



Why boss-subordinate relationship doesn't work anymore

Charmaine Denton

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In the traditional boss-subordinate world, the boss drops work on the subordinate's desk and says it is needed that afternoon. The employee can do as told or suggest a different approach, and even a different timeline for delivery. Whether or not you are okay with that may depend largely on the workplace culture of the organization.

Many bosses say they advocate an 'open-door policy' where anyone can come in with a problem and where thinking for yourself is the norm. But then not every boss walks the talk.

The question for the boss to ask is: What is more important? Being obeyed or getting the job done? I'm not suggesting that support staff shouldn't listen to their boss, but that they should open up the conversation to a different point of view.

In a startup run by an entrepreneur, or a bigger organization with several departments, productivity has a lot to do with how bosses treat their support staff. Many employees feel threatened if their support staff are free to make decisions on their own. The boss is supposed to show leadership. But true leaders allow support staff to think for themselves and take the lead. In fact, they encourage it.

Every employee wants to be appreciated and feel that their efforts and input have value. But sometimes the person they work for won't allow it, and that is not productive.

Here's an example: A man was running small business that was growing rapidly. He depended a great deal on his executive assistant. While he performed the actual service, the executive assistant handled the operations and administrative tasks which freed up the owner's time so he could focus on those revenue-generating tasks. But things were so busy that they couldn't keep up with the demand.

The problem was that the boss saw their work relationship in black and white -- he had his job and the executive assistant had hers. He didn't respect what she brought to the table. They hired a productivity consultant who suggested that both of them had to make changes, one of those

changes being that the boss should now follow up with customers who were booked in order to take this task off the executive assistant's plate. After all, the boss is the one who made the initial connection with the customers and this would maintain that relationship.

But the owner didn't like that and resisted the change. The business eventually floundered and soon folded. On the surface, it looks like the business was ruined by success, but what really killed it was the owner's refusal to adapt.

Many entrepreneurs, small business owners and managers wear many hats and as a result end up doing everything. They are reluctant to delegate or are unsure what to delegate. Here are some questions these people should ask:

1. What am I willing to give up to make things more efficient?
2. If a new system or process is put in place, would I welcome the change?
3. Am I aware about what is happening out there and adapting accordingly?

That last question is very important, especially today. Young people entering the work force now want to think for themselves, and want to be appreciated and valued. They are not like traditional support staff from years ago. The old boss-subordinate relationship has gone the way of the dodo bird, and those who recognize this will have a more efficient and productive workplace than those who don't.

Charmaine Denton is a productivity consultant who serves busy professionals and small business with her company [Take Back My Time](http://takebackmytime.com/) [http://takebackmytime.com/].

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