

## Are you a Micro Manager or a Delegator??

When I began my retail management career, I set out to complete my tasks single-handedly. In the beginning I always tried to do things myself because I didn't know any better. Our management training program covered areas like creative merchandising, store operations, back-end functions and the like, but missed some of the critical areas for managers to succeed, like letting go of tasks and identifying those who can...and want to pick up the ball and run with it.

But what about the times when you're under the gun? Isn't it easier just to do it yourself? Consider what effect that has on willing, competent associates who are just waiting for that opportunity to shine. Demotivating to them? Does it result in less productivity? You bet it does!

As we mature, many of us have experienced that delegation not only makes us more effective in daily operations but also contributes to our personal career growth and that of others. In an ideal world, we're part of the team that's set on exceeding company's objectives. Practicing the art of delegation can and will:

- improve the results you get from your staff, in addition to honing your skills and increasing everyone's commitment to the organization through buy-in
- provide your employees with a morale booster like no other...*trusting them*.

What a concept!

To be effective,

**Make yourself let go.** Don't think you'll give up control; you'll actually hold more by having others both responsible *and* accountable for their actions. The key is to ensure that your employees understand your expectations and keep you informed about their decisions. Try the following steps:

### **Match the tasks to the team**

Identify which tasks you should delegate, usually ones that don't require special authority or experience, but don't make them all mundane. Make your staff aware that you're more concerned with the end result than a blow by blow description of how they accomplished it.

Then assess your staff and list qualified candidates for each. Profiling or assessment can help facilitate this. Then consider the current responsibilities and workload for each employee.

### **Ask, don't tell**

Schedule a meeting with the selected employee. With a prepared document, review the assigned task with them. Cover the project details, desired results, timeline, dates for progress reports and make sure they know you are behind them. Tell them it's ok to think independently, and that it's also ok to approach you as necessary to discuss the progress or problems...but to come with *their* thoughts on how to solve a situation, not just present a problem and wait for your all-knowing answer. Give them a chance right up front to

voice any concerns or thoughts. And, tell them what to expect in the way of a reward, whether it be monetary, additional time off or a recognition letter for their personnel file.

**Provide the necessary resources for success**

If it's an area that could require specialized training to be successful, have this lined up prior to discussing it with your employee. This could involve people (internal/external), internet research tools or a class. Maybe there are others in various departments that can help them gather what information they'll need to complete their project successfully. Approach these folks and let them know the individual has your backing to approach them for information. It might also be as simple as providing a list of email addresses and extensions to make their life easier.

**Know when to recall a project.** Let's face it, stuff happens. How often do we get through a day, let alone a week without some kind of detour on our business road map? This may arise either through the person you picked informing you things aren't going according to plan or you informing them you've changed direction (or been told to do so). If possible, redefine the task if necessary, discuss/set new options, success parameters and don't dwell on the negative. It can still provide a very positive outcome for all parties. You'll be reinvigorated with more time on your hands, and your staff should find a new sense of accomplishment and acknowledgment that the company recognizes their efforts.