

## Train for Growth 10.17.11

**I didn't realize what a black hole training is. It's becoming more challenging for me as we add people. The repetitiveness drains me. And I wonder, how can I impart knowledge I don't have?**

The transition, from being at the center of everything to training others to take over, is a 180 degree turn. People don't make transitions that big on their own. However, unless the owner makes the change from doer to manager, the business will eventually stall. Read on, and consider getting help.

It is essential that employees and managers build skills in order to grow the company. The owner, as head of the organization, has to lead the way. Taking a page from sports, it's worth noting that not every coach is an expert player. The best coaches, however, are outstanding at getting their players and team to build skill and capacity to perform.

First employees have to learn the job. Then they have to learn how to do the job better than it's ever been done before. Why? Because as employees improve skills, the company profits from increased efficiency and ability to perform.

Most privately held businesses start out with the owner as expert at, and doer of, just about everything. Everyone pitches in to help. Everyone looks to the owner for direction and advice about how to do their jobs.

As the company grows, tasks become more specialized. People concentrate in areas matched to their skills and ability. Experts are trained, or brought in, to add scope. For example, a bookkeeper takes over accounting tasks. A new sales person brings on more business. A production manager oversees operations.

The business owner, former doer of just about everything, steps back, lets people take over. The owner's focus shifts to managing and orchestrating. The owner gets all of the moving parts of the company to work together smoothly, while insuring that the company is adding profitable clients, products and services year in and year out.

No longer is the owner the expert at how tasks are done within the company. Individuals working for the owner become the experts. And their ability to contribute is limited by what they know, what they experience, and by the amount they can handle - just as used to be the case for the owner.

The owner now has four key human resource development tasks to deal with. Identify when individuals are maxed out. Help individuals figure out what they need to learn next. Prioritize the list of tasks that need to be learned. Line up money for learning.

As owner, you might assess an individual's ability to learn by saying, "Let's practice together. You teach me what you know. Show me what you're learning." Instead of competing to be "best", the owner becomes a coach, holds people accountable for growing, guides progress, lets employees have the "win", builds employees' confidence.

If certain tasks have to be taught over and over again, assign people as skill experts, to be the go-to people when employees need to master specific jobs. Often the skilled go-to people are not the people managers - as teaching tasks is much different from managing people. However, the experts' contribution to the whole of the company is just as great, and they should be recognized as just as important as people managers.

You, as owner have to get freed up to plan out how the company will grow. You step back and observe what parts of the business are working well, what parts need help, and what parts will need help in the future. Then you build an overall plan, and budget to insure all parts of the organization are improving at the pace needed to hit short and long term goals profitably. You oversee the plan's roll out, and make adjustments along the way. Not sure how to do that? Get someone to teach you, before you become an obstacle to your business' progress!

Looking for a good book? *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning: How to Turn Training and Development into Business Results* by Calhoun W. Wick, Roy V. H. Pollock, Andy Jefferson.

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