," he says. "It keeps employees from developing and thinking for themselves. It also smothers employees and stymies their growth and ability to learn and grow skills relative to the business."

According to Dawna Moore, owner of [Valet Maids](#) in Dallas, says micromanaging stymied her business because it prevented specialists in her business from performing their duties. "Micromanaging hurt me because you cannot be an expert in everything," she says.

Walker admits that learning to delegate was a challenge. "Trusting my people to do the tasks and projects the way that I would do them was very hard for me to let go of," he says. "I am very detail-oriented, aka a perfectionist, and still have a hard time letting them do things for me." But once he started to delegate, he says his business took off."

Steps for Successful Delegation

Hecht believes you must delegate if you are going to be successful. "Delegation is critical to the growth of any business and is the most effective way for an entrepreneur to spend time on critical tasks that keep the business moving toward success," he says. Delegation does not mean being entirely hands-off. Instead, it requires careful thought, planning, and follow-up. Here are some tips to help you stop micromanaging.

- 1. Document your processes.** Before you can trust anyone to handle a part of your business for you, you must document what you do and how you do it so that they can follow your [established practices](#). Boone created "an operations manual that outlines all of my standard operating procedures that my assistant references for her daily tasks. I do have a checklist that my assistant must complete so that I know that each task was completed for the day."
- 2. Hire competent people.** Delegation only works if your employees are good at the jobs you hire them for. [Hire carefully](#), screening for the skills you need and personality of your company, Boone says. "Even though I do have an accounting background, I have never worked with small businesses before," he notes. "Accounting for a small business is different than working with large corporations. I was able to find a bookkeeper who is well-versed in my type of business, and this has helped me a lot." Walker says that, when hiring people, "I use the trust-but-verify method. I trust what they tell me on their résumés and in their interviews, and then I call all their references to make sure what they told me was accurate. I also ask for an additional reference off the cuff during interviews to see if they have anyone in mind right away or do they have to think about it and email me later. If they have to email me later, that's usually not a good sign."
- 3. Trust them.** Once you've hired good people, you have to trust them to do the work. Give them the chance to be successful without micromanaging them. Walker suggests, "Start with the smaller, less important tasks and, as your people show you they can do them, and do them well, start giving them more important things to do. This will also help them feel empowered and more like a real team player."
- 4. Let go of the task.** "I try to assess each task and see if it is something that only I can do or if it is something that I can delegate to my assistant or someone else," Boone says. She then delegates and moves on to other things that need her attention.
- 5. Evaluate and give feedback.** Regularly evaluate your employees and offer them suggestions for how they can be even more successful at the tasks you've delegated. Don't forget to praise them for what they have done well. After Boone delegates, she checks back in. "It's important to also provide oversight to employees to whom you have delegated tasks," she says. "I try to have at least a weekly or biweekly meeting with those employees to make sure that everything is going well and that the tasks are being accomplished appropriately. This makes time for two-way dialogue, and we can make any adjustments as necessary."

Delegation Leads to Success

Eliminating micromanagement has allowed Walker "to have more time doing higher-level projects that actually help us get new clients, become more efficient, and train more people to do the things we do and do them the same way we do so our clients don't miss out. I sleep more and am way less stressed before and after work."

Boone now clearly sees how damaging micromanagement was to her company. "Delegation has given me time back to focus on tasks that will help my business grow, including planning and developing a strategy for the future of the company," she says.

Micromanaging can be a tough habit to quit but, once you do, you'll find that it gives you time to focus on the big picture so you can create growth for your company.

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