If You Want to Be a Leader, Stop Doing

Do you feel like you can't ever catch up? Do you feel like you have countless meetings on your calendar and that leaving on time is an oh so distant memory? Maybe it's because you are doing instead of leading.

We are doing too much doing. As managers, we find ourselves filling all these roles we believe are necessary to manage our teams and get the work done. The challenge is that as a manager, your job is not actually to do all the work. We believe that it's our job to be the one they come to, the one to fix everything, the one that makes the team's lives easier, so they can focus on getting things done, right? Well, maybe not. Instead, you should be providing direction, coaching, and leadership for your team.

Are you doing your team or yourself any favors when you are their superhero? Maybe you need to take a step back and reevaluate your role…unless you really want to ensure job security at this level for the rest of your career and never climb the next rung of the ladder…if you aren't replaceable, they can't ever let you go on to bigger and better things!

As you think about how you spend your time each day, consider that you may not be as productive and helpful to your team as you are surely trying to be. What do I mean?

Here are some thoughts to consider:

- **Nonstop meetings:** Whenever I speak on this topic, I ask the crowd how many of them spend all day in meetings. Almost the entire room raises their hand. Sadly, I used to do this, too. I thought I had to always be "in the know" of everything going on in the organization to be effective in leading my team to get their work done. We often feel it is our job to go to meetings and "protect" our resources or fight for the things we need for our project. Instead, it might be a more effective use of your time to enable and empower your team members to step up and take ownership of their area of responsibility. If you aren't rescuing or protecting them constantly, you can let them step up and take responsibility for representing themselves or their project within the meeting. Figure out which meetings don't require your input and spend less time there and more time coaching and supporting your team.

- **Manager as firefighter:** Do you feel like you are spending your day putting out fires for your team? Do you find yourself bragging (or complaining) that you got to "fight fires" all day long? Do you enjoy the thrill of being able to fix things? I get it. I used to spend my entire day running from fire to fire. However, by fixing everything, my team wasn't learning how to solve their own problems or put out their own fires. I thought I was being helpful to them and carrying a burden so that they could get other work done. However, I was left exhausted by running around and fixing things for people and they never learned the valuable skill of being able to solve their own problems. A leader will coach team members through the process of fixing their own problems so that they then have more time to lead the team instead of running from fire to fire.

- **Answering questions vs. asking them:** Does your team come to you all day long asking you countless questions? Are you the "expert" on the team? If so, your team has been trained that they don't have to figure things out for themselves, but just come to you and you will give them the answers to their questions. I know it feels good and that you are valuable to your team by answering the questions. However, they are missing a key opportunity to figure things out for themselves both now and in the future. Instead, how about delegating the answering of questions or coaching your team to figure things out themselves? Empowering your team to become more self-sufficient will free you up for thinking about the future. Instead of answering questions, ask them. Questions like, "What do you think should be done?" or "How could this problem be solved?" will help them learn to think for themselves.

- **Never letting your team fail:** I used to think my job was to protect my team from failure. This was especially hard for me in the PMO space where we weren't always appreciated or understood. However, by never letting my team fail and protecting them all the time, I was limiting their opportunity to grow and develop their own leadership skills. In order
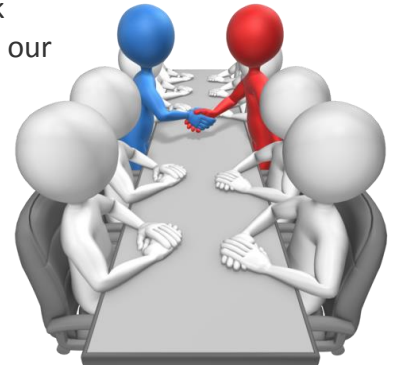
to lead, you must fail (and then learn from it). Are you taking the opportunity to let your team figure out how to recover from their failures? If your team becomes super comfortable with you protecting them all the time, you are limiting their opportunity to grow.

- **Short term vs. long term thinking:** Because you are spending all your time answering questions, solving problems, and attending meetings, you don't have any time to think beyond today. You have a constant backlog of things you should be doing or planning for and it all gets shoved to the far edge of your calendar, only to become your weekend or late-night work. That will burn you out and prevent you from ever getting caught up. It's a vicious cycle. Instead, consider scheduling time to think. This doesn't mean you don't spend all your time alone, but maybe find more efficient ways to move your team forward while also getting time to move forward your own planning. Consider the **One Hour Manager** blog post for some ideas on how to do this.
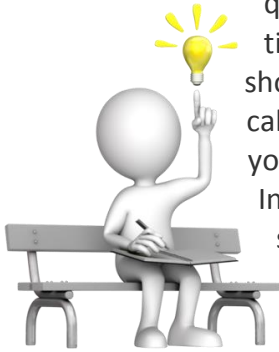
If any of this is resonating with you, don't worry, most of us have been there. I know I was there, and it took a while to figure out how to get out of it. That's why I share these topics with you…I wish I had me when I was you and I want to save you the time and frustration of learning things the hard way and fast track you to be the leader you were meant to be! It's very hard to detach from a mode that feels like it's working in the moment. Consider, however, that the things that are helping you move forward in the moment may be limiting your long-term goals and aspirations, both for you and for your team.

Thank YOU
for making an IMPACT!

Thank you for taking the time to read this eBook.

I welcome you to join our free and value-packed newsletter to get more goodies right in your inbox! Each week, we share new insights and practical and immediately applicable resources to help you further your own capability and help you address even the toughest challenges as you are delivering projects or building and running a PMO.

[Click here to join us!](#)

I welcome your feedback and insights, as well as suggestions for new topics or challenges you are facing while driving IMPACT in your organization. Please visit [PMOStrategies.com](#) to connect with us and share your thoughts.

Warmly,

Laura Barnard

Founder & CEO, PMO Strategies