

Micromanagement

—Its Effect on People and Organizations

Inter-American Division SeLD Conference 2020

Presenter: Lowell C Cooper

- I. Micromanagement—What it is. What it is not. The reason it occurs. Its characteristics.
- II. Micromanagement—Its effect on people.
- III. Micromanagement—Its effect on organizations.
- IV. Micromanagement—What can be done about it.

“I perform better under strict micromanagement.”

“I perform better under strict micromanagement.”

—No Employee Ever

“Leadership is not so much the exercise of power itself as the empowerment of others.” —Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders, The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 80

Christ-like leadership is exercising power and authority for the good of others. Christian leaders do not abandon the use of authority but exert their power under the constraint of sacrificially living for the good of others.

“For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” —Luke 22:27 NASB

- I. Micromanagement—What it is. What it is not. The reason it occurs. Its characteristics.
- II. Micromanagement—Its effect on people.
- III. Micromanagement—Its effect on organizations.
- IV. Micromanagement—What can be done about it.

Micromanagement is a term that describes a management style characterized by excessive involvement, bordering on interference, in the work of subordinates.

Micromanagement is a term that describes a management style characterized by excessive involvement, bordering on interference, in the work of subordinates.

Mismanagement is a term that, among other things, describes a situation in which a manager tends to perform duties that really belong to a subordinate.

Mismanagement occurs when a manager is focused on doing non-managerial tasks.

Micromanagement occurs when a manager is preoccupied with the precise manner in which non-managerial tasks are performed by someone else

Micromanagement: Internal factors

- Excessive detail-oriented nature of supervisor
- Emotional insecurity
- Compensation for uncertainty about how to exercise authority.
- A symptom of weak rather than strong leadership.
- Perceived underperformance of person supervised.
- Personality differences.
- Misinterpretation due to employee's psychological state.

Micromanagement: External factors

- Organizational culture—“just the way we do it”.
- Heavy reliance on centralized decision-making.
- Threats to organization’s existence—regulatory demands, time and performance pressures.
- Instability of the managerial position.

Micromanagement: Its characteristics

- Reluctance to delegate.
- Constantly requiring reports.
- Limited freedom for subordinate to make decisions.
- Frequent complaints that work is not done right.
- Reluctance to pass on their skills or knowledge.
- Unwillingness to empower subordinates.

Micromanagement: Its characteristics—cont'd

- Extreme focus on details rather than big picture.
- Inability to process feedback.
- Projects drag on forever because supervisory level is a bottleneck for getting decisions.
- Penchant for control—a mentality that someone needs to be sure that things get done right.
- Needing to be copied on all emails, notified of all telephone conversations, etc.

- I. Micromanagement—What it is. What it is not. The reason it occurs. Its characteristics.
- II. Micromanagement—Its effect on people.
- III. Micromanagement—Its effect on organizations.
- IV. Micromanagement—What can be done about it.

Micromanagement: Effects on People

- Frustration
- Demotivation
- Increased stress
- Sense of inability to do things right or well
- No sense of ownership in the work
- Sense of imprisonment rather than empowerment
- Unhappy, unfulfilled, unproductive

“It doesn’t make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do.”

—Steve Jobs, Chairman, CEO, Co-founder of Apple, Inc.

- I. Micromanagement—What it is. What it is not. The reason it occurs. Its characteristics.
- II. Micromanagement—Its effect on people.
- III. Micromanagement—Its effect on organizations.
- IV. Micromanagement—What can be done about it.

Micromanaging may get short-term results. Over the long term however, micromanaging has a negative impact on the organization as well as the micromanager.

Micromanagement: Effect on Organizations

Inefficiency—two people to do one job

Loss of creativity due to employee disengagement

Workplace sense of synergy and high morale decreases

Productivity drops

Employee turnover increases

Risk-taking and innovation are stifled

Viewed as justification for retaliatory responses

- I. Micromanagement—What it is. What it is not. The reason it occurs. Its characteristics.
- II. Micromanagement—Its effect on people.
- III. Micromanagement—Its effect on organizations.
- IV. Micromanagement—What can be done about it.

What you can do if micromanaged...

Learn to manage your emotions

Keep commitments, anticipate needs, build trust

Put yourself in manager's shoes

Demonstrate commitment to supervisor's success

Dialogue to verbalize expectations

Talk about your discomfort with the relationship

Demonstrate a commitment to excellence

What you can do if you are a micromanager

Conduct some rigorous self-examination

The most difficult thing in the world is to know yourself.”

—Thales (Greek mathematician)

Micromanagement: Its characteristics

- Reluctance to delegate.
- Constantly requiring reports.
- Limited freedom for subordinate to make decisions.
- Frequent complaints that work is not done right.
- Reluctance to pass on their skills or knowledge.
- Unwillingness to empower subordinates.

Micromanagement: Its characteristics

- Extreme focus on details rather than big picture.
- Inability to process feedback.
- Projects drag on forever because supervisory level is a bottleneck for getting decisions.
- Penchant for control—a mentality that someone needs to be sure that things get done right.
- Needing to be copied on all emails, notified of all telephone conversations, etc.

What you can do if you are a micromanager

Conduct some rigorous self-examination

Watch how others supervise

What you can do if you are a micromanager

Conduct some rigorous self-examination

Watch how others supervise

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

—Carl Jung

What you can do if you are a micromanager

Conduct some rigorous self-examination

Watch how others supervise

Admit your tendency/Express desire to change

Do not change suddenly—creates confusion

Ask for feedback from those you supervise

Practice delegation—emphasize “what” more than “how”

Encourage innovation/Express appreciation

“King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, ‘How do you counsel me to answer this people?’ Then they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.’ But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him...”

—1 Kings 12:6-8, NASB

“God never designed that one man's mind and judgment should be a controlling power. He never designed that one man should rule and plan and devise without the careful and prayerful consideration of the whole body, in order that all may move in a sound, thorough, harmonious manner.”

—Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 3:16, 17

“Men whom the Lord calls to important positions in His work are to cultivate a humble dependence upon Him. They are not to seek to embrace too much authority; for God has not called them to a work of ruling, but to plan and counsel with their fellow laborers.”

—Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 9:270

“Sometimes a man who has been placed in responsibility as a leader gains the idea that he is in a position of supreme authority, and that all his brethren, before making advance moves, must first come to him for permission to do that which they feel should be done. Such a man is in a dangerous position...”

—Ellen White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 491, 492

“Those who accept a position of responsibility in the cause of God should always remember that with the call to this work God has also called them to walk circumspectly before Him and before their fellow men. Instead of considering it their duty to order and dictate and command, they should realize that they are to be learners themselves.”

—Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:282

“...This does not authorize any one man to undertake the work of ordering his brethren arbitrarily to do as he thinks advisable, irrespective of their own personal convictions of duty. Nor are God's chosen laborers to feel that at every step they must wait to ask some officer in authority whether they may do this or that.”

—Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 491

“The Lord will not accept the work of any man that is not done in tenderness and love and kindness. He has not set us as rulers, to lord it over His heritage. Let others be moved by Christ, just as we desire to be moved by Him.”

—Ellen White, *The Upward Look*, p. 267

No situation lasts forever and sometimes patience and forbearance yield insights and experience that shed a positive and lasting influence on our own exercise of leadership.

Change and growth are possible. Let's admit our weakness and turn to God and our colleagues for guidance in improving our practice of Christian leadership.

—*End*—