RESEARCH REPORT

MICROMANAGEMENT AND SUCCESSFUL WORKPLACE FUNCTIONALITY:

WHAT ARE THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF MICROMANAGEMENT ON EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND WORKPLACE CULTURE?

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WHY CONDUCT THIS RESEARCH?

MY RESEARCH GOAL IS TO DISCOVER WHETHER MICROMANAGEMENT PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND IF SO, WHAT MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN TO HELP CORRECT THE ISSUES CREATED.

PROMOTE HEALTHY WORKPLACE DYNAMICS

We spend a great deal of time at work. No one functions his or her best in a toxic environment, and it is human nature to want to feel valued. Leadership that micromanages inhibits group morale and reduces self-trust.

MITIGATE NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS AND INSTEAD, DRIVE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, RETENTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

Effective leaders develop a knowing for the strengths and weaknesses of each of their team members. They utilize these recognized strengths and work to improve the areas requiring help. Controlling leaders who are untrusting of their team ultimately damage morale and stifle creativity and growth. This leads to dissatisfaction throughout the ranks of the organization, and ultimately weakens the basis of organizational success.
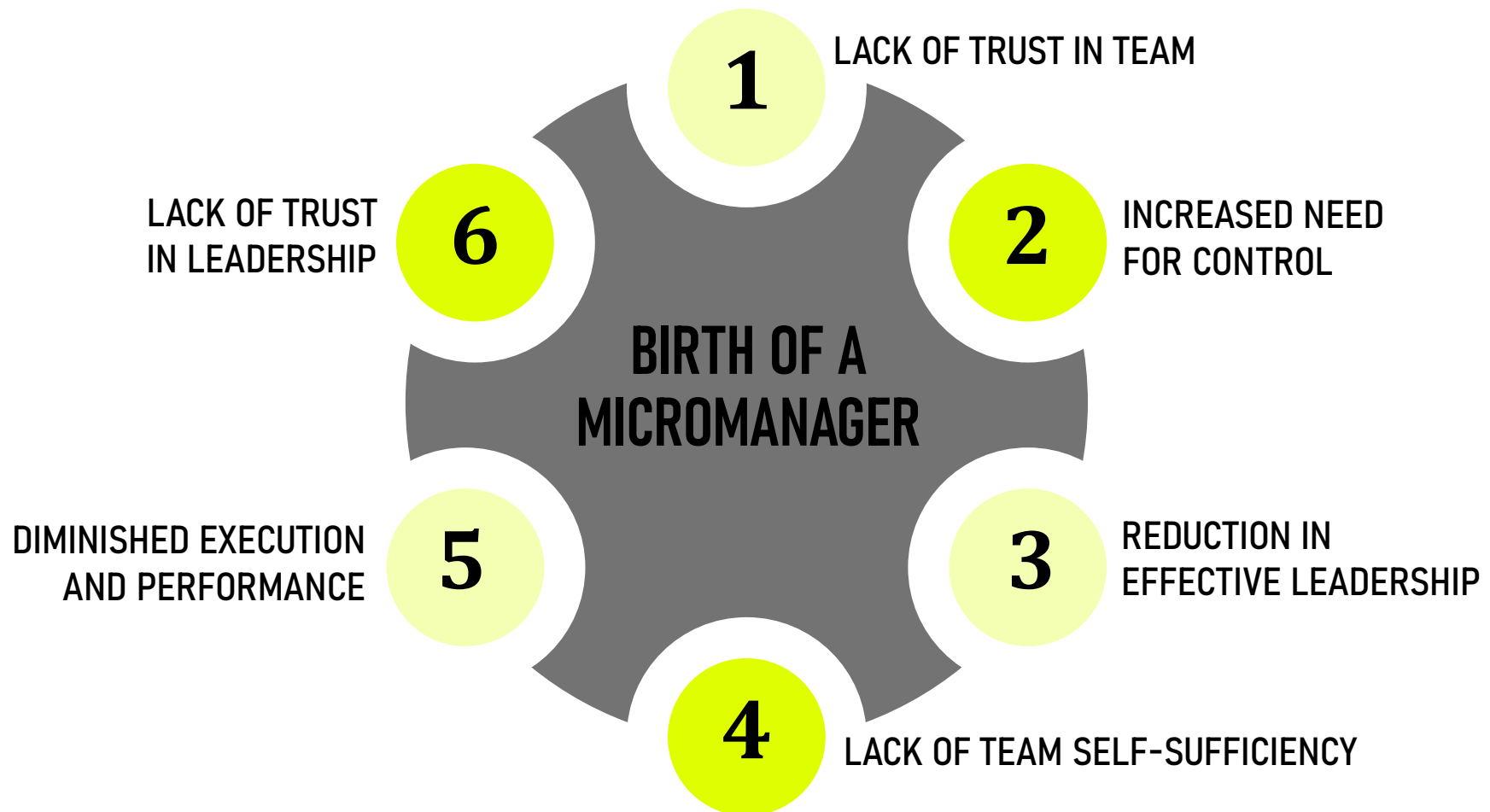
MICROMANAGEMENT

DEFINED

ACCORDING TO MERRIAM-WEBSTER.COM, THE WORD MICROMANAGE MEANS, "TO MANAGE ESPECIALLY WITH **EXCESSIVE** CONTROL OR ATTENTION TO DETAILS," (MERRIAM-WEBSTER, n.d.).

HOW IS A MICROMANAGER BORN?

1 LACK OF TRUST IN TEAM

2 INCREASED NEED FOR CONTROL

3 REDUCTION IN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

4 LACK OF TEAM SELF-SUFFICIENCY

5 DIMINISHED EXECUTION AND PERFORMANCE

6 LACK OF TRUST IN LEADERSHIP

BIRTH OF A MICROMANAGER

RECOGNIZING THE BEHAVIOR ITSELF

In his book, *My Way or the Highway: the micromanagement survival guide,* Harry E. Chambers notes,

> 'The ability to deal with any micromanagement effectively is contingent upon our ability to reduce the gap of perception between the micromanagee and the micromanager.'

He went on to ask the following question:

Q. WHEN DO PARTICIPATION, COLLABORATION, AND OVERSIGHT BECOME MICROMANAGEMENT?

A. WHEN THEY INTERFERE WITH PERFORMANCE, QUALITY, AND EFFICIENCY. WHEN THEY BECOME BARRIERS TO ACHIEVEMENT, OR IMPEDIMENTS TO GETTING THINGS DONE. MICROMANAGEMENT AND MICROMANAGERS DO NOT ADD VALUE TO INDIVIDUALS OR PROCESSES. REGARDLESS OF THE INTENT, THE RESULTS ARE SUBTRACTION, NOT ADDITION (CHAMBERS, 2004).

GATHERING THE DATA

TO FIND REAL-TIME IMPLICATIONS

I CHOSE THE FOLLOWING
METHODOLOGY TO CONDUCT MY
SMALL-SCALE, WORKPLACE
RESEARCH:

WEB-BASED GOOGLE FORMS QUESTIONNAIRE

EASILY DELIVERABLE VIA EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

SAMPLE SIZE: 16 SUBJECTS OF VARYING TENURES

QUESTION FORMATS: LIKERT-SCALE, MULTIPLE CHOICE
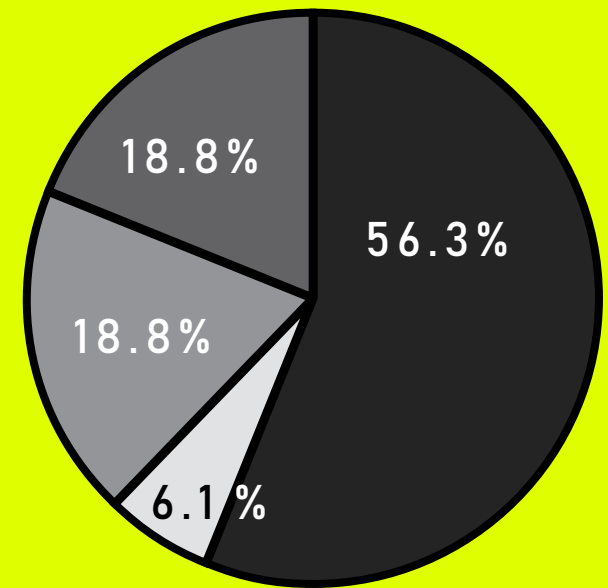
OPEN-ENDED SHORT ANSWER

SAMPLING

CONDUCTED IN OCTOBER 2021

16 PARTICIPANTS SURVEYED

(8) INSURANCE SPECIALISTS
(5) EDUCATORS
(3) MARKETING/P.R. PROS

18.8%
56.3%
18.8%
6.1%

CURRENT WORKPLACE TENURE:

56.3%   10+ YEARS
6.1%   6-10 YEARS
18.8%   3-5 YEARS
18.8%   0-2 YEARS

Micromanagement and successful workplace functionality: what are the short and long-term implications of micromanagement on effective and workplace culture?

your previous and current work experiences with var
is only to be used for the intended purpo
your time and insight!

QUESTIONS

HERE IS A BRIEF SAMPLE OF THE TYPES OF INQUIRIES POSED IN OUR SURVEY:

· I believe I've been micromanaged by my current employer or in the past. (Likert scale)

· If I am learning something new, I do not mind a certain level of micromanagement. (Likert scale)

· My job satisfaction is closely related to how I feel I am treated by my leader. See Fig. 1. (Likert scale)

· I would produce my very best work if I felt trusted and valued by my manager. (Likert scale)

· How willing would you be to look for another job if you felt a constant sense of micromanagement? (multiple choice)

· If you've been at your current employer for 5 years or longer, would you tolerate a higher level of micromanagement or poor leadership, based on the time you've already invested? (multiple choice)

· What type of manager would you most desire to work for? (multiple choice)

· Describe characteristics of a leader who micromanages. (check boxes; multiple responses; open/short answer)

· What contributes most to micromanagement? (open/short answer)

QUALITATIVE DATA CODING

RECURRING DESCRIPTORS FOR LEADERS WHERE JOB SATISFACTION WAS HIGH:

- FAIR
- CONSISTENT
- TRUSTWORTHY
- TRANSPARENT
- MOTIVATIONAL
- CONFIDENT
- KNOWLEDGEABLE

FIG. 1

STRONGLY DISAGREE

NEUTRAL

AGREE
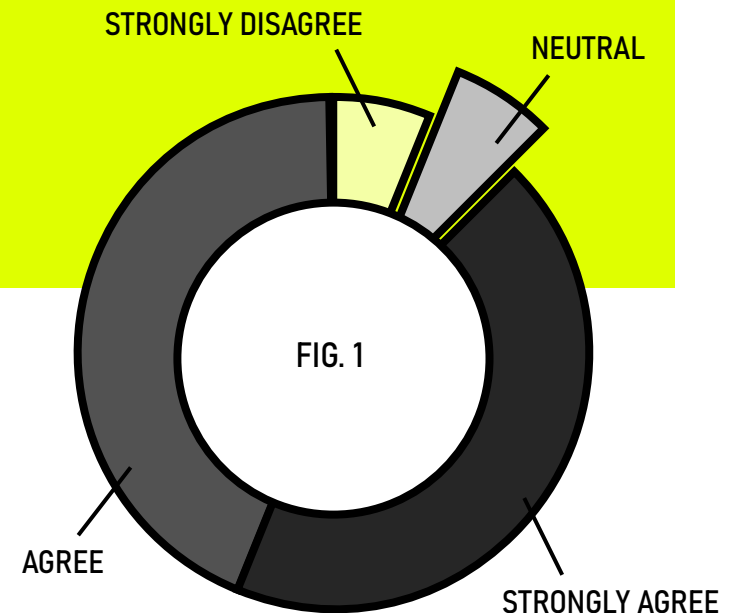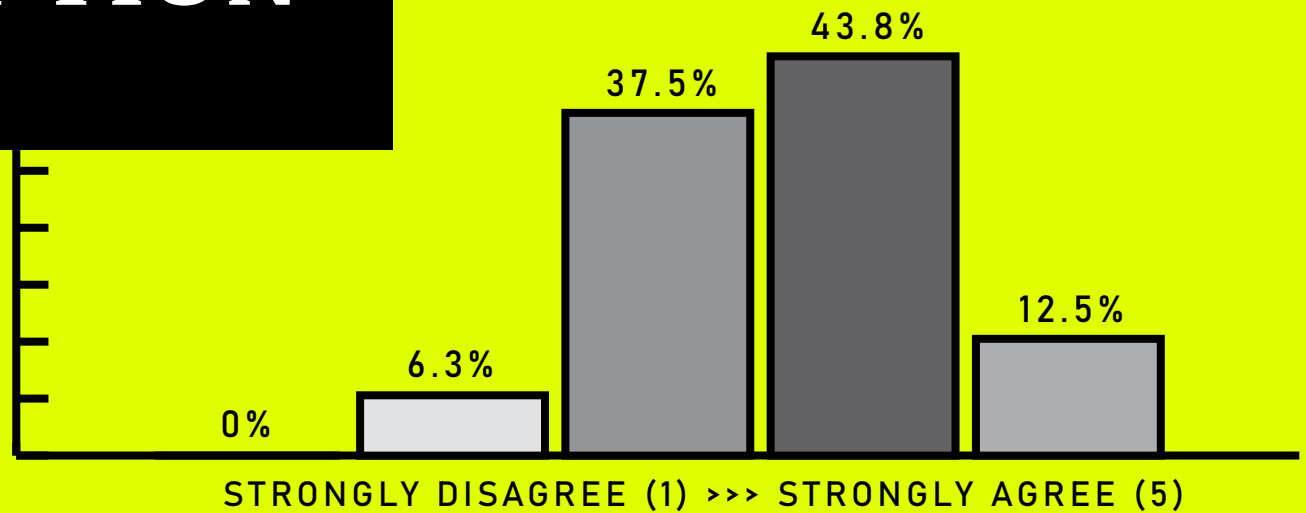
STRONGLY AGREE

ANALYZING THE DATA SET

68.8% AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEY'VE BEEN MICROMANAGED AT THEIR CURRENT JOB OR IN THE PAST.
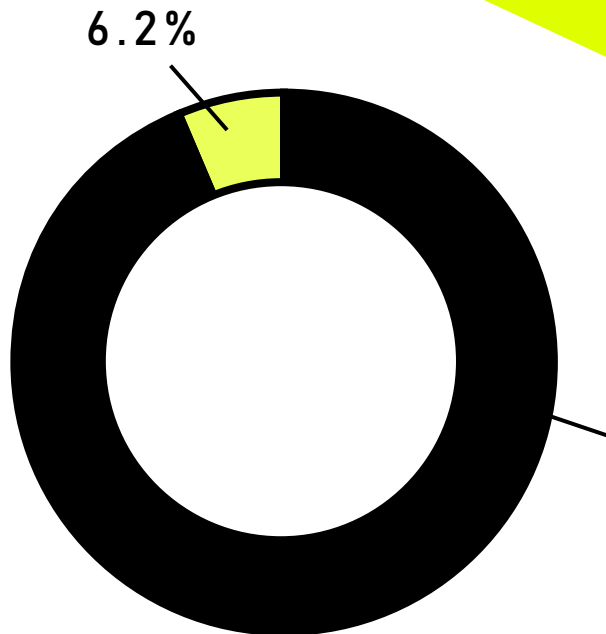
93.8% INDICATED THEY'D LOOK FOR/BE OPEN TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES IF THEY FELT CONSTANTLY MICROMANAGED BY THEIR LEADER.

THE PERCEPTION

43.8%

37.5%

12.5%

6.3%

0%

STRONGLY DISAGREE (1) >>> STRONGLY AGREE (5)

WHILE 56.3% AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEY DO NOT MIND A CERTAIN LEVEL OF MICROMANAGEMENT *IF THEY ARE LEARNING SOMETHING NEW,*

6.2%

AN OVERWHELMING 93.8% OF THOSE SURVEYED DESCRIBE MICROMANAGEMENT AS A NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR.

SHORT-TERM ISSUES IDENTIFIED

DAILY DISSATISFACTION AT WORK

REDUCED DESIRE TO CONTRIBUTE IDEAS

LESS WILLINGNESS TO GO ABOVE
AND BEYOND

" *My leader refuses to delegate because he doesn't trust me to do a good job. What's the point of offering my ideas?* "

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

EMPLOYEE RETENTION DOWN=TURNOVER UP

STIFLED IDEAS; STAGNANT ORGANIZATION

REDUCTION OF POSSIBILITIES
AND POTENTIAL SUCCESS

DECLINE IN
TRUST

" *My boss is so over-bearing.*
She is constantly checking up on
me! I need to go somewhere
I'm appreciated. "

TED TALK
FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE

In October 2018, Chieh Huang gave a TED Talk on micromanagement. In his engaging presentation, he discussed his first-hand experience as a micromanager, and ultimately his change of heart. Mr. Huang likened this behavior to, "taking great, wonderful, imaginative people [...] bringing them into an organization, and then crushing their souls by telling them what font size to use," (Huang, 2018). His conclusion was that none of this management style was necessary to individual or organizational success, and instead, tends to foster negativity while lowering morale.

NEARLY 94% OF RESPONDENTS WOULD PREFER TO WORK FOR A MANAGER WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS, BUT WHO ALSO ALLOWS THEM TO COLLABORATE AND CONTRIBUTE IDEAS TO THE REQUIRED TASKS.
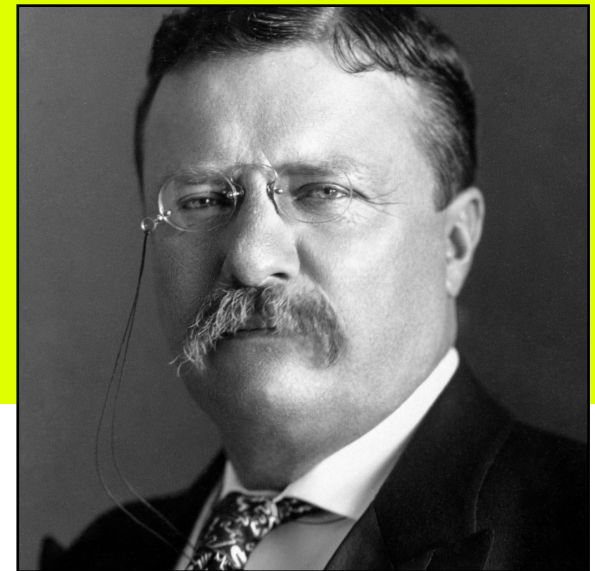
RECOMMENDATIONS
FINDING WORKABLE SOLUTIONS

It is important to understand that micromanagers are not inherently bad people; they do, however, lack recognition of certain negative tendencies. At the conclusion of my small-scale, workplace research, I posed the following question:

Do you feel a micromanager can learn to change his/her behavior?

Over 75% of my sample group showed optimism that it could be possible with time and recognition. But how?

"The **best executive** is one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it."

- Theodore Roosevelt

1 RECOGNIZE THE BEHAVIOR.

(THEN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.)

62.5%

OF RESPONDENTS INDICATED THEY'VE HEARD THEIR LEADER COMPLAIN ABOUT HOW BUSY OR OVERWORKED HE/SHE IS.

In an excerpt from his article titled *The Micromanagement Disease: symptoms, diagnosis, and cure*, Dr. Richard White Jr. recognizes the following indicators of this detrimental behavior:

> Micromanagement can be revealed by examining the decision flow in the organization. Are decisions made at the proper (and lowest) level where the decision maker has the authority, skill, and necessary information to make the decision effectively? Have talented employees been empowered, allowed to make decisions, and held accountable for performance? If there is no empowerment of employees to make decisions, then the good ones will leave. Is turnover a problem? Are there bottlenecks where managers are taking on too much work and trying to make too many decisions? (White Jr., 2010).

Understanding the behavior as it is occurring is the first step toward correction. We cannot fix what we do not perceive to be broken.
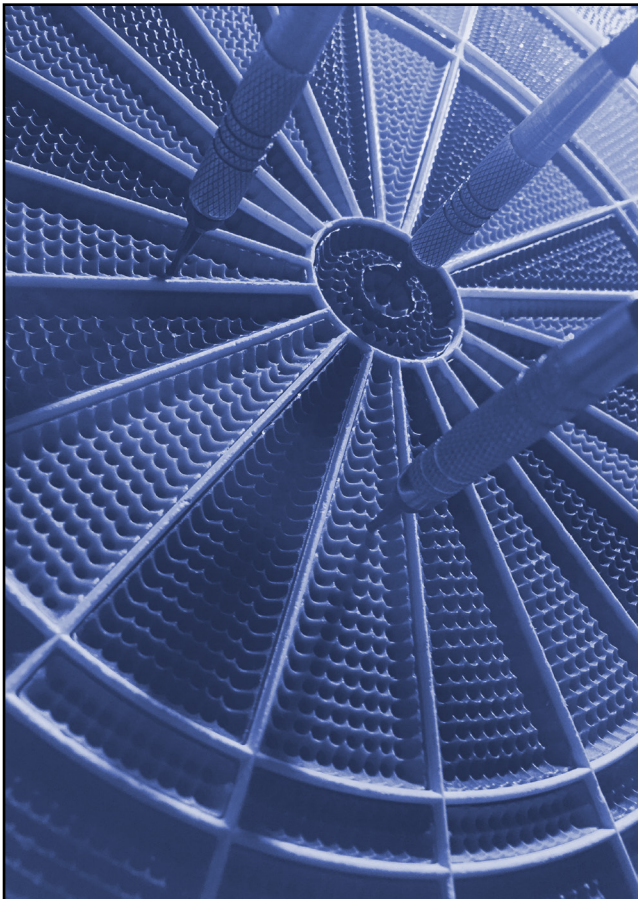
2 MAKE YOUR EXPECTATIONS KNOWN.

To clearly define your goals is the best way to set yourself up for successfully achieving them. Clear, concise direction expresses the desired outcome to the team and affords them the opportunity to determine how best to tackle the task in front of them. Harry Chambers speaks about this idea below:

"Confusion reigns when priorities, objectives, and goals are not clearly identified, communicated, or accurately comprehended. Confusion creates unfocused activity or inactivity; in some cases, it freezes people in place. People who micromanage are quick to step in and fill any perceived void. They believe their activity is necessary to gain order and stability. Confusion provides many people with an open invitation to micromanage. Interestingly, this is a chicken-and-egg situation. Micromanagers are not clear in establishing roles, responsibilities, accountability, and expectations; thus, they create the confusion. They then intensify their micromanagement behaviors to correct a problem of their own creation. Talk about a lose/lose situation! They contribute to confusion and then feel compelled to "fix it,'" (Chambers, 2004).

3

ENCOURAGE DELEGATION.

(SHARING IS CARING. THEY'RE NOT JUST SAYING THAT.)

Remembering that you've hired good, qualified individuals to do the work is important. Trusting them with the responsibility and allowing them the opportunity to shine is a great way to create solid interpersonal dynamics in the workplace. When the workload is shared and all feel valued for their contributions, good things will begin to happen.

"...the reality is this. I don't have the CEO thing down 100 percent pat, but I've actually learned the most fundamentally challenging lesson I've ever had to learn, and that's this. There is only one solution to micromanagement...and that's to trust," (Huang, 2018).

4 DON'T VILIFY MISTAKES.

According to Dr. Richard White, Jr., a Public Administration Professor at LSU, mistakes are a good indication of a leader's willingness to delegate. This is not a negative. He states, "Allow mistakes [...]when mistakes happen then you know employees have been empowered with decision-making authority and are taking risks," (White Jr., 2010).

5

CREATE AN OPEN, INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT.

(MAKE YOUR WORKPLACE ONE THAT INSPIRES OTHERS TO FOLLOW YOUR LEAD.)

At the end of the day, everyone wants to be proud of where they work, the work they do, and that their contribution is recognized as valuable.

A relationship-driven approach that seats *people* at the heart of highly-functioning organizations appears to be the best way to achieve success.

For additional questions/comments on my research process, please feel free to contact me at glimjj17@uwgb.edu. Thank you.

REFERENCES

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Micromanage. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/micromanage.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary has been a trusted resource for nearly two centuries. Established in 1828, it possesses a longevity that speaks for itself.

Chambers, H. E. (2004). My Way or the Highway: The Micromanagement Survival Guide. Berrett-Koehler. https://www.bkconnection.com/static/My_Way_or_the_Highway_EXCERPT.pdf.

The author of this publication, Harry E. Chambers, possesses over thirty years of coaching, consulting and training with an emphasis on organizational development. This source was useful because it showcases results from a much large study than I was able to produce, conducted by Mr. Chambers' company, Trinity Solutions, Inc., and also discusses the effects of micromanagement on employees – both real and perceived – and how these shape behaviors.

Huang, C. (2018, October). Chieh Huang: Confessions of a Recovering Micromanager [Video File]. https://www.ted.com/talks/chieh_huang_confessions_of_a_recovering_micromanager.

This source is a first-hand account of a manager who has grappled with the recognition of his tendencies toward micromanagement and his desire to change direction. He gives examples of managing minute elements of the business and how he was stifling his employees – and also shares insight on why this level of management is not sustainable. Mr. Huang is the cofounder and CEO of Boxed, which is a $600 million online warehouse retailer based in New York.

White, Jr. PhD, R. (2010, Spring). The Micromanagement Disease: Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Cure. https://homepages.se.edu/cvonbergen/files/2012/12/The-Micromanagement-Disease_Symptoms-Diagnosis-and-Cure.pdf.

As its title states, this article details what micromanagement looks like, the reasons behind it, and what can be done to alleviate it. He also discusses how the structure of an organization can increase the probability of micromanagement. His belief is that the key to correction is recognition. Dr. White, Jr., is a Professor at Louisiana State University and teaches in LSU's Public Administration Institute.