



Remove the Leash

By Jim Vasconcellos

Years ago, my neighbor adopted an adorable, toy fox terrier which they appropriately named...Tiny Tim. This dog was so petite, a fall from their bed broke his leg! As he matured, he quickly bulked up. At his maximum, he weighed in at a whopping five pounds. It must have been all heart because he protected his domain like a lion protects its pride.

Every day, without fail, I could look across the street and see Tiny Tim at his post. Sitting behind a glass storm door, he would survey his kingdom to identify any threat to his domain. Each day, the same threat strutted by between two and three o'clock: a black and white Persian cat. Tiny would go ballistic; jumping up and down, barking and scratching at the door.

One day my neighbor opened the door just at the moment the cat was parading by the house. Tiny instinctively darted out after his objective. My neighbor shook his head and grumbled, 'That dog is out of control.'

The next time I saw my neighbor, Tiny Tim was on a fifty-foot run leash. The cat strolled by again. Tiny shoots off the starting line, hits the fifty-foot mark, ends up airborne and lands flat on his back. Unfazed, he jumped to his feet and continued the high-pitched threats. I watched the same painful event several more times until Tiny learned how far fifty feet was. Now he would run to the fifty-foot mark, stop, and go on his rant.

It wasn't long before Tiny realized that cat would always be out of his reach. The next time my neighbor was out on his porch, Tiny sat quietly at his side on the leash. As the cat casually strutted by, Tiny simply stared at it. Then he looked up over his shoulder at his master then back at the cat. Up at his master. Back at the cat. Then his little head slumped down to rest on his paws as he laid down and let out a deep sigh. It seemed the leash had broken Tiny of his will to pursue his quest.

In business, your management approach can create the same outcome. When you fail to trust your employees to make the decisions necessary to carry out their objectives, you have put them on a leash! A constant patrolling of their actions prevents them from instinctively pursuing the directives that you put in front of them. They'll stare at the



objective – stare at their manager – stare at the objective – stare at their manager. Waiting for the next command. Waiting for ‘approval’ to move forward. Waiting for the ‘proper’ approach to take action. Waiting for the ‘right’ way to tackle the problem. Waiting for the ‘acceptable’ solution to the issue. And even worse, in the long run it breaks their will and confidence to act independently.

The goal is to have the employee accountable for the results. You can’t hold them accountable if you’re holding on to the leash. Remove the leash by giving each employee the resources, skills, knowledge and authority necessary to make the decisions to achieve the desired results. Only then can you can hold them accountable.

Look for opportunities everyday to ‘*unleash*’ the potential in your employees. By trusting in their abilities to handle the challenges in your business, you will develop self-reliant, independent productive employees.



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