

## **“Why The Boss Can’t be the Boy”**

With the demands of spring close at hand I've been working with a number of employers and managers to help structure their staffing. Priority has been to maximise performance through effective delegation including greater use of part time roles to match peak demands.

A key to success is harnessing the motivation and genius of “the boss” by making best use of their talents without limiting their capacity for business management and entrepreneurial roles that add value and promote business growth.

I've seen teams struggle when employers have attempted to delegate responsibility while retaining an operational role. This has real potential for confusion in the ranks and to undermine management staff. Responsibility must be delegated by actions – not just words and titles. Teams work better with the boss adopting a helicopter view rather than trying to work from the sidelines as they try to keep in touch with what's going on day to day. This challenges employers to understand the difference between involvement and interference!

A common problem is that an employer's physical input sends the wrong signal to the team. In our own businesses and many of the farming operations I work with, I've seen the negatives of leaders who try to support their operation by being part of the team day to day.

This may start as a gesture of encouragement but it risks being taken advantage of by simply making life easier for everyone else. I'm convinced that running tight staffing levels is fundamental to achieving creativity and a sense of urgency that gets things to happen. Providing excess builds comfort zones and complacency that reduces urgency and efficiency.

When the boss is around to pick up the pieces there is a real risk their contribution will be taken for granted. And worse – this will waste the most valuable management resource available to the business as a potential entrepreneur is downgraded to become simply an operator!

The second weakness of a part time role in operations by the boss is the risk of undermining the effectiveness of management staff. For effective delegation there must be sufficient responsibility and accountability to allow managers to manage.

A manager who is constantly over-riden or contradicted by their employer loses the respect of their team and becomes frustrated.

Delegation can be enhanced by an employer's strategic support but it can also be very quickly undermined by interference and unexpected change. The best way to avoid this is to minimise physical involvement and concentrate on planning and approving strategies to be implemented by management staff. This sometimes requires an employer to tolerate things working below optimum but this is acceptable if lessons are being learnt and systems refined to eventually achieve the desired results.

The big benefit of this approach to team structure is that it promotes growth at all levels. Operational staff is challenged to get it right on time, the first time. This will be assisted by the development of systems and procedures that reduce the risk of error. Managed pressure on the team will encourage effectiveness not just efficiency so the focus is not just on doing things right but equally on doing the right things.

Senior staff will have the authority and accountability to exercise their responsibility. As their confidence and competence grows their independence and the team's capacity will increase. Time effective and constructive monitoring through regular meetings between the employer and management staff will ensure a forum to discuss results, achieve quality control and harness the employer's insight and experience.

Employers and business owners will expand their capacity to act as entrepreneurs. They will stay objective to improve the plan rather than be sucked in to more menial tasks. As effective leaders they will support, encourage and challenge. They will be able to develop systems that promote simplicity and success.

If you are employing management staff that are only functioning as operators - look at your own role and management style for improvement rather than wondering what's wrong with your people!

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