

## **Micromanage your way to Failure.**

Micromanagement is still pervasive in projects even though it does not add anything to the chances of project success. On the contrary, micromanagement is the death knell of your project as it kills off the very things that are needed to make success likely. This article explains how micromanagement is dumb and why you're negligent if you are guilty of this heinous crime.

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Micromanagement can be defined as managing with excessive control. Micromanaging is still commonly used by project managers who think that if they define and monitor project tasks down to the molecular level, there is a much better chance of getting things done and achieving the objectives of the project.

If you are a project manager, and you are micromanaging, you are negligent of not doing your real job. Why do I say this? Think about it. Firstly, if you are investing all of your time in checking up on your team, where will you find the time to do the other things that ultimately decide if your project is a success for a failure? How should you spend your time then?

First and foremost, you must invest significant time in creating, nurturing and developing and observing your team. The things that really make the difference, and make success more likely, are those wonderful human behaviours that can't be brought about by close or harsh management. Things like motivation, morale, commitment, innovation, creativity, integrity, trust and open and honest communications are the keys to the project management kingdom.

And what is the impact of micromanagement on these illusive qualities? It kills them stone dead. Everybody hates being micromanaged. It is disrespectful and kills trust. And wouldn't you know it, trust and respect are the very things that enable all of the other desirable behaviours that you need in your project.

Of course you must manage your team but it should be at the appropriate level. Empower your team by giving them autonomy. Unleash their collective powers so that they are fully committed and fully performing.

Give them reasonably large chunks of work and get their buy in by agreeing what has to be done, the time it will take, and what outputs are expected and how they can be checked. This will promote ownership, engagement and accountability.

Manage them by using MBWA or "managing by walking around". Simply wander around the office occasionally and see how they are doing. Talk to them, share with them, have fun with them, advise them and be advised by them. Be supportive and don't be critical. This will enable you to stay in touch with what is happening. You will see at first hand if they are succeeding, where they are struggling, and if they need help. In other words, you will have your finger on the pulse of your team.

A natural by-product of MBWA is a trusting relationship and mutual respect. Yes! the very qualities that form the foundation for all of the other desirable behaviours such as morale, commitment, innovation etc. that you need in your project.

The next big problem for micromanagers is that they are probably wearing blinkers and are blind to the bigger picture. A project is not an island but exists in the context of an organisation and a wider business and economic environment. The project manager must take a holistic view and not only have an inward focus but an outward focus also. You not

only have to manage the internal workings of the project and the project team but you must also seek to influence the wider environment of customer, sponsor and other members of the stakeholder community.

The best way to ensure that you understand the big picture is to make the time to wander around the building and network with those who have an interest in and are affected by your project. Practice NBWA or “networking by walking around”. Find out what’s happening on other projects. Tune into the grapevine to get the latest gossip. Be a political animal and understand the politics of the organisation. Who is in or who is out? Who is on the way up or way down? Are there any changes in the wind that will likely impact your project? Who is cheering for your project and who is wishing it ill?

I know that there are micromanagers out there who will be shaking their heads and saying that this is a load of wimpish nonsense. The most important part of my job is to make sure that the team is actually working. What about the slackers, trouble makers and the just plain dumb?

If you are unlucky enough to have one of these types, then obviously some action must be taken. Maybe their behaviour is a side effect of your micromanagement style? Ask them what is the problem? Part of your job as project manager is to coach, mentor and grow individual team members. If this is not possible, then reassignment out of the project may be the only option. Let the bus company carry the passengers, not your projects.

As one who has suffered the evil of micromanagement myself, can I appeal to all project managers out there to stand back and think again. Come on. Give us all a break! You will reap many rewards by giving your team its wings.

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