

Macromanaging and Leadership

By Stan Pohmer



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As a (albeit “old”) student of business and in working with retailers of all sizes, from corporate big box to locally owned garden centers in my consultancy, I’m always looking to identify those factors that differentiate the winners from the losers.

I’m looking to find those sometimes

intangible aspects of a business that allow one retailer to be successful while, facing the exact same competitive environment and challenges, others are not so fortunate.

I’ve learned that two of the critical differentiators also are related to one another:

- The skill set and approach to the business that the owner and key managers bring to bear and
- The way the limited resources available are utilized and allocated, both on a personal and professional level.

Skill Set and Approach

By nature, “retail is detail” and managers become almost obsessed with personally controlling every task and operation from start to completion.

On the surface, there’s nothing wrong with this management approach, but I question whether this is the best use of your time and talent to achieve optimum results. And we tend to fill the management ranks with folks with the same operational focus, based on the way we promote people.

We reward people who have excelled at micromanaging by promoting them into a higher position.

Human nature dictates that this promoted individual will continue to do more of the same things and exhibit the same management style in his/her new position that got him/her promoted in the first place, despite the fact that the new position has the need for a different approach, style and skill set that, unless communicated and taught, will never be introduced.

Back in 1969, Laurence J. Peter developed The Peter Principle, a management concept that describes this phenomenon in which the selection of a candidate for a position is based on the candidate’s performance in their current role, rather than on the abilities relevant to the intended role.

As a result, in a hierarchy, people tend to rise to their “level of incompetence.”

As people are promoted, they become progressively less effective because good performance in one job does not guarantee similar performance in another.

Skill sets and management styles need to adapt and evolve based on the requirements of each individual position!

Based on my observations, there’s a direct correlation between the skill/mindset of the owners and senior managers and the success of their businesses.

Those companies that are micromanaged are generally not nearly as successful as those that are macro-managed, where leadership and vision are integral parts of a manager’s skill set.

Very succinctly, micromanagers are operators, while macromanagers/leaders are activators, visionaries and strategic thinkers.

Micro- Versus Macromanagement

One of the best comparisons I’ve seen to illustrate the differences between micromanagement and macromanagement was recently published by Julie Winkle Giulioni in “SmartBlog on Leadership.”

In her blog, Winkle Giulioni provides an overview of the management styles. For example, a micromanager will focus on

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dictating how to accomplish a task, while a macromanager is more concerned about the end product or what will be delivered.

Another example is micromanagers tend to provide directives and macromanagers provide direction to employees to get the job done. Micromanagers concern themselves with procedures while macromanagers are more concerned with possibilities for the future.

Micromanagers monitor people and projects, macromanagers mentor them. And a micromanager concentrates on ensuring that everything is in compliance and ensures that processes are followed, whereas the macromanager focuses on commitment and taps into the employees’ engagement in a project.

You can learn more about micromanagers versus macromanagers in Winkle Giulioni’s blog at www.smartblogs.com/leadership/2015/09/10/are-you-a-micromanager-or-a-macromanager.

There’s a place in the workplace for both micro- and macro- managers, and many of us are a mixture of both.

However, the higher one rises in a company, the more macro/leadership thinking needs to be incorporated in order to capitalize on the greater opportunities.

POHMER ON...

Contrary to popular belief, all leaders are not “born” and leadership can be learned!

The bad news is that most colleges and universities teach management practices, but not leadership practices, even at the Masters level.

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The U.S. Military is one of the best institutions that have successfully taught leadership to both officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and the best of the best, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), has codified their leadership training regimen, and it makes a lot of sense in application to the business world.

Here are the key Leadership Principles that are taught in the USMC program:

- Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
- Be technically and tactically proficient.
- Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates.
- Make sound and timely decisions.
- Set the example.
- Know your Marines and look out for their welfare.
- Keep your Marines informed.
- Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.

- Ensure assigned tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished.
- Train your Marines as a team.
- Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities

Resource Utilization and Allocation

What gets done, how it gets done, and who does it are questions decided largely by how you as a senior manager and as a person determine how to invest your corporate and personal resources.

Don’t forget to consider all of the resources available, including time, finances, energy, effort, commitment and people!

We often focus most of our attention on deciding how to deploy corporate assets and resources to achieve established goals and projects. But where to invest your personal resources, especially time, will have a lot to do with establishing and achieving your corporate vision and strategies, developing and mentoring your team, and establishing a profitable future for your company.

If, for example, you have a micromanager style, you will be spending more time on

initiating and following up on tasks and projects, possibly at the expense of investing time into more strategic endeavors.

On the other hand, if your style is more macromanaging, then you would be likely spending more time mentoring and developing your team and empowering them to manage more of the everyday tasks, allowing you the time to think and act strategically.

Managing corporate assets and resources will be driven to meet company goals and mission, but your personal assets should be invested to both increase your personal productivity, as well as ensuring the success of the company, all while supporting your personal management style.

Leadership and intelligent resource allocation and utilization go hand-in-glove to work together for both personal and company gain.

Do you have a plan to implement and enhance your leadership skill and mindset?

It may take a while to develop, but it’s well worth the time and effort! ... **L&GR**

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