

Stop Putting Out Fires!

Moving from Firefighter to Smokey the Bear



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Do You Find Yourself...


- Racing from one crisis to the next?
- Solving problems for others?
- Feeling responsible for fixing things?



Is This How Others Perceive You?

- Just Fix It!






Many leaders and managers
have a compelling; even perverse
interest in fixing things.

Average managers solve
problems and get results.

Great managers build people.

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*Leaders never solve
problems alone;
organizations do.*

When one of your people comes to you with a problem do you say “Ok I’ll figure out a solution for you?” If so, then congratulations! Now YOU own the problem.



You're firefighting if you:

- Think more about processes than people.
- Jump in and help people solve problems.
- Fix rather than build.
- Speak more than listen.



You're Smokey the Bear when you:

- Let them talk about problems while you talk about their strengths.
- Explain why you believe in them.
- Honor their hard work rather than their frustrations.



Firefighting suggests others *can't* achieve without you. Stepping-in indicates others *aren't* capable; it's a subtle form of rejection. It doesn't build people; it tears them down.





Challenges, stress, and confusion are the context of growth and learning. Allow time for good people to rise up and win without you.

Tightly monitor, however, key success factors. Your interest and involvement indicates priorities; it creates heightened accountability.

The best thing
leaders do is get
things done while
developing others.



“Giving people self-confidence is by far the most important thing that I can do. Because then they will act.”
Jack Welsh



You lower the self-confidence of others by over-correcting, micro-managing, ambiguity, and favoritism.



You raise the confidence of others by preparing, trusting, and praising.



Six Steps to Help Your Staff Take Ownership and Responsibility

1. Don't take the monkey
2. Reduce the noise
3. Be solution focused in you approach
4. Identify what is already working
5. Express confidence in their ability
6. Identify small next steps





Organizations reflect
their leaders.

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