Jessica Marie
Storyteller. Product Marketer. Business Designer.

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Micromanagers: Flushing Companies Down the Toilet, One Detail at a Time

July 27, 2014 | 👁 **115,886** 👍 **2,318** 💬 **501**

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People don't leave bad companies. They leave bad bosses. They don't leave flawed organizational structures and abandon lousy products and technology. They leave flawed leadership.

No matter how brilliant a company's products and/or services may be, if management is dysfunctional, that company will have serious problems. It may not be immediate, but it's nearly a guarantee that it will happen. This concept may sound like a no-brainer, but it continues to happen across all companies and industries, both big and small.

There is so much emphasis on IQ in organizations, and not enough on leadership. Now we have a bunch of technological geniuses who are socially and emotionally inept.

The problem? A complete lack of emotional intelligence, insecurity, and sheer incompetence on the most basic level.

Leaders set the tone of an organization. The outer environment is a reflection of the inner environment of those who establish the quality of the company. When the leader(s) are chaotic and manage without a solid foundation or strategy, the whole operation turns into fire drills, with everyone running around like beheaded chickens.

The only thing this creates is a sustained profile of hysterics and frustration.

The Dangers of Micromanagement

Micromanaging is a method of management in which an individual closely observes or controls the work of an employee. In comparison to simply giving general direction, the micromanager monitors and evaluates every stage in a process, from beginning to end.

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This behavior negatively affects efficiency, creativity, trust, communication, problem-solving, and the company's ability to reach its goals.

The typical micromanager spends their time directing employees rather than empowering them. They are often very insecure. They spend more time with the details of business operations instead of planning the company's short-term and long-term growth strategies. The fact of the matter is, time DOES equal money. When the designated leader of an organization is wasting time (and therefore money) on overseeing projects instead of focusing on specific growth opportunities, it's time to reevaluate a few things.

> " *There is a huge difference between leadership and simply using one's title, position and given authority, to exercise political and/or bureaucratic power.*
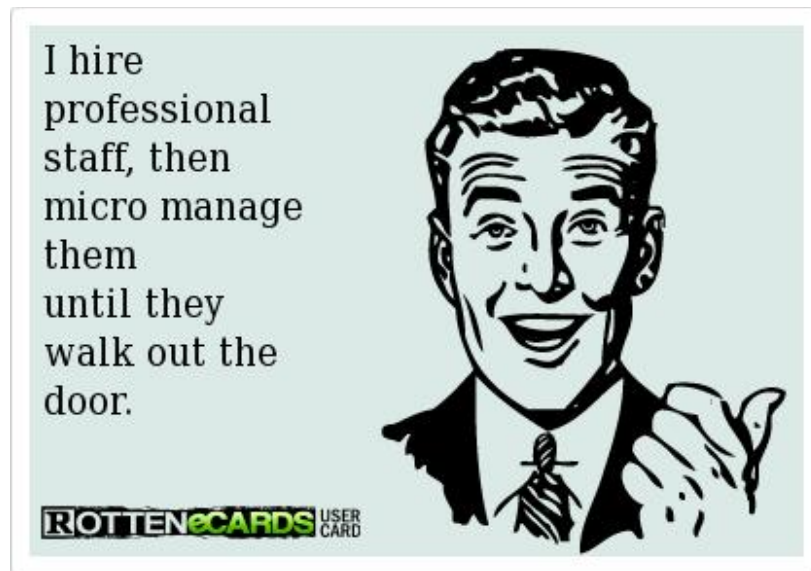
The effects of micromanagement can be disastrous for a company's culture. Employees will soon realize that you are not listening to them. They will undoubtedly shut down, stop making suggestions or going to you with questions. Ultimately, employees will become disenchanted and will eventually quit to work for another company.

Much of the time, these quasi-leaders believe that they are the only ones who understand the business model and are the sole reason for the company's revenue. They will often surround themselves with passive people who don't question their authority, and fail to challenge or criticize their actions. These managers also tend to be extremely closed-minded to new approaches or ideas to solve problems.

It is for all these reasons that these types of managers will never hold a high level position at a large company. Of course, exceptions are noted, we often hear of executives who behave this way, but for the most part, they just do not possess the characteristics required to deal with projects and people in a productive and meaningful way.

> " *People don't leave bad companies. They leave bad bosses.*

Micromanagers want things done in a particular way. We all do - the *"right way"* – translation – *"my way"*. However, when these managers communicate requirements, they're simply telling them to execute. In this case, they're not asking anyone to think for themselves. And employees who actually engage in their work, won't be satisfied for very long.

Managers certainly do not always have the best and brightest answers. Letting employees become part of the decision process is so important for increased productivity and helping everyone feel valued.
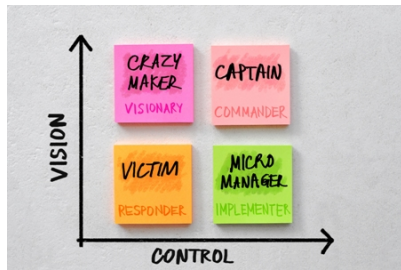
Underlying Problems

The underlying psychological issue of micromanagers is that most action (perhaps *reaction* is a more appropriate description) is based on fear, not reason or evidence. This causes major problems. First and foremost, their fear drives their need to control the details in processes, and their need for constant recognition. It's not uncommon that most people who work with micromanagers have adapted their own behavior to try and prevent confrontation. However, enabling these issues only makes the problem worse.

There is also a failure to prioritize, making managerial and operational rhythms suffer. "Post-mortem" meetings become the norm, rather than after-action reviews. Blame is thrown in every direction except the manager's and turnover gets worse.

What Makes a Great Boss?

1. *Communication:* A great boss is a communicator who has the ability to relate deeply to others, someone who is able to empathize and recognize the talents in their employees and peers. They have strong emotional intelligence and self-awareness, and speak and act with integrity.

2. *Delegation:* Great leaders know when and how to delegate and, for the most part, remain removed from the project, trusting their employees to be professional and produce results. They know that being involved in the granular details of these projects is a waste of their time, and inhibits their employees from feeling free to do great work. They know that they should trust their employees and don't micromanage to the point of distraction.

3. *Fairness:* There is a difference between treating employees equally and treating them fairly. Let's face it: Not all employees are equal. Everyone is different. Some employees create different value within the organization. A great boss treats everyone fairly, but not equally.

4. *Humility:* Great bosses understand that the business is not about them. Leaders have to be able to talk and listen to their employees on all levels of the company. At the same time, they must have the respect of their employees, the kind of respect that's earned by being honest, having integrity, and being humble.

5. *Responsibility:* Leaders take responsibility for their actions. If you make a mistake, own it. Don't blame others for your lack of self-awareness, or make excuses for failed projects and blown deadlines.

What Do Employees Want?

Employees don't just come to work for a paycheck. Yes, SOME do. However, research suggests that most people are not simply extrinsically motivated. They are intrinsically motivated and would rather be respected and praised for their work instead of just paid more.

What do we as employees (and managers) want? To be left alone to do our work in peace. Every independent and intelligent person who has the training, knowledge and desire to work at an organization has something important to contribute. Allowing them to become a part of the process can have a hugely positive impact. Not only will they have a sense of purpose, but also a sense of belonging and community within the organization, working toward a shared goal. To put it simply – they will be engaged.

Nobody wants to have their autonomy and creativity robbed from them. Managers at all levels within an organization must stay aware of the dangers of micromanagers and have ways of dealing with those issues. Otherwise, there's a rough road ahead, for everyone.

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Susan Chan
gurulu.com - Director
It's all about the boss. It can be hell
working for someone who just cannot get off your back constantly telling you
what to do. The best leaders are those who remain on the same level as their
troops, eat the same food, have a similar office, stand at the front line and
trust their troops to execute the overall plan according the local
circumstances they are faced with without ordering them around. I found
micro-managers are typically megalomaniacs who think they are smarter than
everyone else. Anybody agree?
Like(120)   Reply(10)   1 day ago

Vineet Kumar
Associate Technical Delivery Manager at Accolite
Nice post. Employees
don't leave companies but managers (or bosses). And there are things more
important than money. You can not make a person happier who works for money
only, because someday he will find better paycheck and leave. But people who
work for recognition are the true assets for an organisation. Micromanagement
can ruin a talent and vision.
Like(49)   Reply(7)   1 day ago

Louis D. LoPraeste
~ An American Writer and Thinker~
... we have a bunch of
technological geniuses who are socially and emotionally inept... Oh lord, so
true. So true.
Like(31)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Harrison owusu
Career Coach Consult, Snr. Managing Partner (Part Time)
Great article.
Very true and direct. Micromanagers also usurp credit for tasks performed by
their assistants or junior colleagues. They tweak the task and call it their
own. They're always delegating and do not initiate any project. They are
master critics of finished tasks. They do not inspire confidence and the
always think highly of themselves and belittle others.
Like(29)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Dennis Thireault, M.S.
Scientist|Project Manager|Regulatory Affairs|QA Compliance|Consultant
Read Peter M. Senge's book
"The Fifth Discipline" about the Learning Organization and build your company
around his idea of a learning organization. Micromanagers are the worst
people to work for; however they also seem to rise the fastest up the ladder
as well. Often they are like chameleons when they get initially hired by HR
and then change their colors quickly after they are in the corporate
culture.
Like(24)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Sean Lemass
Fleet Management System Dispatch Supervisor at Solid Energy New Zealand Ltd
"leaving
bad bosses not bad companies". have seen a lot of highly skilled, intelligent
people leave a great company for this reason Do you write any articles on
how to deal with micro-managers.
Like(4)   Reply(3)   1 day ago

Alan Lloyd
Independent Media Production
With good people working for you, all
that is needed is to give them a goal and the room they need to accomplish it.
That this is so rarely done continues to amaze me. It's as though someone, on
deciding they want a new house, insists on choosing the tools for the
carpenters doing the framing.
Like(21)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Christopher Gu
**CDNPAL Media Exchange. Creators of NginAd, OpenRTB Duplex Enabled Open Source
Ad Server for Video, Mobile and Display**
"People don't leave bad
companies. They leave bad bosses. They don't leave flawed organizational
structures and abandon lousy products and technology". Um, you should go read
Glassdoor.com. People leave flawed organizational structures ALL THE TIME, and
they say so in their exit reviews on Glassdoor. Good bosses often times can't
make up for shitty benefits and subpar salaries for comparable positions.
People often call these companies "starter tech companies" like you would call
a 2 BR house a "starter home" and they will say how it's a great doorway to
get to a better company.
Like(11)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Markus Wolter
Consultant bei Intercountry CH

To put it in one word :
BULLSEYE!! This post is really true, "Much of the time, these quasi-leaders believe that they are the only ones who understand the business model and are the sole reason for the company's revenue. They will often surround themselves with passive people who don't question their authority, and fail to challenge or criticize their actions." Especially the last sentence is a result of this management style. But how on earth can those companies with those kind of people exist? Simple: Either they are very big and full of money and they just exchange the employees like a pair of dirty trousers or the company has an excellent enviroment of growth and revenues (maybe without reasonable competition) and so every argument of the lack of leadership in the company is crushed by the demonstration of the good numbers (although they could be way better with proper management!!). That this kind of handling people also causes fear is described excellently in the post and I can only underline that! In the end the employee will as soon as it is possible leave that company and so the company basically feeds on the financial dependence of their staff and that is THE motivation killer... but hey: as long as there are enough people standing in line for a job those guys won't give a damn ... even if one day they company goes broke. Then those guys will say: "Hey I did my best and fired so many incompetent people! But I cannot do everything by myself!!" True.... ;-)

Like(12)   Reply   1 day ago

Tina Gerson
Associate Director of Sales at Loews Hotels
It really is all about the
boss. Having just left a company I worked for over the last 15 years, I can tell you the poor leadership leads to low morale, dissention and constant chatter among the middle management and hourly employees. Leaders in name only set poor examples of how to coach and grow a team by staying behind closed doors and virtually staying out of touch with their "team". Ultimately leading to the failure to fulfill annual goals and motivate a team of professionals. It's the downfall of corporations who leave these people in positions of authority well past the expiration date

Like(9)   Reply   1 day ago

NaRena Nedoff
Motivated Logistics Professional willing to move mountains for the right company.
Great
article! Working under a micromanager was one of the most difficult things I have ever done and I will make sure it doesn't happen, again!

Like(5)   Reply(1)   21 hours ago

Bob Korzeniowski, MBA, CPA, PMP
IT Wild Card, part of a winning hand
I'd
add : 6. Trust. You hired someone to get the job done. Micromanaging is not trusting them to get it done.

Like(8)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Nachiket Joshi
Senior Revenue Manager at Marriott International
Brilliant Article!
People who move into managerial positions with strong technical knowledge but with inadequate/inappropriate grooming for stepping up in managerial position end up micro managing.

Like(6)   Reply(1)   23 hours ago

Scott Turner, MBA
Executive Leader I Sales & Marketing I Consulting I Healthcare I Technology I Revenue and Earnings Accelerator
Great post, Jessica
Marie! Indeed, having experienced both extremes of your stated equation, I can 100% support your assertions!

Like(6)   Reply   1 day ago

Justin Grounds
Started the Entrepreneur Map
Just had 8 years first hand
experience of being micromanaged. If you find yourself being micromanaged,
seriously start working on plan B.
Like(6)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Sasker Soontiëns
Content Director at Brainstud
After working in quite the a particular
environment last year I noticed that some people actually function
fantastically with a micro managing boss. I'm not sure how well this works for
the overall learning curve of the person but if you look at the output, it was
better when micro managed. On the other hand for me personally this does not
work at all. Could this also have something to do with having the ENTP [MBTI
test] personality type? I'm curious to your thoughts.
Like(1)   Reply(2)   7 hours ago

Mark Yokel
President, Options Trader at Mark Yokel
Absolutely true. Perhaps
the most important thing that a management team can do is to create a positive
and productive work environment. It should be a place where workers want to
spend time and be successful. It should reward success and not threaten
punitive measures if an individual or team falls short. In my mind, a manager
should give his or her people the autonomy they want and need to get the job
done. Micromanagement is practiced by leaders that do not trust their team
and will almost certainly lead to mediocre performance at best.
Like(3)   Reply(1)   1 day ago

Timothy Kline
Senior Methods Development Scientist at Kalon Biotherapeutics, LLC
This
post is perfect!
Like(3)   Reply   1 day ago

Jerry Ramos, PE
President at Ramos Consulting, LLC
Good article and 99% true. For
the 1%, too much praising or an expectation of constant praising can also be a
distraction to an organization. Praising and recognition should come with
occasional praising and appropriate compensation.
Like(2)   Reply   1 day ago

Kelvin Otis
Creative Copywriter/Web Content Strategist
Rarely is an article written
here on LinkedIn where you'll find nearly 100% consensus. From HR personnel to
top management, the verdict is in: micromanaging is a destructive force. I've
seen an entire department ruined as a result. And I've seen too many good
people leave companies because of it. However, one is left wondering why
companies fail to correct it even when it's an obvious problem. One of the
biggest takeaways from this excellent article is that micromanaging is based
on fear and a lack of trust. However, I wouldn't go so far as to say that all
micromanagers are incompetent. For the most part, people qualify for a
management position because they've earned it. Micromanagers are simply
missing a critical soft-skill component.
Like(2)   Reply   1 day ago

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