



AVOIDING THE DO-IT-YOURSELF TRAP

Suppose there's a report that one of your junior staff is supposed to be preparing.

It's a complicated report. The deadline is tight. And the person has never worked on it before. You, on the other hand, have put similar reports together so many times you could do it in your sleep.

You could spend a lot of time explaining to the person exactly how to put the report together, answer a lot of questions, wait while they struggle through with it, check their work for mistakes, answer a lot more questions, then repeat till they eventually get it right.

Or you could just do it yourself, and explain it to them later when you get around to it.

That can save you a lot of trouble right now, but at the cost of greater trouble later on.

RECOGNIZE THE TRAP

"I can do it faster myself" is a seductive notion precisely because, in the immediate term, it's true. You have the experience and the skill to make quick work of tasks that less seasoned members of your team struggle with.

In the long term, though, doing it yourself can have very damaging consequences, for two reasons:

- If you're doing the hard stuff yourself, your people are never going to learn how to do it.
- If you're doing the work your people are supposed to be doing, who's doing your work?

What's at stake is twofold: **your ability to develop your people**

rather than encouraging prolonged dependence, **and to manage your time** (and theirs) more effectively.

- **Tight deadlines should be the exception, not the rule.** From time to time an emergency situation may occur, but in the normal course of business you should make sure you build time into the weekly routine for your people to learn new skills, and for you to coach them.
- **Give clear direction to your people.** Let them know exactly what you want done and when you want them to do it. Give them the tools they need to succeed. Provide them with whatever explanations they require. Establish clear expectations.
- **Make yourself available** to them as a resource if they need you—be willing to answer questions, provide suggestions, give support, etc.—but **don't do the work for them.**
- **Set appropriate goals.** A new rep who's just getting started in sales is not going to be capable of doing the things you expect of someone who's been in the field for a few years. Give them both opportunities to grow and stretch.

DON'T JUMP IN YOURSELF

For people who have recently been promoted to management it is a particular temptation to keep on *doing the job*. That's what you're good at; that's what you like doing; and the urge to step in can be

powerful when you see one of your people making mistakes and possibly jeopardizing results in a situation where you know you could have done a lot better yourself.

But you're a manager now. It's not just a change of title—it's a whole different perspective on the job.

When one of your people is having problems, **the solution is usually not to do the work yourself, but to coach them to do it better.**

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Recognize the difference between doing the work and coaching others to do it.
- When you feel the urge to *do*, slow down and take time to evaluate why, and what you want to accomplish. Learn when your expertise is more valuable in the field, or behind the scenes.
- Make sure your people get the learning experiences they need. Discuss and agree on the areas you would like them to improve, and arrange a series of steps to ensure success.
- Be available to your people to handle questions and situations as they arise.

