

# Micromanagement

Micromanagement is a term which is used to describe the exercise of power in taking control over a subordinate who has been assigned responsibility for a specific role, task or function. What this in essence suggests is that the individual abuses the extent of authority over the subordinate, in undertaking the responsibility for the execution and management of the assignment.

Micromanagement is a phenomenon that plagues many an organization. It is both demoralizing and humiliating to the individual who is directly affected by the action taken by his superior. It can result in the erosion of confidence and respect for the subordinate by team members. Micromanagement is generally associated with individuals who have a tendency to override decision(s) taken by others to whom they delegate authority. Such actions are apparently levied at demonstrating and satisfying themselves of the nature of the influence which they wield. One distinct characteristic of those who micromanage would be the ego they present that is predicated on a sense of self importance. These individuals are glory seekers who take pride in taking the credit for success. Unfortunately, they are specialist in passing the buck when things go wrong.

There are those who would suggest that the management structure within a bureaucracy, lends to the possibility of micromanagement being a feature of the system. This only holds true if those who have been appointed in position of leaders and managers, or have been delegated specific authority and responsibility, allowed themselves to be victims of intimidation, to be easily influenced or persuaded; or lack the character to make and stand by decisions based on their professional judgements.

As general rule of thumb, the day to day management of an organization is entrusted to the Chief Executive Officer or the manager. In the public service this responsibility falls to Permanent Secretaries who are charged with the daily management of the affairs of Ministries and the implementation of policy directives. There are however some variations to this. A case in point is where statutory boards as quasi government institutions, each have an appointed chairman who serves as the agent of the political directorate, but is required to yield to the Chief Executive Officer as the manager of operations.

In the instance of Permanent Secretaries, they are required to follow the directives of the Cabinet and policy positions that are announced by the Minister with responsibility

for a particular ministry. In contrast, the Chief Executive Officer at the level of quasi government institutions, is expected to follow the dictates of the Board of Management. It is left to be determined at what point can a legitimate concern be raised about the issue of micromanagement.

Does the Minister who appoints the chairman and members of a board have the right to direct what it should do, redirect or overturn decisions made? By extension this raises the question as to if is it appropriate for a Minister to direct or instruct the Chief Executive Officer, with or without reference to the Chairman and the Board of Management.

Within private sector organizations where the bureaucratic structure is also evident, the essence of power and authority is ripe, so as to give rise to traits of micromanagement. It is to be understood the micromanagement amounts to mismanagement. It is a controlling action that takes away the initiative from the persons charged with a specific responsibility. Micromanagement denotes a lack of trust and communicates that an individual does not have what it takes to get the job done. Moreover, it stifles creativity, innovation and the use of initiative.

The bottom-line is that there is no discarding the fact that based on personalities, perceived power and authority that micromanagement can be a feature in the public sector. However with Ministers of government being accountable to the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, this can serve as a decisive means of reducing the extent of micromanagement within the public sector.

Within the private sector it is more than likely that micromanagement can be considered as a creature of the system, given that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune.'