How to Build a Team That Thinks and Executes Like a Founder

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Building a successful and thriving business is every entrepreneur's dream. In the beginning stages, the business owner pours countless hours and sleepless nights into their venture. Before they know it, their small operation requires the support of an entire team. At this stage, the entrepreneur must shift their focus from being hands-on with every task to delegating responsibilities to others to share the load.

Delegation is not easy for most business owners. They often struggle with letting go and assume that others will fail to execute work to their standards. This is a valid concern. After all, employees don't typically bring the same level of passion to their work as the company founder. The reason that delegation often ends in disaster is that most people think of delegation as simply assigning responsibility for tasks to employees. Instead, it's critical for the business owner to learn how to delegate in a way that empowers their team to think and execute work like a business owner.

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1. Transparent communication and vision sharing

As a business owner, you are likely driven to success by

underlying goals, dreams and aspirations for the business. As a leader, it’s your responsibility to help the team understand and embrace your shared vision. If your team has a deep understanding of what you are trying to accomplish, you can ensure that everyone is rowing in the same direction.

It isn’t enough to simply share your vision and goals. To really get the team engaged, it’s critical that they understand the underlying “why” behind your goals and decisions. One of the best ways to do this is by being as transparent as possible, such as sharing financial data and other key business metrics. This information can help the team understand the bigger picture and connect how their individual roles contribute to the overall success of the company.

2. Empower the team to take ownership and make decisions

Many business owners stand in their own way when it comes to empowering their teams to think and execute like they do. It’s easy for entrepreneurs to micromanage and want to be involved in every minor decision. The challenge is that this encourages a culture of simply executing tasks rather than empowering the team to take meaningful action.

First, stop assigning tasks to your team. Instead, give team members ownership over entire end-to-end processes. This allows them to take full responsibility for the success of this process and help you hold the team accountable for executing it successfully. The best way to do this is by focusing on outcome-based delegation. This provides flexibility and autonomy for the team to figure out the best way to achieve the goal.

As a business owner, you don’t want the team coming to you for every little decision. Providing the freedom to make decisions on their own can streamline the process and shift

responsibility and ownership to the team. Obviously, you still want to be involved in major decisions, so it's important to set guardrails for the team to follow. For example, you might allow your managers to make financial decisions without your approval as long as they fall under a certain threshold.

Finally, you'll want to address issues with "reverse delegation." This happens when the team is struggling to complete a task, which then ends up being delegated upward to the manager or owner to handle. To eliminate this issue, encourage team members to recommend solutions when they are unsure of which way to proceed. This puts the ownership back on them to try and solve the problem themselves before seeking help.

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3. Provide incentives for the team

Let's face it, business owners are often more motivated to help the business succeed because there is some form of reward or incentive that comes with success. Providing a paycheck likely isn't enough incentive for your team to work with the same level of engagement and passion as a business owner. Offering incentives such as bonuses or profit sharing is a great way to tie an individual's motivation to the company's goals.

Keep in mind that these don't always have to be financial incentives. For example, you could offer flexible work hours, extra vacation days, professional development opportunities and increased responsibility or autonomy as a way to reward team members for helping to achieve major company goals. It's your responsibility to find out what motivates the team to operate at their very best.

4. Create a feedback loop

Feedback is an incredibly important part of delegation. Oftentimes, successful delegation is an iterative process. In many cases, a bad deliverable is a result of miscommunication, unclear direction or not having access to the right resources. The challenge is that many business owners give up when delegation doesn't work the way they hoped the first time. Instead, create a process that allows you to provide feedback to the team on the results. This feedback can help them better understand your underlying thought processes and clarify expectations for future delegated responsibilities.

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Delegation can be an extremely difficult process for business owners. It's a skill that often requires practice and patience. A great way for business owners to strengthen their delegation skills is by working with a business coach. They can help guide you through the process and understand the best ways to strategically delegate responsibilities to maximize your effectiveness as a leader.

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