

# ACEmentoring

Micromanagement: How to avoid  
being micromanaged or being a  
micromanager... A New Perspective

Presentation Notes

# Agenda

- I. Welcome to: Micromanagement and How To Avoid It
- II. Logistics
  - 60 minute teleseminar
  - 40-50 minutes of presentation
  - 10-20 minutes of Q&A
- III. Who am I?
  - III. Disclaimer
- IV. The Situation
  - Case Studies and Real-World Situations
- V. The general definition of Micromanagement
  - Why this definition is not useful
- VI. My definition of Micromanagement
  - Why my definition is so much more useful
- VII. How to avoid micromanagement
  - In general
  - If you are a manager
  - If you are a direct report
  - If you are a team
- VIII. What you can do going forward
- IX. Sign-off

# Is Micromanagement Necessary?

- Absolutely unnecessary
  - There is no reason for anyone to feel micromanaged (unless the manager wants that to be the case.)
  - There is no reason for a manager to be labeled as a micromanager (unless the manager wants that to be the case.)

# The Situation

- The situation as an employee
- The situation as a manager
- Case studies and real-world situations

# The Situation as an Employee

- You want to feel a sense of empowerment.
- You want to feel independent.
- You want to feel competent.
- You want to feel trusted.
- You want to feel in control of your own work.
- You want to get that positive performance review.

# The Situation as a Manager

- You want your direct reports to get their jobs done well.
- You don't want to feel like you are "baby-sitting" your direct reports.
- You want to control the situations.
- You don't want "surprises".
- You want to give positive performance reviews.
- You want to get a positive performance review.
- You don't want problems to deal with.

# General Definition Of Micromanagement

- Why it is not useful

# First We Must Define It

- Before we can avoid something we had better understand what it is.
- Lets look at typical definitions



# General Definition #1

- *Micromanagement is a management style whereby a manager closely observes or controls the work of subordinates or employees. Micromanagement generally has a negative connotation. (what does closely mean)*
- *The micromanager is the manager who must personally*
  - *make every decision (but sometimes they must)*
  - *take a lead role in the performance of every significant task and, in extreme cases,*
  - *dictate every small step the workers take.*
- *To many employees the micromanager is a control freak.*
  - *The micromanager hovers over people who are trying to get their work done and rarely, if ever, seriously considers their ideas and opinions.*
  - *The only "original" thinking the micromanager recognizes is his or her own. (sometimes... if always then it may be a micromanager)*

# General Definition #2

- The micromanager takes essential management practices to **extremes** and interferes with employees' ability to do their jobs properly. **(extreme?)**
- Micromanagement is readily recognized by employees, but most micromanagers don't think of themselves as micromanagers. **(not true)**
- A boss or manager who gives **excessive** supervision to employees.
- A micro manager, rather than telling an employee what task needs to be accomplished and by when, will watch the employee's actions closely and provide rapid criticism if the manager thinks it's necessary. **(sometimes needed)**
  - Term often has a negative connotation because an employee may feel the micromanager is being condescending, due to a perceived **lack of faith in the employee's competency**.
  - A micromanager may also avoid delegating when assigning duties and exaggerate the importance of minor details to subordinates.

# Signs Of Micromanagement

- In general, micromanagers:
  - Resist delegating.
  - Immerse themselves in overseeing the projects of others.
  - Start by correcting tiny details instead of looking at the big picture.
  - Take back delegated work before it is finished if they find a mistake in it.
  - Discourage others from making decisions without consulting them.

# Delegation & Micromanagement

- When it comes to delegation, a micromanager:
  - Cannot delegate effectively or delegate at all
  - Often hands out only the easy, boring or dirty tasks while delegating nothing of interest or importance
  - May delegate, but put the employee in a position of deciding nothing of significance without prior approval
  - May hand out work, and hover providing detailed direction, dictating methods rather than providing proper preparation, making the employee responsible for results and not allowing him or her to figure anything out and learn by doing... **(so... sometimes it is too risky)**.
  - May hand out a task, but pull it back at the first sign of trouble, failing to provide the employee with a condition essential to growth and development: the **reasonable** freedom to fail.

# These Definitions Are Not Useful

- Because these talk in “generalizations”.
- They do not lead to “explicit behaviors” or “quantitative behaviors” but only to “generalizations about behavior”
- Words like
  - Too much
  - Extreme
  - Learn by doing
  - Hover around
  - Reasonable freedom to fail
  - Decide nothing of significance without their approval
  - Resist delegating
  - Start correcting tiny details
  - Discourage them from making decisions without consulting them first
  - Excessive supervision
  - Closely observes and controls

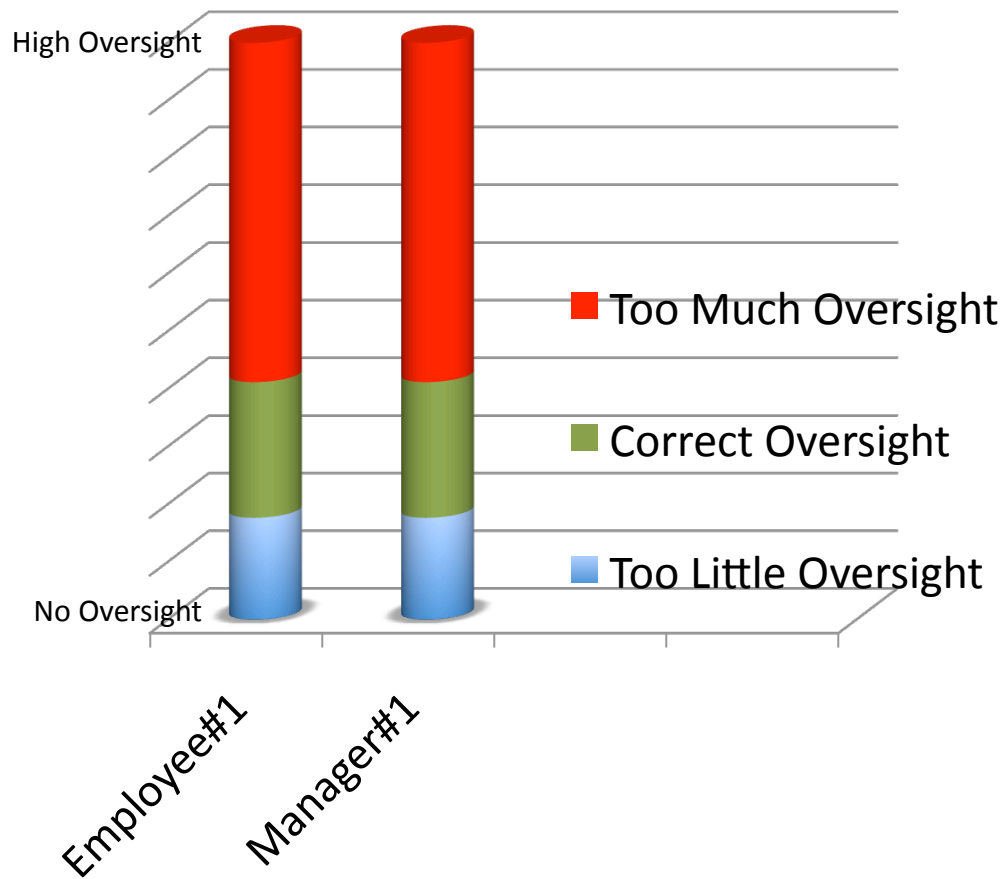
# My Definition Of Micromanagement

- Why it is so much more useful

# My Definition

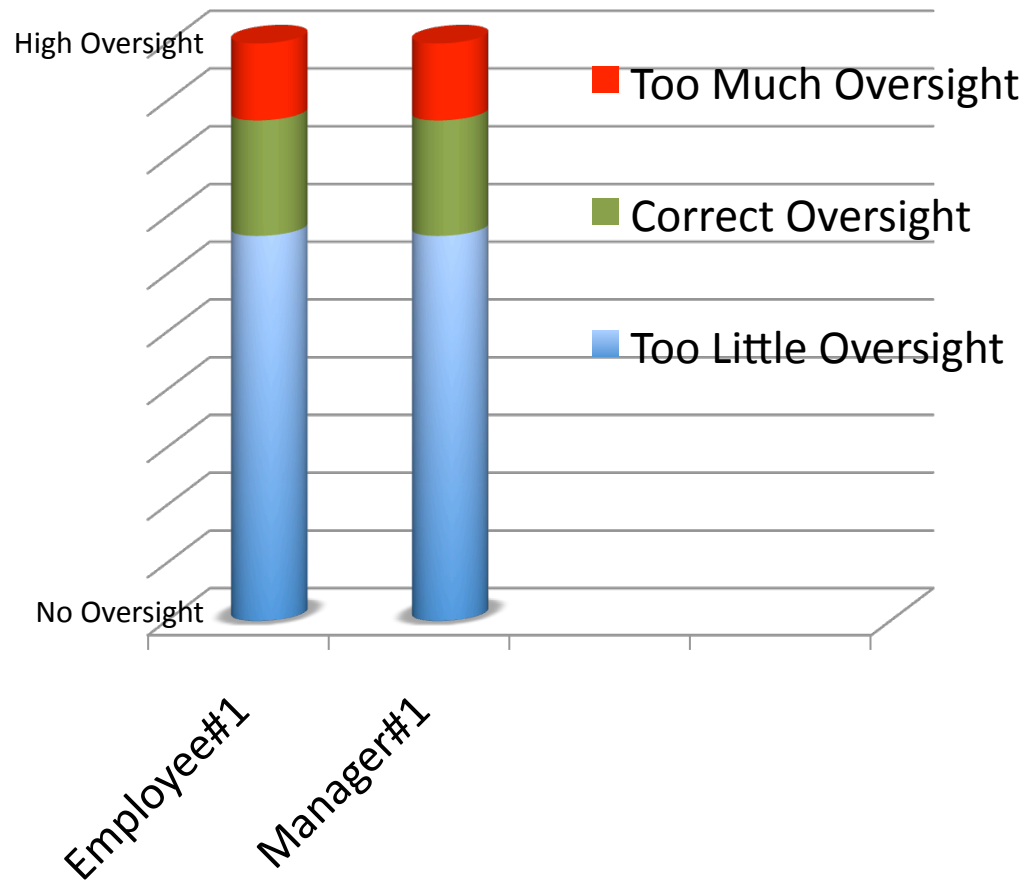
- Given initial conditions:
  - The employee wants a minimum and a maximum level of oversight by the manager for a given task or assignment to ensure that the employee has sufficient sense of empowerment. **(too little versus too much)**
  - The manager wants to impose a minimum and maximum level of oversight on the employee for a given task or assignment to ensure that the task is completed successfully.
- Micromanagement is the mismatch of these minimum and maximum expectations.

# Manager & Employee Agree-Low

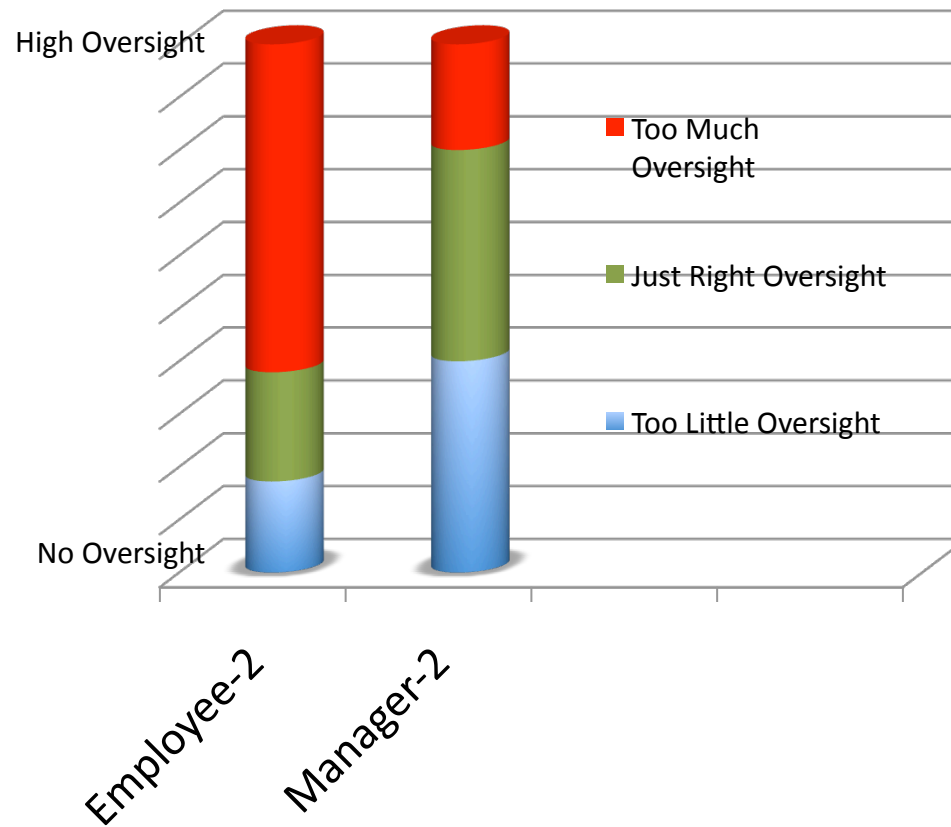




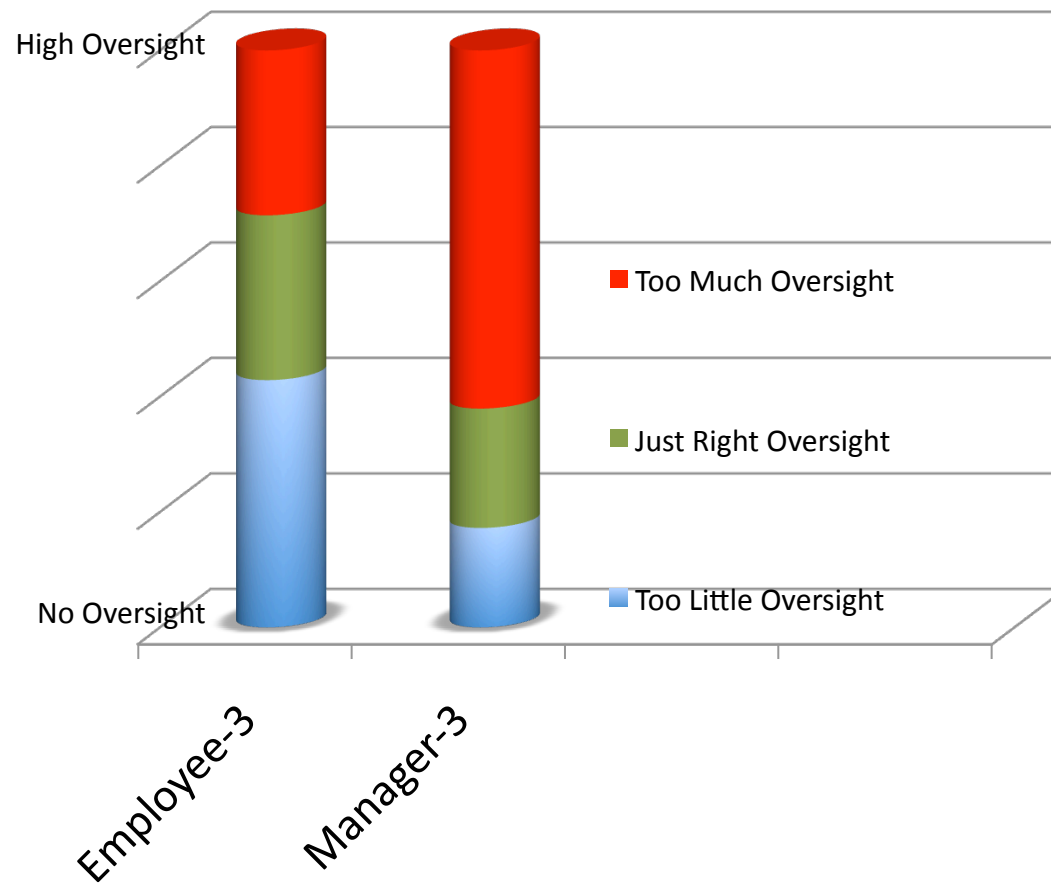
# Manager & Employee Agree-Hi



# My Definition of Micromanagement



# Employee Feels Abandoned



# Why My Definition Is Useful

- Because it allows the manager and the employee/team to avoid micromanagement by making adjustments based on the task and the individual/team.
- That is, successful management is “context dependent”
- This means that what might be micromanagement in one situation is not in another.
- We must be able to adjust as the circumstances dictate.

# Case Studies

- Case Study #1
- Case Study #2
- Case Study #3
- Case Study #4
- Case Study #5

# Case #1: A Two Week Task

- **You give a 2-Week Task to a Mechanical Engineer**
- You are a technical manager.
- You have given an mechanical engineer a 2-week task.
- The engineer and you believe that the task has been defined clearly.
- What level of oversight do you establish?

# Case #2: PM In Trouble

- **You have been assigned a new program manager on a new program.**
- 2 months ago you were assigned a new program manager to a new program... you are the VP of Engineering.
- The program manager says he knows how to be a program manager but his performance, so far, does not seem to bear this out.
- After 3 months as a program manager and repeated warnings from you, the program is still behind schedule (and getting worse) and over budget (and getting worse).
- Every time you ask the program manager to fix the program, he says he will and that he knows what to do, but nothing seems to change.
- Your customer comes to you and tells you that if you can't get the program back on schedule and budget, the customer will cancel the program request.
- What do you do?

# Case #3: Change My Org

- **A program manager wants to change his organizational structure.**
- You, are his manager.
- You have a long discussion with the PM to discuss his desired org change.
- You are convinced that his organization change will result in problems and you tell him so.
- You make several suggestions regarding the organizational changes you think will work.
- Your PM does not like your suggestions and wants to implement his approach.
- You are certain that his approach will fail but he does not want to implement your suggestions.
- What do you do?



# Case #4: First Pass Yield

- **You have been asked to fix a printer product line.**
- First Pass Yield is too low.
- There are 10 different people involved in this fix and they have been attempting to fix the problem for 14 months with no success.
- You have no authority over these people or the product.
- The CEO has asked if you can help.
- You decide to meet with the people and set up weekly meetings.
- How do you handle the situation? What do you do?

# Case #5: Manager Wants Info

- **Your functional manager wants a weekly activity report from you.**
- You feel it is too intrusive.
- You think,
  - “Why does my functional manager need to know what I’ve been doing all week?”
  - “I am an engineer and I report to the program manager and if my program manager is happy with my work, no one else should care.”
  - “I do not want to write any weekly activity reports.”
- How do you handle the situation? What do you do?

# Cases

- **We will return to these at the end and discuss...**
  - What actually occurred
  - What could have been done differently, if anything
  - What can be learned from these real-world cases

# Purposes

- of the manager
- of the employee
- of the team

# What Is Everyone's Purpose?

- The manager's purpose is to:
  - Ensure that the employee or team complete the task/project accurately, as expected, within budget and within the allotted time.
- The employee's purpose is to:
  - Complete the task/project as expected by the manager within the allotted time and budget while exercising as much “enjoyment” in the process as possible.
- The team's purpose is to:
  - Complete the task/project as expected by the manager within the allotted time and budget while being a team and allowing members to have as much freedom and motivation as each desires.

# Conditions That Lead To MM

- Conditions To Consider To Avoid Micromanagement
  - Duration of the task
  - Risk of the task
  - Employee's / team's desired level of oversight
  - Manager's desired level of oversight
  - Where does the expertise lie?
- Are all of these in alignment or not?
- If yes... go ahead
- If not... have a conversation to reach agreement on alignment
- What is that conversation like?

# How To Avoid Micromanagement

- In general
- If you are a manager
- If you are a direct report
- If you are a team

# Phase 1

- Because we know that micromanagement is a miss-match of oversight expectations between the manager, the employee, or the team, then:
  - If you are the manager you want to ask questions of the employee to determine what the employee expects in oversight.
  - If you are the employee you want to ask questions of the manager to determine what the manager expects in oversight.
  - If you are a team member you want to ask questions of the manager and your teammates to determine what their respective expectations of oversight are.



# Phase 2

1. What level of management oversight does the task require for success?
  - Duration of the task
  - Risk of the task
  - Employee's / team's desired level of oversight
  - Manager's desired level of oversight
  - Where does the expertise lie?
2. What level of oversight does the manager want?
3. What level of oversight does the individual or team want?
4. What is the best approach based on all this information?
5. Have a communication around this selection to get buy-in.

# Phase 3

- Once we know what everyone's expectations are for oversight, we now engage in a discussion regarding how to reconcile those expectations:
  - If you are the manager
  - If you are the employee
  - If you are the team representative

# What Is The Conversation

- If you are the manager
- If you are the employee/engineer
- If you are a member of a team

# Phase 2 - Expanded

1. What level of management oversight does the task require for success?
  - Duration of the task
    - If duration is short, oversight is more frequent (opposite for longer duration)
  - Risk of the task
    - If risk is high, oversight is more frequent (opposite for lower risk)
  - Where does expertise lie?
    - If expertise is with manager oversight is more frequent (opposite if expertise is with employee)
  - Employee's / team's desired level of oversight
  - Manager's desired level of oversight
2. What level of oversight does the manager want? (low consideration)
3. What level of oversight does the individual or team want? (low consideration)
4. What is the best approach based on all this information? (major consideration)
5. Have a communication around this selection to get buy-in. (final step)

# Revisit of Case #1

- **2-Week Task for a Mechanical Engineer**
- At the end of two weeks the engineer has done nothing.
- He says the VP of engineering gave him another task.
- What do you do now?
- What could you have done to avoid this situation?
- What I did
- What is the learning going forward

# Revisit of Case #2

- You have been assigned a program manager for a new program.
- With the ultimatum from the customer what do you do to fix this program?
- What do you do now?
- What I did.
- What is the learning going forward?

# Revisit of Case #3

- A program manager wants to change his organizational structure.
- I let the PM implement his organizational structure under the following conditions:
  - Weekly meetings
  - If anything goes bad, he implements my suggestion
- What I did.
  - The reason for all this is that I want him to have his chance to implement and learn
- The learning going forward.

# Revisit of Case #4

- You have been asked to fix a printer product line.
- Take a very “teacher” perspective
  - Give each person a task that is defined as to end result and process...
  - With a focus on “learning what they can learn”.
  - Because we need to learn what was actually happening
- What I did
  - Was actually micromanagement
- The learning going forward



# Revisit of Case #5

- **Your functional manager wants a weekly activity report from you.**
- You feel it is too intrusive.
- You think,
  - “Why does my functional manager need to know what I’ve been doing all week?”
  - “I am an engineer and I report to the program manager and if my program manager is happy with my work, no one else should care.”
  - “I do not want to write any weekly activity reports.”
- How do you handle the situation? What do you do?
- What did I do?
- The learning going forward

# Going Forward

- ???????
- ???????

# Therefore The Key Is...

- Avoiding micromanagement lives in...
  - A discussion
  - That aligns expectations of oversight across all parties...
    - Manager
    - Employee
    - Team
  - **BASED ON THE CONTEXT** and nothing else!

# Questions-1

- Are there times when I should just do what a micromanager wants me to do?
  - If yes, and how do I know?
  - Answer: Yes... Case #5
- Are there times when I really have to micromanage an employee and how do I do that without upsetting them too much?
  - Answer: Yes... Case #2
- How does the issue of micromanagement change according to risk and time frame of a project or task?

# Questions-2

- Is the issue of micromanagement an issue that varies according to...
  - Age or generation... yes
  - Life experience... yes
  - Culture... yes
  - Ethnic origin... yes
- However, dealing with the context this way negates all the above considerations because the context overrides all of the above.

# Questions-3

- How do I deal with micromanagement (as either an employee or manager) if my team/manager is not co-located with me (i.e., a geographically dispersed team).

# Agenda Revisited

- What Have We Covered Today?
  - Micromanagement

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