



Want to improve efficiency? Fire the micromanagers and gatekeepers!

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Efficiency seems to be the watchword these days in certain governmental circles. With DOGE running amok through the halls of Washington, saving money has become a mantra among those who think most federal agencies are grossly overstaffed.

But that's not what this column is about.

I want to address a far more sinister phenomenon I have seen slowly taking over many of our companies and campuses over the last few decades. In fact, I think the savings that could be realized by eliminating these folks from our collective payrolls would easily dwarf anything Musk and his teenage goon squad are doing.

I'm talking about, of course, getting rid of all the micromanagers and gatekeepers out there. In any organization that's truly adding value to society, these people are usually a drain on quality, productivity and ultimately, the bottom line.

Bear with me.

First, let's consider the micromanagers. These individuals have been the bane of my existence for decades. Unfortunately, I'm sure many of you can relate. I can also understand that if you're a micromanager, you might have an issue with this assertion. But keep in mind, this commentary is not about you – it's more directed toward you.

A micromanager is someone who ostensibly hires you to do a job and then gets in the way of your doing the job at every available turn. My philosophy when it comes to personnel selection has always been find the right person for the job – and then let them do their thing.

Honestly, if you have to keep a tight leash on someone who reports to you; i.e., if you feel the need to constantly look over their shoulder to make sure they are doing it the "right" way, which usually means "your" way, then you've employed the wrong person as far as I am concerned.

Maybe I'm alone here. But this has happened to me several times over the course of my career.

When I'm hired to do a job, I expect to be given the latitude and discretion to do the job without having to give my supervisor status updates every five minutes – or worse, get their permission to do what I know needs to be done.

If you didn't trust that I knew what I was doing when you hired me, then you're the problem, not me.

Micromanagers are redundant and entirely unnecessary. Moreover, they choke the life out of an organization, kill morale, and strain limited resources. Fire them all.

Which brings me to the next category of relatively worthless organizational chart fillers: gatekeepers. Gatekeepers' primary role, or so they tell us, is to ensure quality and conformance to standards. I would argue they are counterproductive to true originality and hinder rather than promote a competitive advantage.

Remember empowerment? That quaint notion that if you believe in your people and give them both responsibility and autonomy, combined with the leeway to be both self-sufficient and innovative, they will generally exceed your expectations.

Newsflash: If implemented correctly, empowerment works, despite what many managers might try to tell you.

If you're a supervisor, your job should not be to check someone's homework. That's what middle school teachers do. Your job is to support the people who report to you.

Besides, they add a completely extraneous layer to an administrative structure that is already bloated and unable to respond nimbly to constantly evolving circumstances. People who are doing their jobs appropriately don't need this kind of useless oversight.

In a healthy organization, no one would even notice if gatekeepers stopped coming to work or were eliminated altogether.

Again, if you hire the right people and give them the freedom to perform at their best, gatekeepers are nothing more than a pointless distraction. Fire them all.

God save us from our self-appointed saviors.

So there you have it. Want to genuinely enhance efficiency within your company, campus, agency or business? Fire all the micromanagers and gatekeepers - and watch how quickly things improve.



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