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Mastering micromanagement

Three tell-tale signs that indicate an employee may need to “grow elsewhere”

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP OFTEN WARN AGAINST THE DANGERS OF MICROMANAGEMENT. But sometimes micromanagement is a symptom that suggests a problem needs to be addressed.

If you are micromanaging the same situation and the same person repeatedly, it may be time to “free that person up” for new opportunities. Although most employees don’t like being micromanaged, it’s often appropriate when faced with new or problem staff members.

However, it’s not appropriate to hover over a problem employee’s behavior without recognizing that the employee may need to go elsewhere. So how and when do you know you might need to make that decision? The following are a few behaviors you should look out for.

1. A lack of interest in improvement. Merely “not getting it” is not the same as demonstrating no interest.

If your employee wants to improve, he or she will attempt to make changes. And even if those changes don’t necessarily meet your standards, you can see the passion for improvement.

“Demonstrating no interest” can be described as



doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. When employees demonstrate this behavior and shows no passion or interest in your feedback, and you see no change in performance, then in their mind, they’ve already quit.

2. Repeating the same thing more than three times.

Adults learn in different ways, and because of that, there will be times when you must repeat your instructions.

But if you have repeated your instructions or feedback for improvement more than three times and in three different ways, then that person is probably not going to improve. He or she

is either not listening or not interested in making any changes.

3. The excuses increase, but performance does not. No one likes to hear excuses, least of all a leader trying to develop a struggling employee.

Sometimes, excuses are actually mentions of valid barriers. However, more often than not, excuses are a way of bypassing responsibility and buying time until the inevitable.

Have your employee write down any perceived barriers to success. Once these have been cleared out or explained — if excuses increase and performance does not — it is your responsibility to take interest

in the growth of this employee and help them find that growth elsewhere.

An effective leader does not relish the chance, or look for ways, to let employees go. It’s not a fun task. Yet, it is an important part of the role of a leader, one that must be taken seriously and conducted swiftly.

Keep in mind that there is a process to be followed when considering employee termination. It can vary by state, by the rules you have created, and how you have set up your practice with employees or contractors and your tax status.

However, once you have decided upon and looked at each of those areas with your CPA or business advisor, the following process is

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a general guideline:

- ▶ On a first offense, conduct a conversation, and document in the employee's file that this conversation took place.
- ▶ Add a written component to a verbal conversation on the second offense. This reminder is also written down and shown to the employee. Nothing needs to be signed by the employee, but a copy will again go in that employee's file for documentation's sake.
- ▶ Issue a formal written warning on the third offense. This document should be signed by you and the employee with a commitment on behalf of the employee to improve or there will be consequences in place up to and including termination.
- ▶ On the final offense, show the employee the documentation of steps one through three and the signatures, and remind him or her of the previous conversations.

At this time, the employee will have chosen to not be compliant and you can let them know you are terminating employment.

Many would argue that this is one of the toughest elements of your job. Keep in mind that it is the employee's choice and something that must be handled with care, compassion, and professionalism.

If you allow an employee who needs to grow elsewhere to remain as an unproductive team member, his or her behavior can infect the rest of those on the team, making the problem employee, in this case, negatively contagious. ☹



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