

## A DIFFERENT BOTTOM LINE (Part I)

One of my favorite business authors is Larry Bossidy. He was one of Jack Welch's right hand men at GE, he is a former CEO of Allied Signal, and the author of two outstanding books on business: *Execution* and *Confronting Reality*. Larry's one of those guys who can take a complex business issue and simplify it in three sentences.

Recently I came across a piece Larry wrote on business leadership that once again hits the nail on the head. Not only does he ask some tough questions, but he also gives some great suggestions. Here's what he has to say.

*“How are you doing as a leader? The answer is how are the people you lead doing? Do they learn? Do they visit customers? Do they manage conflict? Do they initiate change? Are they growing and getting promoted?”*

*“When confused as to how you're doing as a leader, find out how the people you lead are doing. You'll know the answer.”*

*“You won't remember when you retire what you did in the first quarter or the third. What you'll remember is how many people you developed—how many people you helped have a better career because of your interest and your dedication to their development.”*

So, how *are* you doing as a leader? It doesn't matter whether you own the business, manage a division, or supervise an administrative assistant or a technician's helper. One of your primary jobs is to develop the people who report to you. It is only by developing the people under you that you'll ever escape the tyranny of doing everything yourself. This week and next I'll discuss some ways for you to determine how well

you're developing your people.

**Taking Initiative.** How many projects do your people initiate? Do your people come to you with ideas and suggestions for improving the way the business is run? Do they offer suggestions on ways to increase sales, reduce expenses, improve efficiency, or raise customer satisfaction? Or, do they simply nod their heads up and down when you spoon feed them tasks to perform or goals to hit. If your people aren't initiating things on their own, consider a few of the reasons that might be.

Have they initiated projects before only to have their ideas shot down? As business owners we sometimes do this without even knowing it. "We already tried that and it didn't work." "That's too complicated." "We've always done it this way, and it seems to have worked all right up until now." When we make off-handed comments like these we might as well shut the door and turn off the lights on employee initiative.

Have we failed to act on a good idea suggested by an employee? Sometimes a good idea will mean we have to step out of our comfort zones. Other times our egos may get in the way of supporting a good idea that we didn't think of ourselves. So, we drag our feet until the idea goes away, or we fail to follow through, or we just never find the money to fund it.

No matter how we slice it the result is ultimately the same...people eventually stop initiating projects and bringing new ideas to us.

Chuck Violand – President, Violand Management Associates

+1 800 360 3513 || [violand.com](http://violand.com) || [cvioland@violand.com](mailto:cvioland@violand.com)