

THE BRIGHT SIDE® OF CHANGE

Written by Donna Rae Smith

CORRALLING CONTROL

Ever notice how the qualities that make for successful leaders—self-confidence, focus, determination—can be hindrances when carried too far? A case in point: the common leadership style of “directive control,” where the workplace is so controlled that productivity and innovation are stifled.



For many leaders this stems from a belief that their way of doing things will be better than anyone else's, and, it's often closely tied to a reluctance to trust others. Here are a few of the pitfalls:

1. **Poor time management.** As a leader, there are elements of your job that you can't give away. When you try to do everything yourself or micromanage those around you, you take away precious time from those matters that only *you* can handle.
2. **Failure to build staff capacity.** As a manager, one of your key responsibilities is to identify and build the capacities of those on your team. You can't do that if you're not giving them the freedom to decide how to approach a project and to carry it through to completion. Giving staff the opportunity to grow through their work and trusting them will make them more invested in what they're doing and more engaged by leaps and bounds.
3. **Failure to capitalize on great ideas.** As a leader it can be hard to let go of the belief that “my way is the best way.” And yet, the ability to recognize and support the good ideas of others is invaluable to success and growth. Capitalize on the knowledge, experience and creativity of those around you.

I've been working to change my own behaviors around control. I've found there's a snowball effect – the first step was hard, but since then it has become easier and more natural to give responsibility and authority to those around me. I have more energy now for the projects that need my attention, and I'm more trusting that others are capable to do what needs to get done.

The Experiment



1. **Choose a project to delegate.** Where possible, delegate an entire project (rather than just one portion). It's easier to create a feeling of ownership that way, and staff will be more invested.
2. **Match the project to the person.** Help others succeed by giving them assignments that are suited to them – that fit their skills and abilities and for which they demonstrate an interest.

3. **Be clear.** Give clear guidance on what needs to be done and when, but don't dictate how it needs to be accomplished. Make yourself available to answer questions but don't hover or check in constantly.
4. **Give feedback and coach.** Let staff know when they do something well, and give guidance when improvement is needed.
5. **Build.** Identify what additional skills and training staff need, so that they can take on assignments of increasing responsibility.
6. Repeat!

THE CONVERSATION: Share the results of your experiment in the comments below or contact the author directly at donnarae@bright-side.com.

ABOUT DONNA RAE SMITH

Donna Rae Smith is a guest blogger for Smart Business. She has forged a career, enterprise and an applied discipline on the practice of teaching leaders to be masters of change. She is the Founder and CEO of Bright Side, Inc., a transformational change catalyst company with an emphasis on the behavior-side of change. For more than two decades, Donna Rae Smith and the Bright Side team have been recognized as innovators in executing behavioral strategies coalesced with business strategies to accelerate and sustain business results. Bright Side®, The Behavioral Strategy Company, has partnered with over 250 of the world's most influential companies. For more information, please visit www.bright-side.com or contact Donna Rae at donnarae@bright-side.com.

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