

## EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

### Leaders must learn to let go

It's a lesson that is perhaps most difficult for the new leader: Sometimes you have to let go and delegate critical tasks to your team—even if you firmly believe you can do it best.

Steve Linehan knows something about that. As a new Senior Vice President and Treasurer at credit card giant Capital One, he admits that letting go and delegating was hard for him.

"I was very much a control freak ... there were certain ways that I learned how to do things in terms of the quality and thoroughness of work, how to write things, and I was put in a [new leadership] role where you just couldn't do that."

He finally realized that he had to let go and delegate. But it wasn't easy.

"It's almost like an alcoholic admitting he is an alcoholic," he recalls. In some ways, he felt that his controlling, detail-oriented nature had been a big

part of his rise to a leadership position. So why change?

"I was caught in the mindset, as many leaders are, of 'It will take me longer to teach somebody else how to do it than for me to do it myself.'" So he worked too long and too late doing things himself. As a result, the work suffered and so did his team.

**"It's almost like being an alcoholic."**

However, after a tough performance review from his boss, Linehan forced himself to be more accepting of others' work.

"It might not have been the way I would have done it, but it was really good. Accepting that was incredibly liberating," he admits.

Leadership lesson: Trusting and believing in the people you guide makes you a better leader. "From that point on I think I began to accelerate," agrees Linehan.

— Adapted from *The Next Level*, Scott Eblin, Davies-Black, www.daviesblack.com.

## COMMUNICATION

### Good listening leads to a meaningful dialogue

Good leadership requires good ears. Just ask Christine Loh, Hong Kong Legislative Council member and president of the citizen engagement project Civic Exchange. As a political and business leader, Loh has learned to give her entire focus to people when they are speaking.

"Being able to show that I understood the speaker was often the beginning of a meaningful dialogue irrespective of whether we agreed with each other in the end or not," she says.

Successful leaders like Loh understand that active listening engages and even disarms opponents. In many cases, someone who is disagreeing most fervently merely wants to feel

like you are hearing what they are saying, she says. They don't need or expect you always to agree, but they want to feel that you have genuinely registered and addressed their comments.

Loh says that skillful listening definitely has made her a better leader.

"Having a clear idea of what people are saying enables me to summarize what they've said," Loh notes. And that helps her distill the discussion down to its basics. Most importantly, it helps her to identify—and solve—points of contention.

—Adapted from *Leading Through Conflict*, Mark Gerson, Harvard Business School Press, www.HBSPress.org.

## COMMUNICATION

### Powerful stories present a challenge

Nothing forges a connection with an audience like a great story.

That's why all leaders should study the tactics of a great storyteller like yachtsman and business leader Pete Goss. One story he tells often is of his remarkable rescue of fellow competitor Raphael Dinelli, who faced death in the eye of a horrific storm during a round-the-world yacht race. In another powerful story, Goss recounts his development of a revolutionary giant catamaran, Team Phillips. Each exemplifies the power of a good story. They work because each presents a challenge that draws in the audience.

How can the rescue possibly succeed given the challenges? Will Raphael be alive if Pete can even get to him? And is it possible to develop a catamaran that is the size of a small marina? Will it survive rough waters? Will Goss be able to raise enough funds to make it happen?

— Adapted from *Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?*, Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, Harvard Business School Press, www.hrspress.org.

## ETHICS

### Demand integrity from employees

For a long time, Carl Sewell wrestled with how to describe ethical standards to his luxury car sales people and his other employees.

Finally, it came to him: He now tells his people to ask themselves how their actions would appear if they read about them on the front page of the local newspaper.

"When you ask the question that way, things become real clear," he says.

— Adapted from *Customers for Life*, Carl Sewell and Paul Brown, Doubleday, www.randomhouse.com/doubleday.