

Run your business. Don't let it run you.

Time management

YOU GO TO WORK with the best intentions of making the most of every minute, but end up wondering where it all went at the end of the day.

As business owner, your time is one of your most important resources. You know that delegating work to others is an appropriate way to save time, prioritize your agenda, and focus on what you "should" be doing.

If you are mired in the day-to-day operations of running your business, you are not planning or building your business' future.

The less time you think you have, the more critical it is for you to delegate.

Take the time to look at everything you are doing. Make a list of projects, from big to small, including all the details — phone calls that need to be made, research that needs to be done, questions that need to be answered.

Ask yourself these questions:

"How many of these tasks could be done by someone else?"

What do I really need or want to keep for myself?"

You will likely find that many tasks can be delegated to someone else. Assess each task and decide



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whether it is appropriate to delegate. Identify the best person to do it. Be very clear in communicating how you want the task completed and what you want the end

outcome to look like. Build in check-in points and a timeline to meet deadlines.

Make sure the person you choose is capable of completing the task successfully. If not, you are setting someone up to fail and yourself up for even more stress. Remember to thank the person who helped you.

Don't forget to provide the proper training. This may seem to take up time and money initially, but the savings and rewards are well worth your efforts in the long run.

The benefits of proper delegation go beyond time management and freeing up your time for other priorities. The exercise of thinking through and choosing what to delegate and to whom, forces you to focus on important details such as your strengths, interests, passions, and skills. Just as important, it helps you and those around you discover these traits in themselves. ■

Hiring a manager

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO HIRE A MANAGER. The person you hire to help you run your business will be one of the most important staff members you will hire. This will take time and effort, and your main consideration will be finding a manager you can trust.

In order to find the right person, the first thing you have to do is determine what is really important to your business. Write down what it takes to do the day-to-day

management. Look ahead a few years and see if the requirements for your manager are going to change. If you can anticipate that, add those requirements to the description of the person you're looking for now.

Never forget that hiring a manager is a much more serious matter than hiring a production clerk or a receptionist. That's why it's important to ask penetrating, specific questions during the initial

interview. Think of situations that may arise over the first few months and ask the candidates very specific questions about how they would take care of that problem. Describe some of the initial priorities you will be expecting the manager to undertake and ask the candidates how they would approach these challenges. By probing, you will gain a good insight about each candidate's fit with you, your employees, and your business. ■



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Culture corner: Employee recognition

HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE MY EMPLOYEES FOR WORK WELL DONE? Employee recognition reinforces and rewards the most important outcomes people create for your business. Employee recognition can be both formal and informal. For formal recognition, you develop specific criteria that employees meet in order to receive recognition. It usually involves a formal nominating and review process. Formal recognition can be a monetary bonus, a day off with pay, or perhaps a gift certificate to a restaurant. Informal recognition is a simple, non-organized process that recognizes an employee's contribution when the deed occurs. In other words, when employees go above and beyond to assist customers or other employees, they are recognized immediately for their customer service, teamwork, integrity, or positive attitude.

DO EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAMS WORK? Formal recognition programs have had mixed results. Programs in which em-

ployees are "selected" either by managers or others to receive recognition rarely work. For example, "employee of the month" programs are rarely effective because they single out an individual and are often viewed by employees as "favoritism" or labeled as "whose turn is it to get recognized this month?" Informal programs, on the other hand, have been demonstrated to be powerful. In fact, research has found that informal recognition by managers is a key motivating factor for effective job performance. When you recognize people promptly and effectively, you reinforce the actions and behaviors you want people to repeat.

WHEN SHOULD I RECOGNIZE MY EMPLOYEES? There are no rules about how often recognition should take place. An effective recognition program is simple, immediate, and powerfully reinforcing. Ideally, you should recognize your employees as soon as possible, whenever you want to say



Do you consistently recognize and reward your employees for a job well done?

"thanks" or "job well done." Examples of when to recognize your employees include:

- Exceptional job performance either over a long period of time or under difficult circumstances
- Excellent team work
- Outstanding customer service
- A "good catch"— taking action quickly to prevent a disaster or solve a problem before it occurs
- Applying new skills/knowledge
- Meeting goals and targets
- Displaying commitment/loyalty
- Demonstrating innovation ■