PETRA

PEOPLE

ALL EMPLOYEES MUST WASH HANDS: WHY MICROMANAGING DOESN’T WORK
You’ve seen the signs. Whenever you use the restroom at a restaurant, grocery store or any business where keeping things sanitary is a must – there it is: “All employees must wash hands before returning to work.” Now, I understand that hand washing is in everyone’s best interest, and don’t get me wrong – I advocate it. If you want to know more about the importance of hand washing, the CDC has devoted several pages to the subject.

However, whenever I see those signs, it gets me thinking: Is it really necessary to essentially stand over your employees’ shoulders while they’re in the bathroom and remind them about basic hygiene (albeit in the form a sign)? Maybe it is. Or maybe it’s just the ultimate form of micromanagement in the workplace. At the office, constant reminders about how we should function and behave can turn a creative person into a robot and an A-player with differing ideas into a dissatisfied employee looking for his next opportunity to leave the company. If you want to engage your employees and get the very best out of them, you’ve got to cut down the rules and regulations, and stop micromanaging. Here are four steps to move you in the right direction:

1. **Agree that you’re all adults**
   I’ve written about the adult agreement before, but it’s often either forgotten or never implemented. Remember that you and your team are all adults and should act like it, which means you don’t shoot each other down or hide problems. Instead, bring issues to the table, admit fault if there is any and don’t shy away from making hard decisions. It’s crucial to keep communication open and professional at all times if you want to have a team that functions without your monitoring their every move.

2. **Be clear about expectations**
   If an employee knows what’s expected of him from the start, you won’t need to provide constant reminders. Identifying S.M.A.R.T. goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) for your team members will set them on a trajectory for success, bolster confidence and reduce your need to micromanage. If you’ve hired well, you’ve got nothing to worry about, and your team will perform to the highest standards.

3. **Trust your team**
   When Ronald Reagan was negotiating with the Soviets, he said we should “trust, but verify.” Well, you’re not facing a nuclear threat at the office, so once you’ve gathered a great team around you, trust that they’ll
do the job you hired them to do. Remain available for counsel and keep track of your team’s progress, and show that you appreciate them by giving them the room they need to do their work, while treating them like valued and trusted members of the team.

4. Get comfortable with change

Don’t expect things to stay the same, because they won’t. Your business is going to change over the years, and if you’ve taken time to plan and be intentional about growing your company culture and business, each change should bring about improvement. If, however, you resist the changes coming your way and insist on keeping things “the way you’ve always done them,” then you’re bound to find yourself (and your business) obsolete. Embrace new ideas. Be flexible, and you’ll benefit from all the resources around you – not just your own.

Maybe the “must wash hands” signs make us, as customers, more comfortable that standards are still being upheld. And, maybe there’s a segment of the workforce that’s more likely to follow the rules if you constantly remind them. I’d suggest those aren’t the players you want on your team. Run your business without the “signs.” Your employees will turn your trust into their best ideas, and your need to micromanage will disappear.

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