



Timely Information for Personal Success

A Micromanager's Recovery Guide: Part II



By Kate Zabriskie

Ask yourself if any of the following work scenarios sound familiar?

He gives me an assignment and tells me to do it my way. I only wish he meant it. My way doesn't seem to hit the mark. He changes the smallest details. I dread getting new work.

I've had this job for six years. At this point, I think I understand how it works. It's so frustrating to be treated like someone who just walked in the door.

Yesterday, I found her checking my spreadsheets when she thought I was at lunch. It feels terrible not to be trusted. I need to look for a new job.

Regardless of their intentions, people who micromanage often create an environment of fear, mistrust, and disengagement. The constant oversight, checking in, and nitpicking wears down even the strongest employee. Turnover goes up, engagement goes down, and all the while, the managers who micromanage may not even know they're the source of the problem.

Recommendations for micromanagers on how they can learn to let go were presented in Part I. More suggestions follow in the conclusion of this two-part article.

❖ **Work on accepting different approaches.** Old habits die hard, and change takes time without some help. A little narration can go a long way toward steering the brain in the right direction. *"James is not me, and I am not James. It's okay that we don't work the same way."* A mantra such as that can serve as a gentle reminder and help the micromanager recalibrate. Eventually, these new mental tapes will start to replace old thinking patterns. An updated mental map will positively influence the manager's choices and behaviors.

❖ **Perform the Goldilocks test.** Recovering micromanagers aren't mind readers, so it's important that they become comfortable with feedback.

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Healthy Recipe: Moist Pumpkin Bread

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ stick unsalted butter
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup canned pumpkin
- ¼ cup nonfat, plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ginger
- ¼ teaspoon allspice

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 170
- Carbohydrates: 33 g.
- Sodium: 77 mg.
- Fat: 4 g.
- Saturated fat: 2 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- ➊ Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Spray bread pan with non-stick cooking spray.
- ➋ In a bowl, use electric mixer to beat together the butter and sugar on high speed until smooth. With mixer on low speed, add the egg and combine. Add pumpkin, yogurt, and vanilla, and mix until smooth.
- ➌ In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and allspice. Fold mixture into pumpkin mixture and combine until smooth.
- ➍ Pour into prepared pan and place in center of oven. Bake for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Serving size: 1 slice of bread.

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Editor/Publisher: Mike Jacquart

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A multiple-choice approach is often the best way to encourage candor. For instance, "I'd like to get some feedback from you about how you like to work. Am I too hands on, too hands off, or am I just right? I'm asking because everyone operates differently, and it's important to me that we work well together."

A word of caution: even with the Goldilocks approach, if you've micromanaged your team for a long time, it may take a while for them to give you frank feedback. Check in often and get specific. "Chuck let's talk about this last assignment. Do you feel we got the delegation balance right or do we need to make some adjustments?"

❖ **Don't argue with the feedback.** When someone gives you feedback you don't like or don't agree with, don't argue. Your employee's perception is the reality you must work with. So instead of fighting or withdrawing, ask questions. For example, "What I'm hearing is you would like me to focus less on how you run the lab tests and more on the number you complete each day. Do I understand correctly? If I explained why in this case the process matters, do you think you might feel differently?"

❖ **Look for ways to let go and take on new tasks.** Leaving a micromanaging lifestyle behind is a process and not an event. Self-development requires regular assessment and planning. In addition to asking for feedback, pay attention to where you spend your time that you shouldn't and where you could that you don't. Are you working on strategic initiatives or navigating deep in the weeds? Are you developing people or hoarding work? Are you controlling or empowering? The questions are numerous and important to ask.

Summary

Any activity that requires change can be hard work and at times even a little scary. For micromanagers, this can be especially true. Nevertheless, as most rehabilitated micromanagers will profess, it's a lot more productive and rewarding to work in a place where people have the freedom to do their best work. ■

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