

## Team Leadership: Avoiding Micromanagement

**It can be tempting for managers to remain vigilant over every activity their team members are performing, especially if the employees are working remotely. However, doing so will only breed feelings of resentment and distrust in employees. Managers should instead aim to be team leaders who empower their employees to work independently and reach goals within a reasonable time frame.**

### **Dangers of Micromanagement**

Micromanagement can occur when leaders are insistent upon things getting done their way. Such behavior is often a result of managers not trusting their employees to perform tasks correctly. This approach to management hinders business growth and is harmful to both employees and managers.

*Pluralsight* blog contributor Jack Wallen discusses some consequences of micromanagement that leaders should avoid at all costs. The first is a loss of control; when leaders drastically limit their management styles to only controlling, they lose the ability to effectively communicate and manage altogether. Micromanagement also kills trust. Employees will not trust a leader who burdens them with a never-ending scrutiny of their performance. This lack of trust leads to lower productivity and high turnover rates. Employees who are micromanaged will lose confidence in their own abilities to perform well on the job. They will not do anything that isn't explicitly dictated to them, such as going the extra mile to solve a problem on their own. Employees will start to become dependent on their manager, and will constantly turn to him or her for guidance they've been conditioned to think they need. Habits like this will cause managers to get burnt out quickly, as it's exhausting to always be peering over everyone's shoulder. What's more, employees are likely to feel the effects of their manager's burnout, causing the entire team to suffer. Overall, micromanagement damages the manager-employee relationship and prevents teams from finding innovative solutions to problems or ways to finish projects.

### **What does effective team leadership look like?**

A great leader is one who supports his or her team and who is willing to give up some control by letting employees take matters into their own hands. Remember that employees were hired in the first place because of their skillsets and ability to execute. Managers should heed the traits listed below, which are cornerstones of effective leadership.

- **Strong Communicator**

Communication is what forges bonds between managers and employees, and between members of a team. In her article “The Top Complaints from Employees About Their Leaders”, author Lou Solomon writes that effective leaders “know productivity is tied to communication. They are intentional about building a sense of connectedness with their teams...” Having an efficient means of communication is vital for remote teams who do not have the same opportunities to connect with one another as their office counterparts. It’s up to managers to implement a system that lets them contact employees as frequently as needed and vice versa. Such a system should also enable employees to collaborate with each other. In fact, the four traits discussed below can be more easily attained with a good communication platform in place. Luckily, there are affordable technologies available that include real-time instant messaging and announcement functions, making communication amongst remote teams effortless.

- **Active Goal Setter**

It is impossible to expect teams to excel if they have nothing tangible to work towards. Without a cohesive vision, teams are sure to fall apart. Team leaders are responsible for relaying organizational goals to their employees. There should be no ambiguity about individual expectations or how each employee’s role is essential to the success of the entire organization. Goals should be expressed using a common language throughout the organization. Such uniformity in team leadership prevents confusion and helps keep remote teams in the loop. Employees can also motivate each other when they are working to meet the same objectives.

- **Provides Feedback**

In her article, Solomon references a poll conducted by Interact/Harris of roughly 1,000 U.S. workers where respondents were asked to identify the communication issues that prevent effective leadership. 63% of participants did not feel adequately recognized for their achievements and 39% reported a lack of constructive criticism. These findings highlight employees’ need for feedback. Team members will feel more valued and are likely to go above and beyond if their efforts are acknowledged. Managers also shouldn’t hesitate to administer negative feedback, as it’s vital for improvement. Feedback should be delivered on a regular basis, not just during performance reviews. Solomon advises that providing continual feedback keeps an organization healthy and nimble.

- **Believer in Transparency**

When rumors of change are spreading through an organization, employees can become anxious about how their futures will be affected. This anxiety is a distraction that prevents employees from working productively. Moreover, remote employees who are already disconnected from office culture will feel ignored if they are informed of change at the last minute. For this reason, team leaders need to be transparent with employees new happenings as early as possible.

Managers will gain more respect from their teams if they are forthcoming with inside information, according to Solomon. Consequently, employees will want to work to their fullest potential if they respect the person they're working under.

- **Asks for Input**

Managers need feedback just as much as employees do. However, they cannot expect it to be handed to them automatically. Managers should be proactively seeking out ways to get better at their jobs by asking for input from their employees. Having their voice heard makes employees feel valued. For this to happen, employees must feel safe to express their concerns. Effective team leadership also lets employees take part in decision making. Entrepreneur contributor Marcus Erb explains in his article "How to Stop Micromanaging Your Team" that employees are more likely to be accountable for their work if they have a voice in what they're doing. Solomon warns, "Vision that is too heavily weighted toward achievement at the expense of employee experience can exact a toll." Employees will take initiative only if they feel empowered to do so. Micromanagement, conversely, leads to a fearful, disengaged workforce. Managers need to take a step back and give their teams some autonomy if they wish to maximize productivity.