Are You "Annoying" Your Employees And Is This Costing You?

Consider your own work experience, and you'll probably recall a time when your boss did not trust you or empower you to make decisions. Most people find this annoying. In fact, according to research done by Bamboo HR, "80% of 30-44 year olds found it to be 'considerably annoying' when their boss doesn't trust or empower them." According to the research, that number went up to 89% if the respondents had at least a Bachelor's degree.

Do you have any 30-44 year olds in your organization? Are you annoying them? Consider whether you are doing all you can to empower these valuable members of your team so you can get the most out of their decision-making talents and grow them professionally. Do you have a plan for cultivating decision-makers in your organization? If your answer is no, don't feel bad. Decision-making and empowerment can be tricky topics, and here's why.

Let's start at the bottom: Many middle manager or entry-level staff employees want to make decisions that are key to their jobs. They want to have an effect on their work life, and they want to feel like they are contributing to their organizations. But the process of decision-making can be shrouded in mystery. For many employees, the way that critical organizational decisions are made is opaque to them, because no one talks openly about it.

People don't feel they can talk candidly about power and decision-making. These topics may seem too threatening to discuss. People fear they will lose their jobs if they bring these

topics up. They also don't want to be seen as "power hungry". So in the absence of a clear way to resolve this discomfort, ineffective organizational decision-making cultures persist. Employers miss the opportunity to engage their staff, and they miss out on making the most out of each individual's decision-making abilities. But the reasons for this are not necessarily straight-forward. Ineffective decision-making cultures are often result of subtle forces--like fear and bias--that are actually designed to *help* the organization.

While fear of failure can exist in any organization it is particularly common in small businesses and in non-profit organizations that don't the financial resources to persist in the face of a decision-making calamity. Organizations with limited resources often tighten the reins of decision-making and keep the numbers of decision-makers small. The common reasoning is that they can't take the risk of expanding the number of people who are making key organizational decisions. What if something happens? The process may feel too risky, but fear can get in way of tapping the talent of your team. And it can serve as a way to frustrate and disempower employees.

And then there is bias. Bias affects who we think should make the decisions in our organizations and whom we deem to be "qualified." In our society, bias is also a difficult topic to bring up. But just because its difficult to address does not mean that it isn't powerful. Bias too is designed to "protect the organization", but it doesn't actually work this way.

Here are a few well-known biases for you to consider. Perhaps you went to an elite school and are only willing to entrust decision-making to those with a similar background. Or you think that men with seniority should be making all of the decisions. Or

people who are part of the demographic that is served by your organization should be making the decisions. Check yourself, do you have an unexamined opinion about who should be making the decisions in your organization and does this bias really serve you? Does it exclude certain people and not others? Does it prevent people on your team from utilizing their full abilities?

If your answer is "yes" here are four steps you can do today to create a more effective decision-making culture:

1) Raise the topic of power and decision-making in a staff meeting. Ask people to talk about how decisions are currently made, and encourage them to give voice to how they would like to improve decision-making in your organization. Ask them to tell you whether or not they would be willing to take on more responsibility if you would allow them to make more decisions. You might be surprised by what you hear.

2) Inventory the major decisions that have to be made in your organization over the next three months. Write them all out. You will likely be surprised by how many decisions you can list.

3) Bring this list to your staff meeting and allow people to advocate for the decisions they would like to make. Let them raise their hand and speak to the decisions they would like to make.

4) Give them feedback on their self-advocacy, and if you're comfortable, and agree to allow them to make the decisions for which they've advocated. Consider forming a decision-making team to support the new decision-makers.

These are steps that you can take today to create a better decision-making culture. The Gallup Business journal reported that how we look at decision-making is vital. "No single process is more critical to an organizations success than decision-making. Successful companies have learned that they can't afford to let a cumbersome decision-making process become a bottleneck to action." This is true, and if you don't create a better decision-making culture in your organization, you'll be wasting the talents of your 30-44 year olds (and everyone else).