

***New Manager? Learn to Let Go! – Wilfred J. Lucas, PCC***

You have just been promoted to the job of manager. Congratulations on moving to the next level where you are contributing through others. Now What? No new manager roadmap!

Promotions always feel good – they generally come with praise, more money and lots of expectation. But no one is advising you and giving you inside information on how to work with and manage others. In fact, according to Morgan W. McCall, Jr. (High Flyers – Developing the Next Generation of Leaders – HBS press – 1998) much of what leaders learn is learned on the job. People are not born with the ability to lead others. It is a learned skill. So get ready for the journey and the process of learning new things by doing them. Here is some information that may be helpful to you, the new manager.

Whether you are a new manager at the director or VP level, the most important thing to remember is that you cannot do everything. You must let some things go.

Letting go implies the following 3 things that you should stop doing along with the 3 things that you should start or continue doing.

**Stop doing these 3 things:**

1. Stop relying on only yourself for results.
2. Stop telling others how to do the job.
3. Stop taking responsibility for a narrow scope of few results.

**Start doing these 3 things instead:**

1. Start leveraging others – learn to delegate
2. Start providing direction by defining what to do and leave the how to others.
3. Start being accountable for many results

What do these things mean?

**Leveraging others vs. self-reliance for results**

According to social psychologists, we crave the core principles of self-determination – autonomy, competence and relatedness. So we naturally want to be independent and self-reliant. We bury our heads and focus on the task at hand and do what it takes to get the job done. But organizations are made up of more than just individuals doing their own thing. Successful firms are working together toward a vision and strategy that

produces coordinated effort. This in turn results in a profitable return for shareholders. It requires the competencies of others to translate that strategy to a broad range of people who do the work. If you aspire to move up in the organization you will be one of those people who helps make the translation to implementation. In that role you become successful by leveraging others to drive profitable returns for the corporation.

**Telling others “what” to do vs. How to do it**

Letting go of telling others how to do things requires that you separate the goals of your department/team/group from the separate tasks of getting things done. Managers are more effective if they have the ability to communicate their department’s goals, measures of success and the level of effort expected from team members. The ideal therefore is to allow individual members of the team the room to take care of how to meet the goals and measure of success.

**Accountability for many results vs. Responsibility for few results**

Well-run organizations aim for operating in an efficient way. Resources are scarce. There is a premium placed on the ability to get things done with less. The wider

the scope of responsibility of a manager, the less the organization pays to drive productivity. So if you have the ability to coordinate and drive a wide range of activities you will have success in your organization. When you are mired in the details of getting things done, the scope of what you can accomplish will be limited.

Failure to let go and adjust accordingly will create costs to you, those around you and the company.

1. Personal cost – you begin to feel that there is never enough time to think, to rest and create balance in your life. The work is constant and seems never ending. You are on a path to physical and mental burnout.
2. A cost to direct reports – Your doing the work robs them of growth and development opportunity. You are doing them no favors by withholding work or not giving them tough feedback when they are given challenging assignments and make mistakes.
3. Family costs – for those of you with spouses and children, 7-day work schedules robs the family of your time and results in missed birthdays, wedding anniversaries and school activities. The family is deprived and so are you.
4. Business Costs - Experts at the American Institute of Stress have found that each year in the United States, \$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is

spent on stress-related compensation claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, health insurance costs, direct medical expenses and employee turnover.

Despite the warning and the costs associated with not leveraging others, changing to new ways of working with others is not always easy. Two things get in the way.

1. One, you assume that no one can possibly do the job as well as you. Much of your confidence, success and praise may have been built on getting the job done. Not only are you good at making it happen, you love doing it and pride yourself on the quality of the end result. You are emotionally tied to the work. So it is not easy to see someone else do the job without the same level of commitment and passion that you have. It is simply hard to let go.
2. Two, you are timid about giving feedback and holding others accountable for a high standard of excellence. I have had clients who did not expect the best of their people. They found it difficult to demand performance and let their people off the hook. These managers spent extra hours and weekends to do the work. Then these same managers were frustrated about the lack of time

with family and the lack of capability among their direct reports.

So if you want to move up, you must let go. By letting go and leveraging others, you begin to contribute to the organization in a different way. This allows time to mentor and develop others. Most importantly it adds another building block of competence for movement to the next level.

Additional Reading:

The Next level – What insiders know about Executive Success” – Scott Eblin

The extraordinary leader – Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders – John H. Zenger and Joseph Folkman

High Flyers – Developing the Next Generation of Leaders – Morgan W. McCall, Jr.

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