Micromanagement

What it is?

Why does it occur

How do we change course?

What is micro-management?

- Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines micromanagement as "management with excessive control or attention on details".

- The notion of micromanagement can be extended to any social context where one person takes a bully approach, in the level of control and influence over the members of a group.

  - Often, this excessive obsession with the most minute of details causes a direct management failure in the ability to focus on the major details.

Councils and Micromanagement

- Often involves Council members attempting to perform staff functions either directly or by means of extreme oversight

- The proper role of Council members is to set policy and let staff take care of the nitty-gritty, day-to-day activities.

Are we micromanaging?

- If the Council and staff are engaged on key activities that will directly result in sustainable mission/goals/objectives delivery, then you are on the right track.

- If the Council is focused on the details and the "how" things are working (e.g. the time of day something is done, the type of paint used at workdays, the colors on a brochure, budget questions for items already approved, etc) then an organization is at risk of both failing to achieve its core goals and de-motivating staff.

- Staff are just as likely to get into the details without constant attention to the 5 year State (strategic) plan.

Why does micromanagement occur?

- **The Council is not clear what their role is in overseeing and leading the organization.**
  - This happens when an organization does not have clear roles/expectations and job descriptions for the Council members; Council members simply *assume* that what they are doing is what they *should* be doing.

Why? continued

- **"doing" is a natural instinct for most people, including people who sit on Councils.**
  - Indeed, the people who are most likely to be invited to become a Council member are probably high achievers – people who have been very good at doing. These people are more likely than most to follow their instincts and "pitch in". The problem is that in doing these things, they are overstepping boundaries and becoming micromanagers.

Why? continued

- **The root cause of Council micromanagement is often the fear of failing or doing it wrong.**
  - "If we don't do the task, we fear it won't get done and we will fail".
  - People want to succeed and when a Council member sees things going in the wrong direction, the tendency is to jump in and manage the situation. If anything, recent corporate failures and government responses have tended, understandably, to increase this anxiety amongst Council members – whatever the sector they are serving.

How can we avoid or correct micromanagement?

- **Spend time developing a consensus between the Council and the ED on their respective most important tasks and the Council's preferred working style.**

  - Councils differ considerably in their character – both the Chair and the ED need to feel comfortable working together. Spending time developing this consensus may appear to be a luxury or an indulgence but, done well, it can be the source of greater trust between all parties.

How? continued

- **Build effective relationships between Council and Executive Director**.

  - This is foundational and critical. The relationship can vary from the problematical passive board effectively managed and led by its ED to a close partnership between Chair and ED, where both develop a clear understanding of their scope of responsibility. Complimentary behaviours and high levels of trust characterize successful partnerships and, indeed, the relationship between the Council Chair and the ED is a major contributor to the Council's culture

How? continued

- **Develop a chart that clearly delineates the staff responsibilities vs. board roles.**
  - Then Board members and the executive director will check off exactly who is responsible for what tasks.
  - A sample chart is on the next slide

Activity/decision	Council	Executive Director
Budget	Approves	Recommends and provides input
Staff evaluations	Evaluates Executive Director only	Evaluates all others
Day-to-day operations	No role	Makes all management decisions
5-year State plan	Develops and approves	Ensures full implementation

Chart…continued

- What is important is not the number of activities but the fact that each decision is assigned to either the Council or the Executive Director for accountability purposes.

- Remember…the true role of the board is as an oversight governance body, focused on policies and results

How? continued

- **The organization needs to focus on results and success.**
  - A great way to turn around a micromanaging Council is to show the Council the successes, results, and competence.
  - Make sure that at every Council meeting there is a percentage of the agenda devoted to the accomplishments of the Council toward the progress made on the goals of the 5 year State plan.

The Councils job

- Is not to "run" the organization – that is what the Executive Director is hired to do;

- The Council's job (and their added value) is to represent the citizens of the State with developmental disabilities and their families/state agencies/others interested in services and supports for people with developmental disabilities (people who expect certain outcomes or results);

- Council members represent a subset of the State and sit at the Council table on behalf of those who are not there. They are representatives.

Council member role

- Each Council member is part of one body – The Council

- As a Council member, you will (as a group) set direction for the Council work through
  - the development and implementation of the Council's 5 year State plan;
  - approval of a budget to support the State plan and
  - monitor the implementation of the State plan.

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