

## Does your staff cooperate or collaborate with you?

As small business owners we move fast, change course and shift gears daily. Operating a small business demands that we have the ability to be flexible and change as needed. What about our employees? How flexible do they need to be? How informed? How engaged in the success of the business? How do we know they are aligned with us and the business vision?

Sometimes we overlook informing, including, asking or collaborating with our employees. We are often satisfied with cooperation from our employees, unaware of what is possible if we instead were in collaboration with our employees.

“A leader is someone who steps back from the entire system and tries to build a more collaborative, more innovative system that will work over the long term.”

Robert Reich

Here are some great ways to start collaborating with your staff:

- Know the vision for the business, share the vision often.
- Include them often in the planning for the business referencing the vision
- Work on not just in the business with them.
- Tie in daily tasks or monthly projects with the overall business vision.
- Create and measure goals against the vision with your staff.
- Report in on goals with your staff and/or have them report in on their goals.
- Start asking great questions of staff instead of telling staff what to do.
- Start asking your staff for solutions that you are really trying to solve, take their advice sometimes. Let them know you did.
- Let them set the agenda and run the meeting.
- Create and post a visual organization chart that shows future roles (do not include names).
- Have very clear roles and responsibilities for each staff member.
- Change your language to “we”. Speak about business in terms of we, not I or my. For example instead of saying “I need this on my desk by tonight” say “ We need this one and have a deadline of 5pm today can you get it done?”
- Do evaluations of job performance in a timely way.
- Have raises, bonuses and incentives based on company performance as well as the individual.
- Become a great manager. Read books and go to seminars as well as get feedback from your employees on how you could do better.

What are the potential costs of no collaboration?

- If the employee is not in tune with the business goals they will have difficulty prioritizing and focusing on what is important.
- If the employee does not know what is going on, they will make up stories, causing unnecessary miscommunication and hard feelings.
- If they only have half the information they may feel insecure thinking that the company is failing or their job is in jeopardy.
- When we don't allow and ask for their opinions and suggestions, we miss the perspective our staff may be able to contribute. We also inadvertently send the message that what they think doesn't matter. Poor performance is directly linked to employees feeling powerless to affect change in the business or in their current role.
- Employees will not stay in step with the vision for the business, they will be “I” focused instead of “we” focused .They will not be able to see where their job role fits into the business vision.
- We will likely lose touch with what is important to our employees, will not know how to incentivize and morale will deteriorate.

## About the Author

Alicia is owner of Profit Consulting Co. She has become a leader in the field of coaching, consulting and training for small business. She has designed more than 80 custom training programs for hundreds of business owners in a variety of industries across the country. In addition, Alicia has coached managers, presidents and sales professionals on how to build a business truly worth having! <http://www.profitconsultingco.com>

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