

EMPLOYER **Gardian**

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES

FALL • 2004

SPECIAL LEADERSHIP EDITION

In the chaos of the corporate world, it's easy to overlook leadership as a fundamental contributor to business success. That's why this issue of the *EmployerGardian* goes back to basics, recognizing leadership as a key tool in effective employment practices management. Within these pages, you'll find useful information and helpful techniques to revive your inner leader and renew your position on the road to success.



Great Leaders are Great Teachers

When you think about the attributes of a leader, what comes to mind? Typically, leaders are viewed as the keepers of the organizational vision and as people skilled in the art of delegation.

Great leaders are also great teachers. Here's why:

- ▶ Leaders know that to have time to be the visionary, they must have a team of staff members who are competent and creative in doing their jobs. Having such a team requires leaders to teach what they know to others, and then to empower others to take over those tasks and responsibilities.
- ▶ To teach your staff, you must first give up thinking that no one can do things as well as you can. As the leader of your organization, you simply don't have time to do it all and have your organization thrive. What you do have time to do, though, even if you think you don't, is teach your staff!

- ▶ Leaders also know that being a great teacher doesn't mean just supplying facts and information. Many times, the most effective way of teaching is to ask questions of the staff. That way, staff members have to think, be creative, innovative, and responsible for their knowledge and competencies.
- ▶ By being a teacher, you will require yourself to keep on learning! And, by teaching what you know, you will have an opportunity to notice what is missing in *your* knowledge and to fill in the gaps—to the benefit of yourself and your organization.
- ▶ Part of being a great leader is being a teacher who supports your employees. Go out of your way to boost the self-esteem of your personnel. People who believe in themselves can accomplish amazing things in the workplace. Be a coach for your staff members. Keep them on track, but let *them* run the race! A great teacher is inspirational!

(continued on next page)

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CPA EMPLOYERGard**®**

By being a leader who is a great teacher, you can benefit your staff and your organization in several ways:

- ▶ By sharing what you know, you can give your organization the ability to continue in your absence—regardless of whether that absence is planned or unexpected.
- ▶ Empowered employees are more innovative, creative, self directed, and satisfied. When they are given responsibilities and knowledge, they begin to think beyond merely accomplishing a task. They take on responsibility for implementing the organization’s vision.
- ▶ Reduced employee dissatisfaction and turnover.



Teaching truly is a powerful leadership attribute!

And what about benefits for you? When your staff is well-taught, you, as the leader, can enjoy more time to keep your eye on the competition, more time to research your opportunities, more time to plan for possible changes in the market, and more time to make sure your clients and customers are delighted with your products and services.

Teaching truly is a powerful leadership attribute!



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Leadership and the Art of Delegation

It's important for an organization's leader to be the visionary for the organization.

As a leader—to have the freedom and the time to be the organization's visionary—you must learn to delegate and delegate effectively.

Most leaders have had the experience of delegating a task or goal, only to be disappointed when the due date rolled around, and the assignment hadn't been completed.

Or, perhaps, the assignment was completed on time, but not correctly. And, you probably remember an experience from your own work history in which someone "delegated" an assignment to you ...except it seemed to you like you were not being "delegated to," but rather you were being "dumped on." Consider, however, that delegation doesn't have to be like this.

What does it take to be a leader who is not perceived as "dumping" on employees and, yet, who delegates tasks that are completed correctly and on time? How can you be effective at delegating?

- First, you need to understand the essence of delegation. As your organization's leader, you are ultimately accountable for its success or failure. Delegation doesn't mean giving up any of that responsibility. It means that you *share* that responsibility with the employees to whom you delegate. If something goes wrong, you are still responsible. If you take that viewpoint of delegation, "dumping" (which implies ridding yourself of something forever) will not occur.
- Next, if you have a tendency to micro-manage, work on changing this habit. Addictive micro-management will defeat any attempt to delegate effectively. This is a common-sense issue. You cannot give up control and



retain control at the same time. And, why would you want to? Think about it. If you, for example, delegate the task of finding a new health care provider for your employees' health insurance, do you really want to take the time to become an expert on all the details and information involved in that topic?

- Remember to keep the focus on results, not on the process of reaching those results. You are delegating responsibility, not work, and you want the employee to be creative and innovative in achieving the desired outcome.

- Successful delegation requires that you communicate clearly. To enable someone else to complete the assignment correctly and on time, you must communicate clearly so that your employees:

1. Know *what* you want.
2. Know *when* you want it.
3. Have the *authority* to complete the assignment.

Your communication must include precise directions about all the involved limitations, such as time or budget constraints.

- How can you be sure you have clearly communicated the delegated task? Ask those involved. Ask your employees to explain their understanding of the details of the assignment. That way, you can be sure the employee heard what you intended. You can check to see if there are any misunderstandings. And, you can fill in the gaps, as necessary, on any information that appears to be missing.
- Work with your employee to establish and write down interim "progress review" dates. You risk failure of the delegated task unless accountability is present, and unless you require progress reports between the time

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Help is Just A Telephone Call Away

For immediate legal advice on employment law and practice management issues, call (800) 569-3679. As a CPA EmployerGard policyholder, your firm is entitled to 30 minutes of legal advice per month, at no additional charge, from experienced attorneys at the national employment and labor law firm of Ford & Harrison, LLP. Please have your CPA EmployerGard policy number handy.

the task is assigned and the target completion date. “Following up” is like checking in, touching base, and being supportive. It does not mean hounding the employee, hovering over his/her shoulder, or lapsing back into your micro-managing habits.

- Sometimes employees may try to delegate a project back to you. You can avoid this by listening to their descriptions of the challenges they are encountering, and by avoiding the temptation to rescue them with your response. Instead of providing answers, ask questions that will help the involved employees retain their self-respect as well as their responsibility for completing the assignment. Ask questions such as:

1. What do you think we should do to solve this problem?
2. What are your recommendations for handling this challenge?
3. What are some possible alternatives?

- Always, *always* give complete credit and recognition to the employees who complete a project. And, if the goal

is not accomplished you, as the leader, should shoulder all the blame. Don't use your employees as scapegoats. Face it. If a delegated project is not successfully completed and on time, you are accountable for that failure.

- In such a situation, take a close look before you delegate the next project. Ask yourself, “How could I have spoken more skillfully, listened more carefully, or monitored more effectively to have the project completed successfully?” Ask your employees the same question and take to heart any feedback they provide.

Be patient. Your delegation skills will develop over time and with practice. And, train your managers to develop their own delegation skills. Through effective delegation, everyone will benefit—your employees, your organization, and your clients.

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