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FALL 2017

THIS ISSUE:

INCREASING

**EMPLOYEE
POTENTIAL**

CREATING A

**CULTURE OF
CREATIVITY**

**And Other Ideas
to Keep You and Your Team
Moving Forward**

PLUS

DR. ALAN ZIMMERMAN'S
Comment
AND
COURAGE

From MARGIE WARRELL

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vate**

**Becoming An
Innovation
Agent**

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Giving up your power means increasing theirs

By Michael Bungay Stanier at *Box of Crayons*

A few years ago, I had an enlightening podcast conversation with Barbara Coloroso, an author who has written several books and tackled issues of parenting, teaching, school discipline, conflict resolution and more. In our conversation, Barbara talked about three poisonous agents ripping apart our society: having utter contempt for other human beings; hoarding me, mine and more (instead of us, ours and enough); and harming by lying, cheating and stealing.

She explained that the best antidote to those toxic tendencies is to create a climate in which we can care deeply, share generously and help willingly.

She then noted that some people might think that such an environment would backfire in a competitive workplace. But according to Barbara, this climate would actually result in the workplace becoming a better place to work, with employees bettering themselves at the same time.

Being a great leader is about relinquishing power

I paused to think about this when I revisited this conversation recently, because so much of what Barbara said really resonates with me and the way I try to run my company, [Box of Crayons](#). If you've read my book [The Coaching Habit](#), you'll know that my goal is to give busy managers the practical tools to coach in 10 minutes or less. But what I really aim to do — and it's worth distinguishing it a little here — is to help people become more coach-like. And the best way to become more coach-like is to say less and ask more.

Part of being a great leader is offering your employees the opportunity to share and create — thereby creating an environment like the one Barbara references. Being a great leader is about relinquishing power at the right moments. Asking questions is the easiest way to give up a little of your power in order to instill a little more in your employees. Unfortunately, the behavior change of giving a little less advice and asking a few more questions can be surprisingly difficult to accomplish.

Stop “saving” your people

You've probably been praised for your advice and business ideas for years... so why give up the look of control, to replace it with the uncertainty of questions? After all, asking questions feels less useful, slows down the conversation and causes you to lose control of it, right? But guess what? Handing over that control and losing your power is called “empowering.” And as you may suspect, empowering your employees can lead to achieving great work.

Just as managers are accustomed to giving advice and jumping in to “save” the day, so too are they used to controlling the people, the process and the outcome of things in the workplace.

In *Lead More, Control Less: 8 Advanced Leadership Skills That Overturn Convention*, authors Marvin Wrisbord and Sandra Janoff focus on the importance of control. It takes self-awareness to recognize how you should act in certain stressful situations, even if impulse urges you to react differently. To me, that really relates well to the idea that it may feel wrong to not offer advice and instead just ask questions. It takes a great deal of effort to make that behavior change, even though it seems so simple.

To me, though, that's what asking questions and giving up control essentially does in a conversation. You find out what your employees can do, then you create a space for learning and allow them the opportunity to follow through.

Get out of the way

By getting out of the way, leaders allow employees to become empowered, test the length of their responsibility, and maximize their potential. Does a backseat driver ever help someone be a better driver? Probably not.

Let's go back again to empowerment. If you've trained your people to be reliant on you, you have created an overdependence — they need you to help with everything and, in turn, are disempowered, unable to create their own solutions.

YOUR RELINQUISHING SOME POWER AND LOSING SOME CONTROL CAN HELP YOUR EMPLOYEES MAXIMIZE THEIR POTENTIAL AND COME UP WITH MORE — MORE WISDOM, MORE OPTIONS, MORE SOLUTIONS.

By asking questions instead of offering advice, you can get to the heart of the challenge instead of running off to solve entirely the wrong problem. You can encourage development, help create moments of insight and learning, and ultimately have more impact.

Italian-American race car driver Mario Andretti said it best: “If everything's under control, you're going too slow.”

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Learn more about *Box of Crayons* at www.boxofcrayons.biz



Asking Employees for Problem Solving Solutions

If you're a supervisor, you've probably experienced occasions when you've asked your staff for opinions, suggestions, or general comments about work processes, challenges, issues, etc., or even just "how's it going?" only to come up "empty."

Far too often, employees willfully choose to remain silent or hold back on sharing information just because they are not entirely sure what will happen if they talk to you. However, when employees do feel comfortable enough to speak up and talk about workplace issues, research tells us that good things happen – things like higher levels of engagement and job satisfaction, a feeling of self-worth, knowledge sharing, greater creativity, a better use of resources, a healthier, safer work environment, and more.

So, if you're the team leader, the way to fix this is to simply communicate to your staff that speaking-up is okay—right? Well, possibly, but putting a little more work into how you set this up might bring you an even greater payoff.

Simply put, not all comments are equal in value. In an open setting, individuals can get sidetracked, go off topic, and share personal opinions or stories that may be related or unrelated to what you need to discuss. Still, because you need information to help your team and organization grow and succeed, what can you do?

The good news is there are several ways to increase the probability that your employees will speak up with thoughtful, focused, well-informed ideas and comments. Here are some ideas to consider:

Spell-out what you want

Let your team know that you value thoughtful input more than random opinions that ignore the result or solution you seek for a specific issue. Share potential constraints, obstacles, and other factors for team members to consider that may help to keep their thought process and responses on track. One way to accomplish this might be to establish a set period of time for them to come up with ideas that address a specific workplace issue or challenge.

For example, how can a cumbersome work process be streamlined to increase efficiency, or how can you get customers to better utilize a beneficial service your team provides that is seldom used? Determine how best to collect responses (grease board, idea box, shared database, etc.). Then get together to discuss and clarify the ideas received so that you (and possibly the team) can decide on the best proposals.

Be flexible

Not everyone is a "group thinker" or adept at speaking up in a large group setting (even when they know everyone there). Rather than counting them out, let team members know that they are always welcome to share their thoughts and concerns with you privately. This may involve you coming to them periodically, or scheduling regular one-on-one meetings to provide more opportunities for pointed conversation.

To stay focused, it's okay to have an agenda to frame the purpose of the conversation (e.g., "Thanks for meeting with me today. I'd like to spend the next 10 minutes or so talking about _____. This is an important issue and I'd really like to hear what you have to say").

Share the "big picture"

Because not every team member may be involved in each part of a process or issue, they will likely only focus on the piece of the puzzle that they know well and understand. If this is true of the employees you work with, you may get better input from them if you make the effort to help them understand all the factors (or context) surrounding the issue you'd like them to comment on.

For example, if lack of information about a particular process or procedure is hampering an employee's thought process, arrange for the employee to talk with people who were involved in creating or implementing it to understand the history of how it came about. With this new insight, the employee may be in a better position to propose a more informed, workable solution to consider while learning even more about the organization in the process.

"Deputize" others

Recruit one or two team members to collect ideas on specific issues from their peers (other team members) on your behalf, especially if you believe there may still be more "gold to mine," and your own attempts haven't provided the insights you hoped for. Since these "deputies" are gathering informal feedback from others and presenting it to you (perhaps) anonymously, there's a chance that at least a few employees may be more forthcoming with their observations.

Close the loop

Employees who take the time to learn more about complex processes and issues, and freely offer constructive suggestions to improve them should be kept in the loop on what you did—or didn't do—with their input and why. Closing the loop not only encourages employees to continue to speak up, it also sends a message to others that voicing opinions constructively can have a meaningful, positive impact.



Just a thought...

More quick tips from the Solutions Team

Simple strategies to improve "Being in the Moment" with the people you work with

Being In the Moment means not dwelling on the past, and letting go of thoughts of the future so that neither is getting in the way of experiencing what is happening right now.

Following are some easy-to-do suggestions to help you get better at being in the moment with others.

Measure the quality of your interactions.

There is an old saying, "If you can measure it, you can change it." If you want to measure the quality of your interactions with others, enlist the help of those who matter to you. Ask them to rate the effectiveness of your attempts at interpersonal communication and accept their input to guide future interactions. A simple email once a month is all it takes. Ask two or three key people to rate your ability to be present (in the moment) with them when you interact with them. Ask them to score your attempts at paying attention

"There is only one thing stronger than all the armies of the world: and that is an idea whose time has come." - Victor Hugo

during conversations, from minus 3 (really poor) to plus 3 (a lot better). That's it. Nothing more complicated. If you can measure it you can change it.

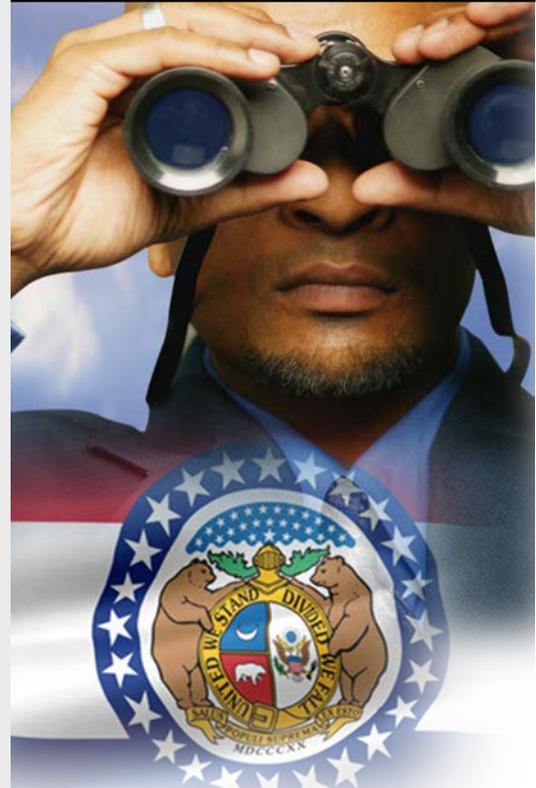
Notice the impact you have.

Warren Bennis in his book, *On Becoming a Leader* (Perseus Books, 1989) encouraged all of us to become "first-class noticers." That's important because noticing matters. Noticing strengthens connections in the brain, and reinforces results, both good and bad. The next time you feel that you had the correct impact you intended with someone during a conversation, stop and notice it. Mentally acknowledge it. Conversely, when the effect you have with another person is not what you intended, take the time to notice that too. Whether his or her face lights up, or quickly goes dark. Notice the impact and think about what may have led to the result.

Mirror the response you want to see.

You may have heard the term, *mirror neurons* – the brain cells that fire when you do an action, and when you watch someone else doing the same action. What happens when you see someone yawn? You yawn too. What happens when someone walks up to you smiling? You immediately feel the pull of your own smile begin. The message here is to stop before you interact with someone and take a moment to put your game face on. In a tense athletic competition, the image you project might be one of unrelenting drive and will to win. When you meet with one of your team members, what image do you want to project? Whatever those emotions are will find physiological resonance in the minds of those you interact with. Part of being in the moment is preparing for the role.

LOOKING *for* LEADERS?



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Are you an innovation agent?

By Allan Forbis, Center for Management and Professional Development

It probably comes as no surprise that in many organizations today, being adapt at “change management” is the new normal for success. It’s also why someone who can demonstrate their competence – and willingness – to be an agent for change is often a valued commodity.

It’s important to realize, though, that it’s not just senior level managers who can – or should – drive organizational change. Anyone who has the desire to become a force for innovation can assume the role, and this is especially true if you’re a manager or supervisor. The work will be rewarding, and yes, probably challenging too.

If you want to be an innovation leader and work with others to help make a difference in your organization and work team, consider the following key attitudes and qualities that will help you “hit the ground running.”

Flexibility. While innovation agents certainly need to be focused, it’s unrealistic to think that ever-changing work priorities and countless “unknowns” won’t occasionally (or regularly) block your path. You’ll need to be flexible and sharpen your creative instincts to respond to unforeseen challenges along the way.

Patience. Still, no matter how much momentum you can obtain, the old saying is true...change doesn’t happen overnight. That’s why effective change management will require enormous patience and perseverance on the part of any innovation agent.

Cornell University Professor, Allan Filipowicz, tells us that “embracing patience is the key to creating an innovation culture,” and that innovation thrives in environments that encourage experimentation and incremental change, rather than quick outcomes. “Innovation is going to be very, very slow. You will do something, nothing will happen; you’ll do it again, nothing will happen.

And so what does happen is we give up much too soon,” Filipowicz says. But good things really do come to those who wait.

Transparency. If you’re going to champion a change or innovation strategy, you’ll also need to make sure people can see the connection between the tasks and activities you’re involved in (or that you’re asking others to help with), and the end result you hope to achieve (i.e., a new process, improved service, culture change, etc.). Without that, confusion and indifference from those around you may derail your best efforts.

Confidence. And, of course, while you will need to trust and have confidence in the ability of others to help you, so too will you need to have confidence in your own abilities.

Leading people through change can be tough, no doubt about it. However, if you are resolute in your vision (or directive) and remain confident in your ability to act as a *mentor, facilitator, and leader* to get the job done, you stand a good chance of pulling others along with you. As Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “Pull the string, and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it, and it will go nowhere at all.”

Organizations need innovation agents to drive effective and efficient work processes, to provide meaningful services to the community, and to fulfill each agency’s mission. If you have the opportunity to drive innovation where you work, consider how you can be a catalyst for change—and embrace the role with confidence!

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Seconds Count: Excerpts from

myquickcoach

Creating a Culture of Creativity and Innovation

Transcript of a MyQuickCoach video lesson from Daniel Guillory

Most people say that they want to be more creative and innovative. The question is...why aren't they? Well, creativity and diversity are inextricably linked and understanding that link is really one of the first steps.

Creating a culture of creativity and innovation is about the ability and willingness to explore solutions and ideas that are beyond the present realm of thinking that you may have, and that, by definition, involves and embeds diversity in the process because you have to be open-minded to ideas that are different than what you would normally do. As a result:

One of the first key steps is to avoid what your own biases and prejudices might be, in terms of what worked in the past. A lot of times in my work with organizations, they'll say, "We want people who want to do it as we have always done it." Well, the first step is to actually have people who are going to think differently than you, and really challenge what some of your assumptions may be.

The second piece is to know that there will be tension and disagreement. So if I'm going to invite people in to challenge how I think and to challenge how other people think, then by definition we're going to have disagreement and tension—and that's okay. I think that is important to establish that at the beginning because there are a lot of people who aren't necessarily comfortable with tension and disagreement, but it's a natural part of the creative process.

The third step is to start to ask employees for ideas about how to create an expanded culture of creativity and innovation by starting to integrate small acts of creativity and innovation. These are small things that you can do with the people working around you to create a more creative and innovative environment. For example, putting up whiteboards in the hallway or having a certain way to operate in meetings so that everybody gets to contribute versus the person who is normally the most active. It also involves talking to other people in the organization about how to integrate these steps and what they should be.

The next step is to acknowledge the ideas and solutions received to reinforce your culture of creativity and innovation. There will be things suggested that may not end up being selected or acted upon. That's a part of creativity and innovation too. Not all ideas are necessarily equal. So some will be selected, some won't. But what you will know – and want to acknowledge – is that every one of those ideas, whether they ended up being selected or not, were all a part of the innovation process. In fact, the ideas that aren't selected often serve as a spark for other ideas that you end up moving forward with.

One of the fears that people have with respect to creativity and innovation is that if they come up with a new idea, that it will be rejected, that it will be an indication of failure, and that it will reflect badly upon them. That's why it's important to not just acknowledge the solution that was acted upon, but also the solutions or ideas that may not have been selected, but that were a part of the process.

The next step after that is to engage and encourage regular discussions with colleagues who go beyond conventional thinking. Finding the people who really push the envelope in day-to-day discussions. Keep in mind that each time someone says, "I don't believe," or, "I don't agree with," or, "No, I don't want to," that it's actually creating some kind of self-imposed barrier to true creative exploration.

Creativity and diversity go hand-in-hand because what you're doing is challenging a certain set of biases, beliefs, and behaviors that may have been in place for a long time. Understanding that, and being willing to push by it, and push past it, is what creates the opportunity for higher order, and a higher level creativity and innovation.

Daniel Guillory is the head of global diversity and inclusion at Autodesk, where he works to integrate all dimensions of diversity and inclusion into many parts of organizations, including customer acquisition, recruitment, hiring, people development, advancement, investment, and acquisition.

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7 simple ways to make every day an innovative day

The need to innovate is something many people work on daily – whether they realize it or not. For example, you’re trying to innovate when you consider other ways to accomplish a complex work task, when you’re encouraging other team members to abandon an “it’s always been done this way” work mentality, or when you’re simply focused on finding more time to enjoy the company of family and friends.

Still, in spite of our best effort to be innovative, we often feel that we’re fighting an uphill battle due to factors beyond our control. Maybe it’s because we have too much to do, we’re continually being pulled in different directions, or we’ve been conditioned to believe that “playing it safe” is the best course to follow. While there may be truth in this, the situation is not hopeless. There are simple things you can do to build innovation muscle. And, like any muscle group, the more you use it, the stronger it becomes.

Here are 7 things you can start doing today to be more innovative every single day.

Stand-Up! Your entire focus and intensity can change when you’re standing; and, so too can meetings you lead or participate in. So try this—convert one of your meetings to a standing meeting and notice the resulting momentum, enthusiasm, and action. If the meeting moves faster, ideas evolve or flow easier, and your team seems more engaged, consider making these types of meeting “a standing practice.”

Start small. Some people think that ideas must be big, transformative, and awe-inspiring to be worthy of true innovation. In reality, though, it’s often a combination of many small things that add up to make a huge difference. Small-scale innovation can be game changing too. Not only can it happen quickly and (generally) without a lot of fuss, it can also pave the way for bigger innovative solutions down the road. So try changing and improving small things first, like how you receive feedback from others (hopefully with a positive, learning attitude), how you acknowledge the efforts and ideas of team members, how you reward yourself for good work, how you begin team meetings, and so on.

Break the habit. Do you remember what it was like when you were first learning to drive? You made it a point to methodically check your rearview mirror, place your hands on the steering wheel in the correct position, and focus intently as you put the car into gear. The good news is that you’re probably still doing that today, you just don’t think about it. It’s become a habit. Over time, a lot of us begin to do our daily work like this too. We fall into a routine that works for us. It’s part of what makes us “good” at our job, but it can also blind us to opportunities. Over the course of the day, identify all the tasks you do without thinking—and then take a moment to consider how you could one or two things differently. For many tasks, there will likely be no change. However, for a few things, you may find a new, innovative way to do the same old thing. Challenge the status quo!



Seek inspiration. Whenever you find something that captures your attention and inspires innovation, put it on display. While efficiency experts will tell you that having an uncluttered workspace is important (and it is), surrounding yourself with inspiration can go a long way too. It can be whatever works for you (within limits). Maybe it’s an ad you find in a magazine, a small poster, a congratulatory email from a customer, co-worker or leader that recognized you (or someone else) for an innovative idea, a white board to include the thought (or goal) for the day, or any number of other things. If you have space on a wall near you, dedicate a spot where you can display everything. If space is at a premium, put items somewhere else that you can easily access when needed. Be creative!

Find an innovation partner. Innovation is rarely a solo activity. It helps to share. Pick a co-worker you feel comfortable sharing ideas with, and who will also share their ideas with you. Encourage each other to keep trying new things, whether it’s pitching a new solution to a problem, sharing articles that inspire, brainstorming possibilities, or just finding a new place for lunch. Whatever it is, engaging in creative partnerships can be rewarding and inspiring. New ideas can surface that would not have been arrived at by a single person.

Put it in writing. Many innovators keep a journal to jot down their thoughts and ideas. Each day, they use a sketchbook, post-it notes, Microsoft OneNote, etc. as a way to capture their thoughts and refine their creative process. It works. Maybe that’s why Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous notebook was purchased by Bill Gates for \$30.8 Million dollars! And here’s the rest of the story—when other people can see the ideas you’ve been working on, they are more likely to take them seriously and become involved in their implementation. So don’t be afraid to “show your work.” Share at least some of your ideas with other people, gather feedback, and see what sticks.

Escape. Our environment can and does effect how we feel. The more relaxed and calm we can become, the easier it can be to tap into our own creativity. This is why ideas sometimes come to us in the shower. Make a habit of getting away from your work routine periodically throughout the day, even if it’s just to walk around the block. You’ll be amazed how much even this simple activity will inspire your attitude and creativity throughout the day.

All of these suggestions may seem trivial, but together they provide a way to strengthen your innovative muscle each day. As a result, both you and your organization will become even stronger!

TECHNICAL JOURNAL

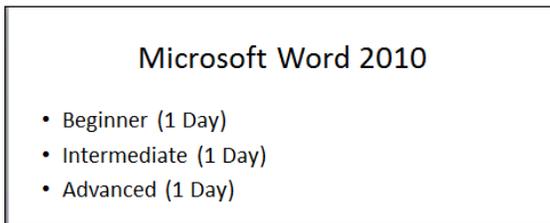
Microsoft Office Tips

From the Center for Management and Professional Development's [Computer and Technical Skills Training Team](#)

Using SmartArt in PowerPoint

One way to insert text into a PowerPoint slide without displaying it as another bulleted/numbered list slide is to convert the text into a SmartArt graphic. The steps to converting are below:

1. Select the placeholder for the content.

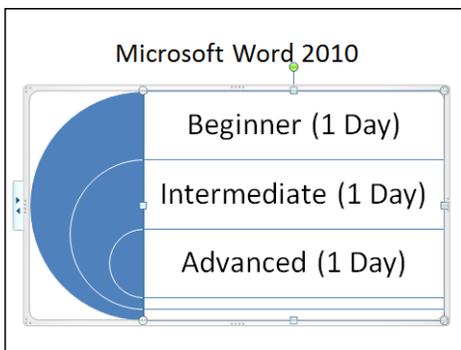
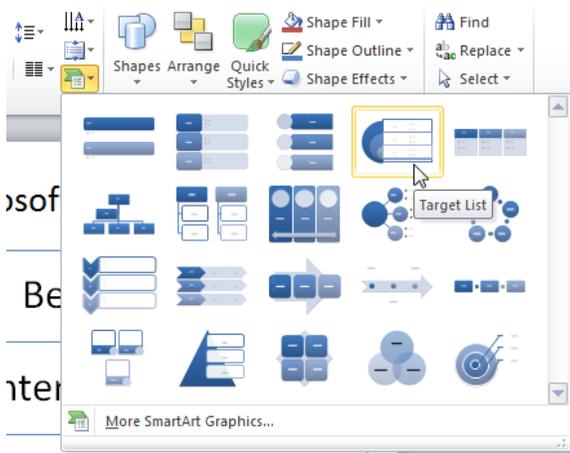


2. Click the Home tab. In the Paragraph group, click the  Convert To SmartArt Graphic button.

PowerPoint will display the SmartArt Graphic gallery.

3. Click the preferred SmartArt Graphic from the SmartArt gallery.

PowerPoint converts the bullets list to a SmartArt graphic, as shown below.



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Dr. Alan Zimmerman, author, national speaker and President of Zimmerman Communi-Care Network has spoken to more than a million people. The Center for Management and Professional Development is proud to offer Solutions readers the opportunity to benefit from Dr. Zimmerman's expertise and his solution-focused approach to leadership and personal enrichment.

DR. ALAN ZIMMERMAN'S *Comment*



"For every problem, there is a solution which is simple, neat, and wrong." --- H. L. Mencken

Some of you may remember the comedian Buddy Hackett. He once said, "My mother's menu consisted of two choices: Take it or leave it."

Well, in most of our jobs, we may feel like we've only got two choices: to do it yourself or to let it go.

In reality, there's an excellent third choice in some situations ... and that is ... **to delegate a particular task to someone else.** Mind you, I said "delegate," not "dump." There is a big difference.

Delegation, done right, can be an excellent choice because it's a win-win. It shows you trust the other person to do the task and do it well. You're developing someone's potential and boosting their self-esteem.

Here's the right way to delegate.

1. Communicate the importance of the task.

When you ask kids to do something, they always ask, "Why?" Well adults are simply babies in big bodies. They wonder the same thing. So don't leave the other person in the dark as to "why" a particular task is important. Tell them.

2. Clearly define the task and your expectations.

Don't assume the other person understands what you want. Many times that's not the case. As a result, the other person may do what he thinks is right... but you won't be happy. Leave no room for misinterpretation. Ask questions to get feedback on understanding.

It's like the couple in their 60's, married for 40 years. An angel came to them and said, "You've been such an ideal couple that the Lord wants to bless you with one wish each."

The woman said, "Great. I want to be on a Caribbean cruise," and instantly she was on a cruise. The man said, "I'd love to have a wife 30 years younger than me." And poof, instantly, he was 90 years old!

3. Give the task and instructions to one person only ... if possible and feasible. In several studies of information flow, researchers discovered that the average hourly employee gets less than 20% of the message the CEO thinks they are getting. As the message goes from the top through several people and several levels of bureaucracy, the original message gets badly distorted. The point is...the fewer people that have to translate your message, the clearer it will be.

4. Document the date you gave the instruction. Simple enough. Both of you should write down the date you give out the assignment. Better yet, both of you should write out the details of the delegated task, answering the questions, "WHO will do WHAT by WHEN?"

And yes, I know people hate to write things down. They'll say they don't need to do that because they'll remember what has to be done. But I always tell people, "The shortest pencil is better than the longest memory."

5. Agree upon the expected deadline for the completion of the task. Research says that a goal without a deadline almost NEVER works. In fact, a goal without a deadline is nothing more than *fanciful thinking*.

6. Never give an instruction to someone incapable of completing it. Too many bosses think they can just dictate when something has to be done. The fact is, though, that sometimes the other person needs more than a clear instruction on WHAT to do. He may need a little help on HOW to do it too.

7. Require periodic progress reports and meetings. It's the best way of ensuring the other person is making progress. And when you hold your meetings, facilitate, don't dictate. Pose questions that guide and encourage others to find answers to their own questions. That way, you're developing the other person's potential instead of creating more dependency.

Also use "preview" in addition to "review" at your meetings. Don't get caught up thinking that reviews have to be entirely on the past - rehashing every right and wrong move the other person made. Spend time previewing the future too. Ask, "What do you expect to happen between now and the next time we meet?"

Of course, don't forget to recognize success. As the other person makes progress on the delegated task, express your admiration and appreciation. You'll be much more effective when you challenge the other person to succeed rather than threaten if he doesn't.

8. Offer to help ... if it's appropriate. The emphasis here is on the word "appropriate." Remember, you are delegating a task and you don't want to pick that task back up and do it yourself. But sometimes the other person needs a bit of training, motivation, or guidance to get the job done.

So ask yourself, before you give some extra assistance, "Will your extra assistance help or hurt the other person in the long run? Will it develop his skills or increase his dependency?" If you decide your assistance is mostly for the good, go ahead and offer it.

9. Follow through. Never assume your instructions were completed. Check for yourself. As the old adage goes, you can't EXPECT what you don't INSPECT.

So now the ball's in your court. Some things should be delegated for your good, and the good of the other person. I've just given you a good way to do it.

ACTION:

Pick out the two delegation steps that you most often overlook or need improvement. Consider how you will do them better the next time you delegate a task.

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COURAGE from MARGIE WARRELL

Used with Permission. An intrepid Australian, **Margie Warrell** is a master coach, speaker and bestselling author who is passionate about helping people live and lead more bravely. Sign-up for Margie's 10-day "train the brave" challenge at www.trainthebrave.com and enter MO as the receipt code (\$97 value).

Conquer the Impostor Syndrome

Some weeks ago, I was invited to speak to 250 leaders in Melbourne about leading through change and creating a "culture of courage" where innovation and potential can thrive. I knew that in the audience there would be many people with far more academic qualifications than me.

As I made my way there, a little voice in my head piped up, "Who are you to talk to them about leadership? You don't have a PhD like half of them... blah-blah-blah..." It's not an unfamiliar voice. It's also an all too common fear that so many clever, capable and accomplished people wrestle with... that at some point they'll be found out as unworthy of their success; that people will discover they don't know as much as they thought.

It's called impostor syndrome. A term coined by a psychologist back in the '70s to describe this phenomenon where, despite external evidence of their competence, people feel intrinsically unworthy of their success and afraid others will eventually realize they don't deserve it.

If you ever wrestle with a quiet fear of being unmasked as an impostor, I hope these suggestions will help you own your success and get that little fear monkey off your back.

Own your success; don't minimize it.

Attributing success to luck is a common feature of those who struggle with the impostor syndrome. Particularly women, who have tendency to chalk up their good fortune to a helping hand or lucky break, whereas men are more likely to attribute it to a combination of internal factors, such as grit, talent or ability.

Impostor syndrome tends to be the domain of high achievers who are wired to focus more on what they haven't done than on what they have. If you feel undeserving, write a list of all

that you've done just over the last 12 months. I would hazard a guess that even attempting to record how much you've done will help you realize that you've earned every bit of the success, influence and respect you enjoy.

Stop with the comparisons.

When I was invited to spend a week on Necker Island with Richard Branson and a host of successful entrepreneurs, I spent the first two days waiting for someone to realize I was there by mistake. And then, after an illuminating conversation with Marianne Williamson, I had an epiphany. We're not all made to be like Richard Branson, nor would it serve the world if we were. Each of us has a unique mark to make on the world, and when we get caught up comparing ourselves to others, it only leaves us feeling less than enough in some way, and diminishes our capacity to make the impact we alone can make.

The fact is, most of your comparisons are unfair because you have a tendency to compare...your weaknesses to others' strengths...your insides to others' outsides...and where you are now against someone who's been in the game far longer than you.

As I write in *Make Your Mark: A Guidebook for the Brave Hearted*, "Comparing yourself is a race you'll never win. Don't get caught up focusing on the gifts or good luck of others. Focus only on making the most of your own."

Focus on the value you bring, not on being perfect.

If you are someone who isn't willing to settle for mediocrity, more power to you. But there's a difference between giving your best and being the best; between trying to better yourself and being better than everyone else on the planet. One is focused on how you can improve the world; the other is about your ego.

The truth is that you don't have to have Michelangelo-like mastery or Einstein's IQ to provide value for others, or be worthy of your success, plus any accolades you receive along the way. Focus on adding as much value as you can, not on scaling some arbitrary bar of perfectionism that leaves you forever striving, never arriving, and only feeling perpetually inadequate.

Risk outright exposure.

Fear of being found out can dial down our ambitions and cause us to stick to whatever we know we already do well. But while playing safe can provide the short-term illusion of safety, over the long run it can only leave you less secure and deprive you of ever knowing just how capable and more than adequate you truly are.

When you refuse to let fear of being found out sit in the driver's seat, you open the door to discover new strengths, grow existing ones and build your own brand of brilliance.

No one else has the same combination of skills, talents, passions and hard-won wisdom as you. Likewise, you are here to make a mark that no one else can. But you'll only do it when you can embrace your one-of-a-kind brilliance and focus on running your own best race. In the process, you will come to realize that the only impostor you've ever had to worry about is the fear that seeks to take up residence in your head.

The truth is that you bring enormous value to the world and have a combination of strengths, experience, insight and wisdom that no-one else does. So if you ever worry about being unmasked as an impostor, I hope my suggestions will help you embrace your value, own your success and step into your power. The world needs what you have to bring. Time to get that little fear monkey off your back. It's the impostor; not you.