



Leadership Essentials

**Ten Signs That
You Might Be A
Micromanager**



PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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Objective: This lesson helps you identify early warning signs that you might be transforming into the type of manager who sucks the joy out of work – The Micromanager. It will help you take an honest assessment of your style and devise an action plan to unlock the potential of your team.

Repercussions of Micromanagement

“Team members need to feel trusted and valued, and micromanaging communicates the opposite. Founders who are prone to manage every detail of their businesses will ultimately kill themselves as well as lose the support of team members. Learn to delegate key tasks and give credit.”

~Martin Zwilling

Challenge: Have you experienced these micromanagement behaviors from managers?

- Control over methodologies or “how” things are done
- Unnecessary/excessive requirements for approvals
- Frequent status meetings
- Dominance and control over time
- Excessive monitoring and reporting

If you checked any of the above, what were the repercussions to you, the team, and the company?

“Overly dominant managers deliver results in the short-term but build teams who do only enough to stay off the radar and nothing else.”

~Ian Mathews

Compliance or Commitment?

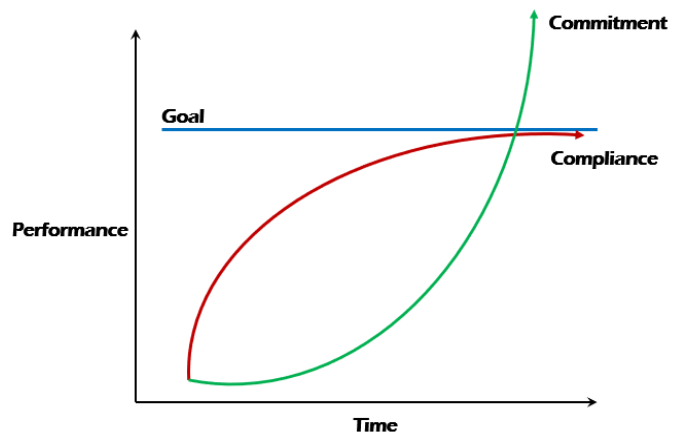
Compliance: A micromanager might be able to follow up incessantly and muscle their team to a goal. But, for how long? With compliance, a team will do just enough in the short-term while looking for opportunities to leave the company and grow.

Commitment: A committed team that takes ownership of their work will break through goals and sustain performance for much longer.

When do participation, collaboration, and oversight become micromanagement? When they become barriers to achievement, or impediments to getting things done. Regardless of the intent, the results are subtraction, not addition.
~Harry E. Chambers

If left unchecked, micromanagement spreads quickly throughout an organization. Micromanagers create more micromanagers, as subordinates feel the need to delve into levels of detail demanded by their manager.

Challenge: In each area (compliance and commitment), identify a time you have been led for each and what were the results?



Compliance:

Commitment:

How Tight are Your Reins?

Even the most egregious control freaks will deny being a micromanager. Studies show that 8 out of 10 employees experience overly controlling managers. Relinquishing control starts with recognizing warning signs. Below is a checklist of micromanagement behaviors.



Challenge: Check each statement that could apply to you.

- You are losing good people from your team.
- You work consistently long hours and can't vacation without frequently "checking in."
- You ask to be copied on team emails and your email inbox is impossible to clear.
- You frequently re-do work that you attempt to delegate.
- You have a list of pending approvals and decisions that your team is waiting on.
- You are always in meetings and you initiate many of them.
- You prefer to document all work processes.
- You are disappointed by your team's lack of initiative.
- Your calendar always is booked, and your to-do list never ends.
- You request frequent updates prior to deadlines.
- You rarely ask for input from others.
- You control 'how' things are done, rather than focusing on outcomes.
- Delegating tasks is difficult for you.
- You are often frustrated with work because you would have approached tasks differently.
- Your tasks suffer because you focus too much on the work of others.
- Your team receives detailed, exacting plans to achieve assigned tasks.
- You are convinced that projects will crash and burn without your continuous oversight and contribution.
- You always need to know where your employees are and what they're doing.

Total Scoring

Add your total numbers of checkmarks _____

(Scoring results on next page)

"How leaders respond to failure determines how much micromanagement takes place in an organization."

~Ian Mathews

Scoring Results

Score	Result Description
Score of 3 or less	You may want to get a second opinion! Denial or sociable desirability may have influenced your responses. Most people who have a tendency toward micromanagement are not aware they are doing it.
Score of 4 or 8	If you responded accurately, you are leading an empowered and engaged team. A few tweaks might be all it takes to create a world-class team.
Score between 9–14	You have an opportunity to leverage your team much more effectively. Start by engaging your team and asking, “How can I use your strengths more?”
Score of 15 or higher	They might tell you, but you are driving your team nuts. If people are not leaving in droves, they will shortly. Invest in a coach to help you make dramatic changes.

Challenge: Reflect on your results. Are you surprised? Why or Why not?



Ask yourself:

Would your team score you the same?

Consider sharing this quiz with your team if you are not certain. How many boxes would they check based on their perception of your leadership style?

Applying the Concepts – Action Planning

Heeding the warning signs that you might be a micromanager, apply these concepts and strategies to your personal work situation. A summary of each sign is provided, along with a challenge question.

1. Improve team morale and lower risk of turnover.

“If you want to retain talented people, relinquish control rather than tightening your grip.”

Challenge: In what ways could you loosen control? List 3 areas.

1.
2.
3.

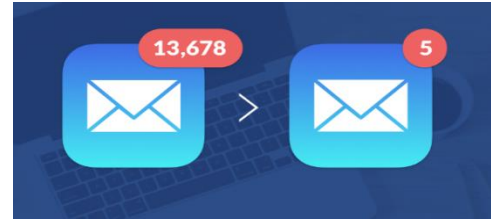
2. Work less hours and vacation without meddling.

Challenge: Identify a second-in-command with potential to lead while you are out of the office. What steps could you take to develop this person to make decisions in your absence?

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3. Take control of your email inbox.

“Start removing yourself from email distributions. Use this as an opportunity to build confidence in your team, letting them know you trust them and don’t need to see everything.”



Challenge: Study your inbox and determine the reason you received each email. What exactly was the reason you were on the distribution? How many could be handled without your attention? List three below and journal your plan to eliminate similar emails in the future.

1.
2.
3.

4. Save time by eliminating re-work when you delegate to your team.

“If you typically re-do 20-30% of any work your team completes, you should expect quality eventually slipping to 70-80%. Focus on calling the plays, developing your players and managing the game; less on playing goalie.”



Challenge: Identify one area where you are currently serving as the goalie and not the coach. Why?

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5. Delegate more and spend less time explain “how.”

“Your job as a leader is improving the business and developing people. Try the 70% Rule. If someone on your team can handle a responsibility at least 70% as well as you, DELEGATE IT.”

Challenge: List two responsibilities that should not require someone at your paygrade. What is the outcome you need achieved? Write the outcome, timing and acceptable range of variability for each assignment.

Challenge: Identify one person on your team who meets the 70% Rule for each responsibility listed above. What steps can you take to delegate immediately?

6. Reduce the list of pending approvals and decisions that your team is waiting on.

“Effective leaders make a difference by ensuring the organization is constantly moving forward. Do you want to be known as a bottleneck?”



Challenge: Choose one process that currently requires your sign-off and ask yourself these questions:

What is the business impact?

What unique value do I add? In other words, why me?

What return can the business expect for waiting on my approval?

What does the delay of additional approval cost the business?

If I push this decision down the hierarchy, what is the risk to the business?

If the additional approval is necessary, who is someone on your team who could reliably make the decision without adding risk to the organization?

7. Reduce the time you and your team spend in meetings.

"The more meetings you add to check up on your team's work, the less engaged they will feel at work."

Ask yourself: Do you hold frequent post-mortem meetings to second-guess every decision and action taken? Do you often call meetings before meetings to make sure that your employees are prepared?

Challenge: Think of a meeting you set up with your team, then ask yourself these three questions:

Did every participant benefit, or did this meeting appease your anxiety?

Could you get the same information without a meeting? How?

Why do you need to keep such close tabs on status? Do you have the right people?

Most managers can use these questions to find low-hanging fruit and give back some control to their team.

~Ian Mathews

8. Reduce your reliance on process.

"In business, more process typically equates to more control. Businesses need process, but it is easy to go overboard."

Challenge: Think of a process currently in place, then ask yourself the following questions:

Who does this process serve?

Does the process serve customers and your team or is it simply in place to appease you?

How much time is sacrificed for the sake of this process?

How frequently are exceptions granted?

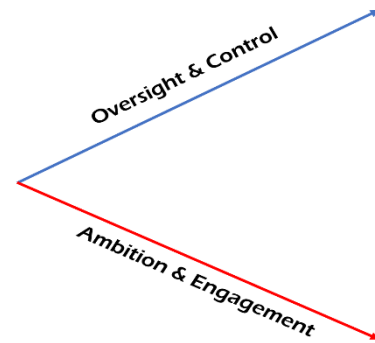
Businesses with an over-reliance on process typically employ weak teams incapable of independent thought.

~Ian Mathews

9. Improve your team's initiative by relinquishing control.

"More oversight and control leads to lower engagement from teams. Ambition lowers in an oppressive environment. Micromanaged teams don't take initiative."

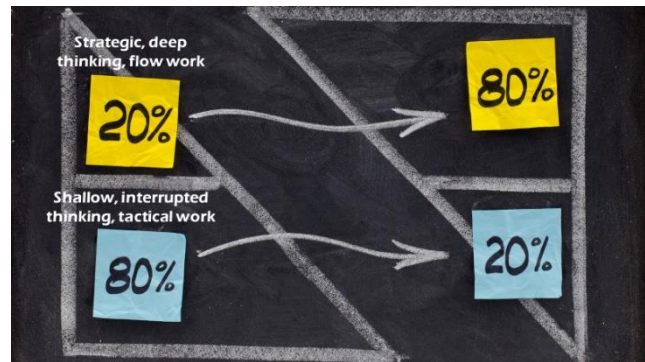
Challenge: Think of a team you have been on that lacked initiative. What ways did the leader play in the situation?



10. Free up time to think strategically.

"Leaders who think strategically leave time in their schedule to think deeply. A leader with no white space in their calendar is not thinking long-term for the business."

Challenge: Study the last two weeks of your calendar. To free up time for "white space" thinking, what tactical items could you delegate to your team?



Next Steps

Challenge: Identify 3 areas of this training and exercise that left an impression on you. How can you change your approach to incorporate these lessons as habits?

1.
2.
3.