9 Management Secrets Of Lazy CEOs

How Exceptional CEOs Get More Done in Less Time

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I choose a lazy person to do a hard job. Because a lazy person will find an easy way to do it.

-Bill Gates.

It's counterintuitive that a Great CEO would also be lazy, but based on research with thousands of high performing CEOs, we have found that it's true.

So how do the really exceptional CEOs get more done in less time than everyone else? What is their technique for getting their work done while still having the time to spend pursuing hobbies and spending quality time with their friends and family?

The truth is that great and lazy CEOs know a secret when it comes to time management. Rather than spending a little time on a lot of things, the best CEOs spend most of their time eliminating the single biggest constraint to the growth of their business. They spend a lot of time diagnosing this constraint before taking action. This process is similar to looking for the kink in a garden hose so you can get the flow going again. These is no use trying to unkink the hose until you find the actual problem.

Depending on the nature of the constraint, they engage in fixing the kink in the hose using one of five different roles the Learner, Architect, Coach, Engineer or Player that together form the archetype for great leadership. These are all high leverage roles that create a permanent improvement in the business. This insight isn't just some theory either; it s derived directly from working with thousands of CEOs running high growth companies. The trick to being great and lazy is to only work at the point of constraint and avoid all work that doesn't increase organizational capacity. Lazy CEOs have a series of well developed tools to properly avoid this non-value work.

But they also have techniques that they use to manage risk and talent, and 9 of those secrets are disclosed here. Use these approaches, the same ones used by exceptional CEOs and you'lls ee your impact grow.

So, do you want to keep working hard? Or would you rather get busy being lazy?

Secret 1: People Don't Follow Pessimists

Did you ever work for a boss who you dreaded dealing with? You know, the kind of negative person who you just knew would shoot down any new idea you came up with or make you expend all kinds of energy doing everything you could to convince them to give you the chance to try something new. The kind of boss that could brighten any room--by leaving it? Worse, of course, was that if you did finally convince them to give your idea a shot, that boss would also reserve the right to lay down a brutal "I told you so" if anything went even slightly wrong. We shudder just thinking about working for someone like that. It's no fun at all. That's why nobody likes to follow pessimists.

Consider the other side of the coin, when you have a boss who is positive and upbeat in such a way that every time you meet with them, you leave with an infusion of energy--even if they disagreed with you or changed your plan! These are the leaders we never want to disappoint.

GE used a leadership measurement system he called the "4 s of Leadership." Two of the attributes leaders were measured on were the amount of "**energy**" they exuded and on their ability to "**energize**" other people. It shouldn't come as a surprise that optimists have these qualities in spades.

When you work for an optimistic boss, work becomes fun again and it's almost impossible not to look forward to what you can do to help push the organization forward and fulfill its promise. That's why everyone loves to follow optimists.

Oh I can already hear the rebuttal from the pessimists: "But I'm just being a realist." No, you're just being negative. Let's face it: statistically speaking, things work out for the better at least half the time--and that's without even trying to make something work. That means that if you're always seeing the glass half empty, and how things are always going to fall apart, you're basically advocating for doing nothing. And where's the future in that?

Admittedly, there is such a thing as being too optimistic. If a leader begins to see only good things happening around them--where they are truly denying reality--then there is a real risk you will lose the respect of the people following you. But the real threat is falling too far to the other side of the equation, where you dampen everyone's mood by only seeing the downside of everything.

I had a fellow named John that worked for me a few years ago. He ran our organization's field service team and he oversaw a staff of several hundred people. John was a pessimist: nothing was ever good enough--including his own ideas! "It probably won't work" could have been his catchphrase. It got so bad, I nicknamed him Eeyore, after Winnie the Pooh's friend who was always filled with doom and gloom.

Eventually, I had to talk to him about it. I explained how regardless of whether a decision worked out or not, we sure would have more fun getting to the finish line if we were more optimistic about what the outcome would be. It might even help us get that better outcome sometimes! There is real power in shifting your mindset so that you begin to think about what can go right and attract it into your life, I explained to him, even when things don't work out exactly as you intended. I think John understood what I was trying to coach him on, but it can be tough for a tiger to change its stripes.

That's why it's important to get a head start on evaluating how you think as a leader by challenging yourself to be more positive and to explore the possibilities of the ideas the people following you are excited to bring you. That's how you'll generate the kind of infectious energy that will push your organization over the top. In short, it's time to get optimistic.

Secret 2: It's Okay to Pull the Boss Card

As leaders and managers, we're trained to ask for input from our team members when we go about making decisions. But, let's be honest: there are definitely times when you've already made up your mind and just go through the motions of asking for other opinions. While that might seem like an innocuous decision, it's the kind of thing that, if you make a habit out of it, could completely derail your credibility as a leader.

Let me explain.

Back when I was a newly minted company president, I made it a custom to bring issues to my team and ask them for input. But there were also times when I had already made up my mind; when I knew what we were going to do pretty much regardless of what anyone might say. So while people chimed in with their opinions, little did they know I had already made the decision.

It turns out, however, that my team had actually figured this out. They could read my body language enough to know when I wasn't actually looking for their input. But I was clueless about this. It wasn't until my CFO, Phil, pulled me aside one day and told me something I'll never forget: "If you don't want our input, don't ask for it." Phil went on to explain that he and the team understood that there were times when I needed to make the tough decisions. They were OK with that--I was the boss after all--so long as it didn't happen all the time. Otherwise, they were happy, even excited, to participate in the decision-making process when I was indeed interested in their opinions.

That was a groundbreaking moment for me. My team helped me understand that sometimes it's OK to pull the boss card and make the decisions myself. But I also knew that if I did that, I still owed them an explanation and the reasons behind why I made the decision. It's paramount for leaders to be transparent about their decisions; it's simply not good enough to rule by fiat.
I remain thankful to Phil for setting me straight. How many times have you shared feedback with your boss, only to recognize that he had already made his decision? It's frustrating. It makes you mad. It might even make you hate your job.

It's clear now that if I had continued to pretend that I was asking for input, I would eventually lose credibility as a leader with my team--which is about the worst-case scenario you can experience as a boss. If my team didn't believe that I valued their opinions and input, well, I wouldn't be much of a leader in the first place.

The truth is that my team influenced my decisions greatly over the years--particularly when it came to major issues, the ones below the waterline that could potentially sink our ship. When our collective success depended on a particular decision, that's when I wanted the most input from my team. Even if we had limited information to work with, I knew we would arrive at a better decision, one that wouldn't sink our boat, if I got everyone involved in making the best possible decision.

But there is a significant cost when you solicit input from the team. Conducting those meetings takes time and effort. And sometimes, there are decisions that aren't worth making that kind of investment. That's when it's OK to play the boss card--as long as you explain your rationale for doing so. In other words, don't ask for input when you don't want it. But also explain why you did what you did.
If you are consistently clear about when you want input, and when you don't and why, you'll then build trust and credibility with your team. You'll also get better decisions and results. And isn't that what being a boss is all about in the first place?

ONE simple question

Secret 3: One Simple Question to Manage Risk

One of the most important jobs any leader does is decide what issues to tackle inside the organization at any given time. But how do you choose which ones are the most critical? Risk is a major component in deciding what comes first.

Consider the analogy of a naval captain. When you're in charge of a ship, you deal with all kinds of unexpected issues that come your way on the water--everything from fires in the engine room and giant waves to enemy ships and submerged reefs.

Inevitably, every ship suffers some kind of damage in its journeys. One technique ship captains use to determine how critical an issue might be is to ask whether the damage is above or below the water line. That's how they'll know how risky the issue is.

The Question: Above the Waterline or Below?

If something goes wrong above the waterline, say something happens to the winch or a toaster exploded in the mess room--things that don't put the ship at risk of sinking--then the captain knows its not a critical issue. It's something that can wait to be dealt with or even something he can delegate to one of his subordinates to correct.

But if any issue is below the waterline, meaning there is an issue that threatens the seaworthiness of the craft and the life of the crew, then it's time to sound the all-hands-on-deck alert as a way to rally everyone toward fixing that issue as quickly and as effectively as possible. Water is coming into the ship and if it isn't stopped--you are heading to the bottom.

Now think about how you might apply this analogy to your business. Think of an issue facing your business and imagine the worst possible scenario. Everything goes wrong. In this horrible set of events, would you materially damage the business or worse, go out of business? This is a below the water line issue and needs to be resolved immediately.

You could find that you might be unnecessarily spending your time and your company's resources on issues that might be best described as above the water line when you should really be worrying about what's happening below it?

If one of your employees is complaining that someone took their sandwich out of the kitchen, is it really worth taking your time to send out a company-wide APB to find out the culprit? Nope--that's an above the water line kind of issue and you don't need to get involved. Ignore it, delegate it and move on.

Conversely, let's say you find out that the client who represents 80% of your revenue is at risk of cancelling their contract. That's a perfect example of a below the water line kind of issue. It's time to use an all-company alert get everyone involved in fixing that problem before the ship--your business--sinks.

In these kinds of scenarios, it's not enough to delegate the task to your team. You need to get involved in at least supervising your superstars who you call in to plug the holes. Speed and accuracy matter, so your input is critical.

This same logic applies to how quickly you need to respond to issues confronting the organization. Use it as a first screen to assess your needed response time. In some cases, where an issue is above the water line, you can afford to wait a bit before engaging with it. It's not a priority. But when you come across anything that rates as below the water line, that means you need to act NOW.
Again, this is a simple analogy that is actually quite effective at helping you and your organization prioritize the issues you need to deal with on a daily basis. After all, everyone's goal should be to keep the company ship afloat. And, as any ship captain would tell you, the best way to do that is to make sure you deal with anything below the water line first.

Secret 4: 75 Percent of the Information Is All You Need to Make a Good Decision

I have written before about people who have high information needs, we call them "infomaniacs." These are folks, or even organizational cultures, that prioritize making decisions using data, metrics, and plenty of analysis.

And don't get me wrong, that's often a good thing in the right situation. What you don't want to do, however, is take that need for information to an extreme. That's especially true when it comes to making normal business decisions.

You always want to have enough information to make the best possible decision you can. But how much is enough? And, just as importantly, how much is too much?

If you have 50 percent of the information you need, for instance, that's probably not enough to make a sound decision. You'll be guessing, which can make your decision quite risky. If it's a choice that doesn't have much impact, like where to have lunch, then 50 percent of the data is plenty. But waiting until you have 99 percent of the information is also risky--and expensive in many ways. Accumulating that depth and breadth of data before you make your decision often:

A.) Costs a lot of money to acquire, and
B.) Takes a lot of time to gather.

Some people call this "analysis paralysis"

These are significant drawbacks, especially if you're trying to run an agile organization that moves nimbly to stay ahead of the competition. The longer you wait to make a decision, the riskier it becomes, since you may be missing opportunities--allowing your competition to catch up or even pass you.

That's why I've found that the solution is usually to make the decision when you have 75 percent of what you need to pull the trigger.

As an example, let's consider that a potential customer is asking you to extend them a significant line of credit as part of signing on with your company. They are asking for enough money that it is significantly risky for your organization if the deal goes sour. So how much information do you need to make your decision?

To get 75 percent of what you need, you might need to establish that they are a reputable company with a solid history of being in business. You might also ask for a snapshot of their financials to help make sure they are solvent.

To get to 100 percent of the information, you might need to ask for their tax returns over the past two years and their profit and loss statements (P&Ls), while also setting up interviews with their CFO and their auditor and so on. If you do all that, you'll have everything you need to know about this company and will make a clear and fully informed decision. But you will probably miss your chance to turn them into a customer.

Why? Because by pushing for 100 percent of the information, you may have opened up a window for one of your competitors to offer this company what they want without the hassle of providing all the information that you're asking for.

Your company could also earn the dreaded label of "hard to do business with," which can be difficult to overcome in a fast-moving market.

The point is that you have to balance the risk level and potential payoff of whatever decision you're pondering with your need for enough information to make that decision. Is this something above or below the waterline, in that it could truly put your company in jeopardy? If you're building a new oil refinery, for example, that might warrant taking the extra time and money to make sure you get everything you need to know.

The book *Blink* reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of "thin-slicing"--filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables.

But for most business decisions, I've found that 75 percent of the data, focused on the right issues, is, as Goldilocks might say, just about right.

Secret 5: Never Waste A Good Crisis

On your journey as a CEO or entrepreneur, you will inevitably face a significant crisis at some point. Maybe it will be the loss of a key employee. Or perhaps it will involve getting in trouble with your bank or the failure of a new product launch. The point is that something will go wrong in a way that you never planned for.

In the wake of such a crisis, it's the natural tendency of CEOs and entrepreneurs to step in and fix the problem. We want to put the fire out. Maybe that's jumping in to find a replacement for the person who left or even worse, take charge of your R&D team. While those moves might help stop the bleeding, they aren't likely to push your company forward over the long run.

That's why I want to change your thinking on this topic. I believe that the best leaders never waste a good crisis because it affords you the chance to make the kind of large wholesale changes you organization needs that you've also been putting off for too long. To put that another way, sometimes the best move is to let the fire do its work so that you can rebuild something stronger from the ashes. Let's return to the example of losing a top employee; let's say your best salesperson. While it might seem like the obvious solution is to rehire for that position, the smart CEO asks some questions instead: Is there a better way to go about this? Maybe you should hire two new junior people instead? Maybe the clients that ex-salesperson worked with warrant your VP of Sales stepping in to take over? Or, just maybe, you're better off losing that client anyway.

Another scenario might be that, due to a massive market disruption, you need to make dramatic changes in your headcount. Now, nobody likes laying people off--which is why most organization lay off the smallest number of people they can. But what if the smarter decision is to cut deeper by getting rid of all of your C players, and then hiring back fewer, but far more productive A and B players instead? In this case, you would have used a crisis to upgrade the overall talent level in your organization.

The point is that when you encounter a crisis, it primes your organization to go through major changes it might not otherwise be capable of making.

Think about your organization like an oilrig in the middle of the ocean. If you were to order your employees to jump off into the cold salty water, miles from shore on any given day, they'd look at you like you were crazy. But if you explain that you're in the middle of a real crisis--like if the oil rig is on fire --you're sure to get far different results.

There's an element of psychology at work here in that when we encounter crisis in our lives, we're also programmed to deal with change in a way that, in more normal times when everything seems fine, we tend to reject.

That's also why it's critical for you, as a leader, not to minimize the extent of the crisis--which is another natural thing for us to do. If the company loses it's biggest customer, for instance, you might be tempted to prop up the troops by saying something like, "It's not a big deal, we'll find another customer to take their place." But that would be wasting an opportunity.

What you could do instead is be quite direct about the consequences of the crisis. As a result, the organization should expect several major changes to come about. That's how you can turn a negative situation into a positive one because you can prime the organization to do things it might not otherwise have been capable of undergoing. And this type of transparent leadership will serve you well through tough times.

A crisis allows you to bring about change at a much faster rate than you would normally be able to bring about--which is why you should never waste them. So next time you get some bad news, resist the urge to go and fight fires. Take a step back instead to see if there might be a silver lining in the form of a big organizational change you probably needed to do to avoid the crisis in the first place.

Secret 6: Handle Information Intelligently

Just about every role in a business these days, including that of the CEO, involves receiving and passing along information to someone else. Maybe it's the sales reports you need to share with your board of directors about, or maybe even it's the financials you want to send to your direct reports. The key question, then, is how do you go about handling that information in the best way possible? Here are three common ways people share information in organizations as information is passed up the organization Full Pass, Amplifier and Dampener. Turns out there's one best way to do it:

The Full Pass-- No Filtering
This is the most straightforward and, frankly, the easiest way to handle information in that you simply pass on literally everything that comes your way upward. People in this mode are afraid not to share something for fear they will miss something important or have a boss with a lack of trust. But it's also the least valuable. When you don't take the time to modify or screen information before you pass it along, you aren't adding any value to it--which forces your boss, your board or your co-workers to spend their time trying to decipher if the information is valuable to them or not. This strategy should be avoided at all costs.

The Amplifier--Make Things More Important
Unlike the person who sends every shred of information out the door untouched, the Amplifier uses their corporate megaphone to turn information into a crisis--something that they feel needs to be handled right away. If everything is urgent--nothing really is.

But rather than act strategically, the Amplifer does this same thing repeatedly, and often when there is really no crisis at hand, many times for political gan. This then tangles up the entire organization in trying to figure out what's really at stake. Acting this way also marginalizes the Amplifer, as the rest of the organization will soon tune them out along the lines of the boy who cried wolf too often. Not surprisingly, Amplifers can wreak a lot of damage in an organization and this approach should also be avoided. They are toxic and create negative energy and effort. ***Don't do this!!!***

The Dampener--Intelligently Filter Information
The most effective, and valuable, role anyone can take in terms of handling information is that of the Dampener, someone who acts as a skilled interpreter of the information and "dampens" the drama associated with it. Someone playing this role can analyze large amounts of data and sort out which elements should be flagged as important enough to share with the organization. The best Dampeners learn to filter the critical information and share context when they pass the information along, which helps their boss or teammates take immediate action on it. Unlike Full Passers and Amplifiers, Dampeners add amazing value to organizations because everyone learns to trust their insights into the issues they pass along. When they say something is important--people listen.
What's interesting to note is that in some cases, CEOs or bosses don't like their direct reports to be Dampeners. They don't trust their team to know what information is important, so they insist on everyone passing everything in full along to them. We call these bosses, "Infomaniacs".

If you find yourself in this camp as a leader, you might want to hit the pause button and evaluate your team and ask why you don't trust them. Maybe it's time to make some replacements. Or, just as importantly, it might be time to consider why you might be holding onto the reins too tightly. Imagine how much more productive you could be if you had a team of Dampeners feeding you only the information you needed to act on or that you needed to pass on to the team or your board? Your life would be so much better in that you could work less and get more done all at the same time. What's not to like about that?

Secret 7: Move Quickly on C Players

One of the most challenging tasks for any leader is figuring out what to do with an underperforming team member in your organization-- a C player. The challenge is that your employee might be a good person, probably someone who has even bought into the values of your culture. The simple answer is to fire them and move on, but that isn't the way to treat people. But they simply aren't performing the way you need them to. So what do you do?

Step 1: Make Them Aware There's An Issue
The first step in dealing with an underperforming employee is to make them aware that they are, in fact, underperforming. Simple, right? And you need to be as specific as possible about where they are falling short, which means it helps to bring data with you to prove your case. It's also something you need to do as soon as you know it's happening--regardless of whether they just joined the company three months ago or even if they just had their annual review. The point is that you can't afford to wait until an end-of-year review to let them know that a problem exists; it needs to happen immediately.

Step 2: Offer Coaching for Improvement
Once you have let your employee know that they are underperforming, there are some things you can do to help coach them to improve their performance. Before you get there, though, you need that employee to "own" the fact that they are falling short in their performance. If you can't break through to them at that level, then your conversation, and their time with the organization, will become very short.

But, if your employee does own their performance--and commits to improving it--then you can work together to put a plan in place to get their performance up to standard. If your employee works in sales, say, and is only closing five deals a month and they should be closing 15 or more, you can ask them what they will do differently to reach that new level. You can then begin a monitoring program where you see how that new plan of action is working. Where are they after 15 days? At 30? If they aren't tracking toward their goal, then you know you have a problem on your hands and can begin planning your next move.

Step 3: Educate Them
It's possible that your employee might actually lack the skills they need to perform their job well. That's an opportunity to offer them the chance to learn those skills that will help elevate their performance. But remember, this is a short-term effort targeted specifically at helping them learn the skills to do their job better. It's not about offering to pay someone to go get his or her MBA.

Step 4: Shrink Their Job
Sometimes, especially in the case of fast-growing companies, employees find that the company's growth outpaces their own ability to keep up. You see that a lot with managers and executives who excel during the early years of a startup but begin to fall behind as the company continues to scale up. One of the options you can employ to help an underperformer is to break up the job as a way to make it more manageable.

Take a sales and marketing leader, as an example. Perhaps you could divide up the job into sales and marketing, leaving the incumbent in one of the roles and hiring the other. While this can often be effective, it also involves someone checking his or her ego at the door to make it work--which isn't always possible.

Step 5: Change Their Position

If you have an employee who continues to underperform despite the help of coaching, training, and shrinking their job, your option of last resort might be to move them into a different position in the organization where they might be a better fit. Think about a salesperson who you might move into more of a product support role where they can worry more about helping other salespeople be successful rather than filling their own quota. Again, you might encounter ego issues with such a move. But it's advisable to keep that person's salary the same even after the shift as a way to mitigate that. They might not get any raises for a while, but it will help them keep a positive mindset as they attempt to scale up into the new position.

Step 6: Exit Time

If you've done everything possible to put your C player in a position to succeed without success, then it's time to exit that person from the organization. If it comes down to this, you can give your employee the chance to take the soft road out, wherein you give them three months or so to find a new job as a way to avoid terminating them directly. This strategy is generally in place of a severance arrangement.

But, if that, too, doesn't work out, you'll eventually need to make the hard decision to terminate them with the hope that they'll find a new job soon.

Obviously no one likes to terminate anyone. But it's essential for you, as the leader, to remember that your organization can't afford to rely on C players for its future success. Ultimately, the organization is looking at you to be the Head Coach and make changes on the team if needed. If you aren't, they begin to wonder if you aren't a C....

Secret 8: Powerful Ways to Develop "A" Players

I have talked about how to deal with the "C" players, or the low performers, on your team. But today, let's shift to an even more important and fun topic: how you can keep and develop your high performers or your organization's "A" players.

The fact is that "A" players are tough to find. There might be just 10-15% of the workforce who can do a job as well as they can at the price you are paying. That's why it's crucial to invest in keeping and motivating your existing star players while also creating an environment that is attractive to other "A" players.

Sometimes No Promotion is the Best Promotion
First off, it's important to recognize that promoting an "A" player is not always the best method of developing or rewarding them. There are times when some "A" players are best left in a position as strong individual contributors: think top sales people or great engineers or software programmers. These are folks who excel at what they do and really have no interest in getting promoted. Smart leaders understand what their "A" players want and where they can excel. After all, a worst-case outcome for your business would be to promote an "A" caliber sales person and receive only a "B or C" sales manager in the exchange. Instead, you can find ways to offer more complex work and/or more money as a way to motivate those performers.

When it comes to the rest of your top performers, the ones you do want to promote into leadership slots that will help drive your organization forward--call them your next generation of leaders--how do you get them ready for their next role?

You have four options to consider:

Educate Them: Sometimes the only thing holding back an "A" player is a gap in their knowledge. This becomes an opportunity for you to help close that gap by, say, paying for an MBA, an advanced engineering course, or even a program focused on managerial skills. Talk to your star performers and find out what drives them and where they want to grow before moving to address any holes that might exist keeping them from reaching those goals.

Increase Their Scope: Make your "A" player's job bigger by expanding the scope or depth of their job (which, incidentally, is the opposite of what you do with a "C" player). If you have someone you think can become a top leader in time, double or even triple their responsibility within their function in a way that grows their capacity as a leader. For a sales leader, you might expand the size of their region, say, or increase the number of their direct reports from 5 to 15 or 20. A project manager might move from one to three or four projects.

Increase Their Breadth: Whereas depth is digging more deeply into a job function, expanding the breadth means you challenge your "A" player by cutting across many functions in the organization. If you have a star engineer, for instance, ask them to lead a project that also includes marketing, finance and personnel. It's a great way to grow their knowledge base and their understanding of the business as a whole while also giving them the chance to work with different kinds of people across the organization. Perhaps you have a new joint venture that needs a leader--this can be a great development opportunity for a coming leader.

Mentor Them: A fourth technique to inspire and teach your "A" players is to pair them up with a more senior person on the team in "conscious mentoring", contrasted with the random mentoring that might or might not happen. That senior person can even be the CEO. The goal is to expose your more junior "A" players to people in positions you eventually want them to grow into. The process itself could be as simple as having lunch every few weeks as a way to help build that relationship and begin to open doors in the organization for your rising star. These meetings can also be very valuable for senior leaders, especially CEOs, because it gives you the chance to assess the talent in your organization up close and personally.

So, when developing your next generation of leaders--think, Educate, Depth, Breadth and Mentoring.

Secret 9: The 70 Percent Rule for Delegation

So when do you delegate a task? This central question stops many CEOs from moving tasks to their team. They wait until someone else is able to complete the tasks as well as they and thus doom themselves to owning that task forever.

Lazy CEOs, on the other hand, use the "70 percent rule." Put simply, if the person the CEO would like to perform the task is able to do it at least 70 percent as well as he can, he should delegate it. Is it frustrating that the task won't be done with the same degree of perfection or perceived perfection that the CEO himself could achieve? Sure! But let go of perfection. Is it easier said than done? Yes, certainly. But there is no place for perfection when it comes to delegation. The upside for the CEO is that he doesn't need to spend any time on the task--zero. The "return on time" doesn't spend on that task is infinite, in addition to gaining that same time to invest in a higher impact project.

Part of the delegation process involves knowing what you want to accomplish and then letting people know what is needed to get it done. Then it's time for perhaps the most difficult part of delegation--letting go and trusting that your team members will take the ball and run with it. This requires an understanding that they may do it in a way completely different from how you would do it. To let go of perfection, you need to decide what's more important to you: having the work completed to "perfection" (the way you would do it), or having it completed successfully in a different way. You may even be surprised to find that when you give your team members a little leeway, they discover new--and better--ways to do things.

This 70 percent performance standard allows the CEO to aggressively move tasks to team members and have them perform the tasks at an acceptable level. Clearly there are some tasks that require a 100 percent performance level. The CEO will choose not to delegate these tasks. They could be transferred but with extensive support and training. In addition, one-on-one oversight may be required.

One important point is that if you delegate a task fully, you shouldn't try to coach up the receiver to get back that 30 percent difference. When it comes to effective delegation, not only does communication need to be clear, concise, and consistent, but also you need to make sure each team member has access to the same information. Trust is one of the most important factors when it comes to delegation, and it goes both ways. You need to trust that your team members will complete the work they are responsible for, and your team members need to trust that you are giving them all the information they need to do the work. You will be available to back them up when necessary.

Effective delegation can be the answer for the time-challenged small-business owner who is struggling to find the time to build his or her business. And when you take measures to set yourself up for an effective delegation process, you're not only giving yourself time to focus on your most vital business activities, but you're alleviating some of the pressure of always doing everything yourself. No Monday-morning quarterbacking either. If you do, you will suck the energy, passion, and ownership right out of the new task-owners and they will simply defer to the leader--and you will never really lose that task for yourself. Your goal is to delegate, recapture time for higher level tasks, develop your employees, and achieve success.

So, when you are considering delegation, ask yourself the question: **"Can this person do it 70 percent as well as I would?" If so, it is time to let it go!**

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