

## SABOTAGE THROUGH MICROMANAGEMENT

A colleague in an international company recently told me about the mess created when managers from abroad took charge of one of their critical projects. They decided to control the project “down to the last nut and bolt and turn of the spanner”. Sharp criticism combined with this micromanagement left the local project team somewhat demoralised. He told me that everything that they did from that point on seemed to be the wrong thing or badly done.

A similarity with Timothy Gallwey’s “The Inner Game of Tennis” struck me as I heard about this. Gallwey’s theory is that within us there is a Self 1 and a Self 2. Self 1, the teller, gives instructions and critique. Self 2, the doer, performs the actions.

Gallwey further postulates that the kind of relationship that exists between Self 1 and Self 2 is the prime factor in determining one's ability to translate knowledge of technique into effective action. In other words, the key to better tennis - or better anything - lies in improving the relationship between the conscious teller, Self 1, and the unconscious, automatic doer, Self 2. How would you characterize their relationship after witnessing the following conversation between them?



Think how Self 2 must feel! It seems as though Self 1 doesn't think Self 2 hears well, or has a short memory, or is stupid. The truth is, of course, that Self 2, which includes the unconscious mind and nervous system, hears everything, never forgets anything, and is anything but stupid. After hitting the ball firmly once, he knows forever which muscles to contract to do it again. That's his nature.

Who's initiating that effort? Self 1 of course. But why? He's supposed to be the teller, not the doer, but it seems he doesn't really trust Self 2 to do the job or else he wouldn't have to do all the work himself. This is the nub of the problem: Self 1 does not trust Self 2, even though Self 2 is extremely competent.

But Self 1 has produced tension and muscle conflict in the body. He is responsible for the error, but he heaps the blame on Self 2 and then, by condemning it further, undermines his own confidence in Self 2. As a result the game gets worse and frustration builds.

Going back to the situation described by my colleague earlier in this article, my extrapolation of Gallwey's theory is that the new managers of the project are "Self 1", and the existing project team "Self 2". And the reason why the project started falling to pieces is that the relationship between "Self 1" and "Self 2" was not a productive one.

Irrespective of your management style, the "Self 2" that you are managing doesn't perform better if you assume that it isn't competent. And most of the modern leadership theories certainly bear this out. I think those overseas managers should read Gallwey's book. Or else get some business coaching.

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