The Middle Course Of Management

by Steve Brown human resources leadership

Summary: Many people indicate they have had managers who have either overmanaged or undermanaged them. Luckily, there is a middle course of management.

Are you a cord-hoarder? You know what we are talking about - those people who can't seem to get rid of old electronics' cords. Many of us struggle with this, maybe longing for a simpler electronic time. No matter what though, you probably want to recycle those cords soon, if you haven't already.

In the world of community financial institutions (CFIs), some employees may be longing to cut the cord to their manager perhaps. This is usually because of either micromanaging or undermanaging. We look at three steps to find an effective point between the two.

Undermanagers tend to avoid conflict. They only loosely manage employee performance, give scant feedback, and aren't reliable sources of direction. They give employees a lot of power and room for initiative, but they don't typically intervene quickly. Workers here can sometimes feel abandoned and left to fend for themselves.

Overmanagers, also known as micromanagers, stay much more involved than they should be in their employee work lives. They express too many opinions, issue unnecessary corrections, and require constant updates. Overmanagers also tend to show little faith in their people and rarely cut anyone any slack. They don't let their staff make mistakes, so employees can't learn from those mistakes. Overmanagers are famously difficult to work for and micromanagement is among the top three reasons that workers resign.

Fortunately, it's possible to steer a middle course. **Begin by facing this straight on.** No one enjoys interpersonal conflict, at home or at work, but it happens in every organization that employs human beings. Ignoring it won't solve problems and can even make things worse. Handle problems immediately, listen to employees, ask questions, and guide staff to an appropriate solution.

Also, remember that **you and your employees each have roles to play**. It's the manager's job to explain benchmarks and deliverables. Employees are then largely in charge of figuring out how to complete those assignments (with periodic guidance).

Maintaining control over the process might address manager anxiety, but it will also increase stress. More importantly, it won't give CFI employees a chance to grow. Managers should remember employees were hired because they have the skills you need, so let them use those skills.

Finally, **talk to your people**. Just 2% of managers give employees regular feedback, according to a Society for Human Resource Management survey. That means 98% of employees are navigating their work lives essentially disconnected from the people in charge of setting goals and standards. That is a significant risk in meeting those goals and standards.

Put yourself in the minority of managers and give your employees regular feedback. Approach them with empathy and cultivate strengths, as well as correct weaknesses. If you do these things, you will see employees thrive and so will your relationships with them. This is all good for business too.

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