



Are You Sabotaging Yourself? ***Leaders Grow Other Leaders; Losers Distance Themselves***

"Every day I meet people who have so much to give but have been bullied enough or are frightened enough to hold it back."

-Seth Godin

Google It

Google is a great picture of empowerment. Part of Google's success worldwide has included empowering their employees to take action on their ideas. Steve Myers writes in his cyber-journal, "Many products and product improvements at Google start with one person having an idea, sketching it out, showing a prototype to others, getting feedback, and soliciting support from others." Notice that getting permission, or running it by one's supervisor is absent from the natural flow.

"Any engineer on our team is empowered to try something they feel strongly about," Todd Jackson, a product manager for Gmail and Google Buzz said. Myers writes, "One example of this is the *undo send* feature. For several years, people at Google debated whether they could or should enable users to pull back an e-mail they sent. Then an engineer in Japan -- who didn't even work on Gmail -- decided he wanted this feature and built it." At that point, "we didn't have to argue about whether it would work," Jackson said.

Last month I strategized with several groups on the *Leaders vs. Losers Succession Planning* presentation. The constant question that was asked at the close of every session was the same one. "Yeah, I get it. But Jim, I work for a lazy jerk who doesn't know my potential and won't trust me with responsibility." How do you lead from the middle of the pack? "What does your boss want most?" I asked. Almost every answer had the same theme: Security, strokes, assurance that the job is getting done.

I have the best assistant in the business. Marti has been the heart and soul of my business. This year, I realized that in new ways. I noticed how many executives and meeting planners complimented me on how simple we were to work with. How timely Marti is in getting back to clients. How efficient she is with details. I relay every compliment to her. She is indispensable (that's a future article on job security). But I did two things that have made a bigger difference in our business that have made it double this year...

Holding On Is Holding You Back

Reinventing simply for the sake of change isn't a valid reason to reinvent yourself. I realized several months ago that for my organization to grow, I had to grow and let go of some of it. Marti keeps the office and my schedule running like a well-oiled machine. But I had failed to notice that she was continually bringing every problem to me for advice and review. One day when I already had too much to deal with around me I said, "Marti, you have always known the right thing to do. You are creative and brilliant. Most importantly, you are trustworthy. That is what I like about you most."

She smiled but I went on. "You recently got a raise because you have raised our business level this past year. With additional pay should come additional...**authority**. I don't care how you handle these day-to-day problems. Just handle them in the way you normally do and we'll be just fine."

"Okay," she said, "But that is totally against the way you manage, you know." She was right and that hit me like a ton of bricks. We were being limited by my ability to let go of what I couldn't or shouldn't handle and allow her to do so. I was the impediment. I had placed a leadership "lid" on the business by being a control freak. I had to give that up and allow her to handle the problems in the reliable way she had for years.

Marti has proven herself to always have our client's best interest (and ours) at heart. Her three rules have always been: 1. Keep the clients happy; 2. Make us money; and 3. Make everyone look great. She loves the new authority, responsibilities and freedom of not having to run everything by me.

Your employees are reading this and either salivating or enraging.

Sorry, but that is an indisputable truth...and you already know it.

Losers are limited by their abilities to let go of the reins and hand them to reliable staff. It is hard to not know and be able to control everything, but I weigh that

against knowing too much and having to give permission to please someone. Most staff members and employees are frustrated with leaders whose need to control makes them feel as though they don't trust them to do the job well. Market Guru Seth Godin writes, "Every day I meet people who have so much to give but have been bullied enough or are frightened enough to hold it back." To reinvent myself, I had to let loose of the reins, choose to trust Marti with them and after handing them over, allow her the freedom to exercise her talents.

Give Up to Go Up

You should know that whatever you're holding on to not only holds you back, **it also holds others back**. Some of my best "Daddy" memories are when my little girl would run up, throw herself into my arms and hug my neck. If you're a dad you miss the days when your children were younger. They grow up so fast.

I once joked with my daughter that I was going to hold a board over her head to prevent her from growing up. She would laugh and say, "Don't, daddy, let me grow up!" The board represented the way I had become comfortable with her as a child. Of course it was silly, but I had to allow her to grow, make mistakes and find her own answers. It involved trusting that I had taught her the right things to equip her for the life she would lead on her own one day.

John Maxwell says, "You have to give up to go up." I say, Give it up and grow it up." What you are holding on to will hold you back. It holds you back from growing. Marshall Goldsmith wrote an entire book based on this principle: *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. It is based on the principles I observed working in the church.

I worked with several pastors throughout my ministry career. They all wanted to grow their churches, but some couldn't grow their organizations beyond a certain level. The reason became clear after observing this in several different locations and scenarios.

The growth strategies that would get attendance to around 500 members each week couldn't be used to increase attendance to 750. At that size, each pastor would be forced to give up some control and authority to those supporting them. Some weren't willing to do this. They resisted giving up the authority or permission to others. So problems would develop and the attendance would drop off, or maintain the same level. Others willingly gave it up and their congregations grew beyond their dreams.

Self re-inventive leaders know that to grow you have to give it up. You are holding a board on the heads of your leaders preventing them from growing up. You are keeping them in the dark, outside the loop and away from your private leadership space. If you want to reinvent the organization, you have to reinvent yourself by letting loose the information, authority and permission everyone has to seek from you continually to receive.

What are you holding on to that is holding you back? Your level of trust and security may be the impediment that is keeping your own organization from growth. In fact it probably is. Your need to keep informed and in the loop on every piddling little detail is killing your staff's interest in working for you. The company can't grow until you do. Either give it up or let go of the power and authority you are holding on to. It is stifling your followers and the structure of your organization. Once you empower the people around you to take action, you will release their creativity and intuition.

Act now. This applies whether you're a Fortune 500 conglomerate or an entrepreneur. Leaders in the race never slow down. They can be cautious as they navigate tricky patches but they never stop running. They make it hard for the competition to catch them and they look to extend their lead when their competitors slow down. In short, you have the power to eliminate fear and uncertainty. Let the reins loose. Lose the board. Grow up. Take a risk. Build and extend your lead by focusing on the long term.

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