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Small Steps, Big Impact

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Recently I started my new job at Ellipse, the Manager of our Sales team, and I am exhausted! Frankly, as lead executive of a \$5 Million dollar company over more than a decade, I have been blessed enough to pick and choose what elements I would like to participate in. Here of late, I could clearly see we were in need of some fresh ideas in our client outreach, territory management, training and product presentation. Who else, but I - was best suited to share my expertise with my organization, while simultaneously being able to share our corporate vision directly with our clientele?

I am certain every executive reading the above paragraph is thinking the same thing; abhor the thought of getting into the trenches and doing the same daily tasks we ask of others. I can appreciate the position. I successfully fended off our need for personal attention for months, before I realized I was doing a dis-service to my underlings by merely directing from the top. Every person in the company is deserving of the best tools, operational training, management attention and professional mentoring in exchange for their own elevated participation. So there I go, just like the Dr. Pepper commercial of yester year (ask a Texan), with mini-meetings at 11, 2 and 5pm; ensuring each person is following the prescribed tiny business steps required to create a successful sales management program.

Every person deserves the best

My experience has become fodder for my discussions with management members while attending business development meetings across the country. Ironically, my stories bring more to developmental chat than anyone could imagine. A month

ago, a client and I were brainstorming on ideas to facilitate a 30% growth in the management portfolio without increasing any headcount in the corporate office. Flattered that this tenured executive would ask me to participate in such a discussion, thinking, what did I have to add? After asking that very question, and hearing the response, "You are a successful female business executive and I trust your opinion." Immediately put my management hat back on and I started sharing ideas.

As we discussed solutions it was resolute; change management is tough, it requires big directional vision, but must be completed in small steps or chaos will result. Simply, we needed to generate systemic change. Our new mantra becomes "Ascertain easily deployed solutions for common problems shared by large numbers of employees." For example, address a central management issue in the site level financial reporting, which eliminates one phone call a day from each community within the regional supervisor's responsibility. Accomplishing said will result in five hours of time savings, multiplied by the five regions, delivering 25 hours of available productivity to be applied in the next change idea. After the company picked five of their biggest obstacles, they were well on their way to their goal.

Back at the sales front, I actually allowed my sales team to provide their five biggest time destroying tasks, promptly reassigning them to other departments and employees. I also gave my team the ability to redirect appropriate efforts with my personal endorsement. With the newly created time, I am able to spend more time training functional sales and time management. Hmm... maybe I should do this to my own desk.

Lisa Benson is the CEO and Co-Founder of Ellipse Communications, Inc.; the largest provider of custom applications and website development for the Multifamily Industry. Visit the company website at www.ellipseinc.com.

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