

Train Potential Leaders: Say No to My Way, No Way and Any Way

Dennis McCarron

Owners at some point give authority to others in their stores. Call them store managers or assistant managers: anyone who is in charge of others. It becomes a necessity to delegate authority to someone. You can't handle it all.

Over time these bosses start to develop their own ways of leading. Without help or supervision, however, most of them fall into one of these three negative habits.

The My Way Boss seeks control of everything in the shop. They are the central nervous system of everything happening. No decision is made without them. No ticket is processed without going through their hands.

When the My Way Boss is on fire, the shop is electric. The problem, as you can probably tell already, is that when the boss is in a slump or not there, the shop is in chaos. The My Way Boss suffers from "Hero Syndrome," an affliction where he or she not only thrives on swooping in and saving the day, but also subconsciously creates those events, in the process making others feel helpless. It's a doom loop if there ever was one. Bosses of this nature rarely seek out help, and when they do, they are moments from burnout and collapse.

If you have a Hero, you must seek him out and ask questions proactively. Schedule get-togethers, preferably lunch away from the shop. Ask questions about the others on the team; get Hero talking about how the group functions and what is he is doing to shift responsibilities on others.

Hero needs to learn to trust others, even if they won't do as well as he would have. Focus the Hero's attention on how to get things done — you typically don't have to worry about results with Hero.

The No Way Boss is a true dilemma. The No Way Boss feels powerless, and that no matter what happens, the end result is pre-ordained. The real issue, besides the life-sucking nature of contact with this person, is that his behavior often leads to "malicious obedience." This occurs when the employees say yes to the owner's face and barely put forth enough effort needed to remain employed.

No Way Bosses will bad mouth ideas and tear down morale behind the owner's back. In meetings they will say things like, "The owner wants us to do X this month, so I guess we have to and then we will see what happens."



This person needs a direct sit down and needs to be asked a direct question: Is this something you want to do anymore? Typically this person lacks the skill, ability, and at this point, the confidence to be in charge of others.

It is a fixable problem, but the solution takes time. I will tell you this: The most economical

solution is firing them and moving on. They are doing more brand damage to your company than if you had no one to run the store.

The Any Way Boss is a pleaser. He says yes to any demand you make, and says it with enthusiasm. And by gosh, it really seems like he means it. Yet, here we are, month after month, still trying to figure out why nothing has changed.

You have to apply some heat to Any Way Bosses. When talking and listening to them, remember to keep them on the subject at hand, because they love to get off topic. You want to focus your questions on how much it means to the team, and how much it means to you that X gets accomplished.

Use their over-dependence on pleasing people as leverage, but don't go overboard. Remind them that pleasing you first is a priority because not pleasing you has dire consequences. And remember, if you find yourself thinking that the conversation is going really, really well... it's possible you are being suckered into false commitment.

The hopeful result of coaching these three types of bosses is to get them to see "The Best Way," that mystical option out there which satisfies, to some degree,

everyone instead of sacrificing anyone. It is not compromise, it is collaboration, the spending of just a few minutes to listen and think through options on the best way to handle important or urgent situations.

Our first thought on how to handle something is rarely our best. Our best is when we take a deep breath, listen, and think. ■

Dennis McCarron is executive director of Dealer Strategic Planning Inc., a company that manages multiple tire dealer 20 Groups in the U.S. (www.dsp-20group.com). To contact McCarron, email him at dennis@dsp-20group.com.