

Why you should never micromanage

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What is Micromanagement?

Micromanagement is a management style characterized by managers who closely monitor subordinates' work, frequently adding their input and constantly changing the final output (Patel, 2017). Micromanagers obsess about the smallest details and are seemingly incapable of delegation. By definition, micromanagement is a management style where a manager closely observes or controls the work of subordinates or employees (Wallen, 2015).

Micromanagement generally has a negative connotation, so why do people micromanage? Micromanaging ensures that tasks are performed in a very precise manner. The problem with micromanagement is that it is not always the right or most productive way of doing things. Micromanagement is all about excessive control and is often associated with a lack of freedom and creativity in the workplace.

Is It Good To Micromanage?

Fisher, Amabile, and Pillemer (2021) state that micromanagers often display a lack of trust in their co-workers and subordinates and often work poorly with others. In this article, we look at some of the other dangers that come along with this style of management and why you should avoid it.

Danger 1: High Turnover of Staff

Simply put, most people do not take well to being micromanaged. When employees are micromanaged, they often do one thing - quit. Considering the reasons why managers micromanage (ego, insecurity, inexperience, perfectionism, arrogance), it is simply not worth the high turnover rate. Having to constantly hire and train staff not only disrupts an organization's momentum but also results in the loss of skilled and effective employees.

Danger 2: Loss of Trust

Micromanagement often leads to a breakdown of trust between managers and staff. When trust is gone, two things can happen a serious loss of productivity and loss of employees. Yes, the latter is a worst-case scenario, but it often happens. Studies have shown that a poor relationship with an immediate supervisor is one of the leading causes why employees quit their jobs (HBR, 2017).

Danger 3: Dependent Employees

Micromanagement creates an environment where employees become overly dependent on their

manager. In an ideal scenario, employees should be empowered and have the confidence to perform tasks on their own. Micromanagement makes employees feel like they must have constant guidance from their manager. Dependent employees take more time and effort to manage, which can take a toll on overall productivity.

Danger 4: Lack of Autonomy

When you micromanage, employees begin to feel like they are losing their autonomy. When this happens, they will slowly lose the desire to do anything but that which their manager's demand, and little more. No one will step outside the box or go the extra mile for a task.

Danger 5: No Innovation

One of the biggest dangers of micromanaging is crushing the creativity of employees'. Staff who frequently interact with clients often know what clients need. Harnessing employees' suggestions may bring a lot of value to the organization. While some innovations might not always be winners, crushing creativity destroys any chances of good ideas being shared. By refusing to take risks in innovation, you are also refusing the potential for progress.

Ways to deal with a micromanaging boss

- **Build Trust**

Trust is key to any healthy professional relationship and when a micromanaging boss is concerned, it becomes crucial. A common reason someone will micromanage their employees is that they struggle to trust them, regardless of whether they have done something to jeopardize this trust or not.

Lambart (2020) says, "Trust takes time to build, a subordinate needs to earn it by demonstrating to a manager that they are on top of things, ensuring that tasks are completed on time and notifying them when there are delays." Keeping your manager informed about the progress of your work can do wonders for the situation."

- **Open Up Dialogue about the Situation**

Micromanagement can often have a very negative effect on employees. Micromanagement often results in low morale, lack of confidence, stifled creativity, and a general loss of independence. Managers often do not realize how their behavior is affecting their employees.

If an employee feels like their manager's micromanagement tendencies are affecting their ability to fulfill their role, then it might pay to address the issue sensitively and discreetly. There is a need to explain politely to their manager how their behavior makes them feel and have some specific examples on hand.

- **Establish Boundaries and Expectations.**

As part of the conversation above, it may be useful to establish further clarity on the role responsibilities and expectations of both parties so that there is no misinterpretation. It is a good idea to establish clarity around expected communication periods, methods, and channels. If both parties are aware of what is expected in terms of communication, then there is less need for managers to be constantly checking in.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the causes of micromanagement can be either personal or institutional. Certain personality traits in managers, such as perfectionism and insecurity, may predispose them to micromanagement. The relationship between the manager and the subordinate, particularly a lack of trust or respect or if the manager feels the subordinate lacks competence, can also encourage micromanagement. Institutional causes could include intense downward pressures on managers to achieve results.

The negative effects of micromanagement are broad, including worker disengagement, breakdown of the manager-subordinate relationship, reduced productivity, and reduced self-belief in the individuals being micromanaged. Organizations may experience attrition of talent if micromanagement is part of the culture.

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