

## Do's and Don'ts of a Great Employee

The Pastor's Coach

Dan Reiland

January, 2011 Article # 1

What side of the desk do you sit on? The majority of vocational church leaders will never experience both sides. In fact, it is likely that you are either a Senior Pastor or employed by one. My vantage point is somewhat unique. I've never planted a church or been a Senior Pastor. I've always been a pastor employed by someone. And yet, serving as an Executive Pastor for over twenty years, and currently responsible for about 85 staff, offers me a unique view -- a view from both sides of the desk.

Over these years I've worked with hundreds of staff. Some in the churches I've served and many in churches I've consulted. With some risk of oversimplifying, I'm going to offer a list of do's and don'ts for great employees. This may help you as an employee or help you train the employees you are responsible for.

I had some fun with this article. I posted this question on Facebook and received a number of great responses. Most were right in tune with my experience! The do's and don'ts I'm offering are not comprehensive, there are many more than I will list here. You can add your favorites to these if you like.

- Don't make your boss think for you.

It's one thing to ask someone what they think about a certain matter. In fact, that is often a compliment. It's quite another thing to ask someone to think for you. That is often an indictment. When an employee, who may be a wonderful person, won't make the effort to think, they are not a valuable employee and will not rise in influence. Practicing the ability to think, to reason, and to interpret, is what separates the average from the good. Those who actually think are the ones who have a shot at great. Thinking is your single greatest contribution. The beautiful news is that everyone can think. The question is who will? For those who will consistently act on their best thinking, the sky is the limit.

When someone on staff comes to me with a problem, I want them to bring solutions, and more than one. The problem with one solution is that it's too easy to "marry it" and therefore defend it. The obvious flaw is that the solution is defended not because it's good, but because it's the only one. Multiple solutions show me that someone is thinking. And then if they ask, "What would you do?" we combine our thoughts for even greater results!

- Do lead up.

Leading up recognizes that influence is not confined to the lines of an organizational chart or a title on a business card. It's an understanding that if you have solid ideas and workable solutions you can make a difference regardless of your position. One time a young adult said to me, "I'm just the receptionist." I responded saying, "Hey, a receptionist is an important job!"

You are the face of the church. You hear from the „customers“ everyday!! You have the privilege to bless people by treating them with dignity and care, rather than just a number - literally just a number.”

If you have a great idea let your boss know. Let her have the credit! It will come back to you in time. If you see or hear of something that could hurt the team or the church, let your boss know! But always bring solutions, something that can be done, and even better, something you can do.

No matter what your role is, when you lead up, don“t assume you know what your boss is thinking, what pressures he carries or what he needs. The simplest thing to do is ask. Ask in this way. What can I do for you? When your boss knows you are for him and the church, you“d be amazed at the results!

If you are not familiar with the concept of leading up, I highly recommend *360 Leader*, by John Maxwell. He will coach you on leading up, leading across and leading down.

- Don“t make your boss carry your pressure.

Every job has pressure. If you don“t feel it you are not shouldering the load your team needs you to carry. Your boss is there when you need direction, help, and encouragement. But there is much that is yours to carry on your own. There are problems you will solve that your boss will never be troubled with. That“s just doing your job. I trust that you can find a sense of pride in that.

Let me be blunt. If you don“t carry the pressure of getting things done well, and even better, making things happen, why does your boss need you? High caliber people get that, and in fact are inspired by that thought. We all want to do a great job and make a significant difference. A great question to ask yourself is if you left your job this coming Friday, never to return, what would happen? There is probably a range from A. You would be dearly missed and it would take 3 people to replace you. B. You would be missed and it would take 3 hours to replace you. C. It would take 3 days for anyone to notice you“re gone. Which one are you today? Is that the person you want to be?

Don“t worry about recognition. If you think, lead up and carry your own pressure you will be noticed and rewarded appropriately in time. If you are a team player, that will be noticed and will serve you and others well.