

// Don't Wait for Permission!

I recently attended the ASQ World conference in Seattle Washington. I truly enjoy going to these affairs because of the opportunities to learn from the technical sessions, but most of all, to meet new people and learn about them! This year was exceptional and my booth was attended by a large number of millennials and young people. I am delighted to see the outreach from our NEXTGEN program is really paying off! Several of these young people had a common question and I thought it one worth developing here for all of us. "JR...what was the most important lesson you learned in your career?" It's a great question, although how can someone as young as I am possibly be old enough to answer that question! But I digress. That lesson is this: Very early in my life I learned **NOT TO WAIT FOR PERMISSION!** I opted for forgiveness instead. Let's unpack this to see how this can work for you without blowing up your career.

It's a sad fact of life that the vast majority of people in our organizations operate out of fear and caution rather than a drive to excel. Think about it for a moment...If they give you permission, then they are taking responsibility. They are accepting the results of your actions. They are climbing onboard the "Risk Train". And most people learn early on that you don't get promoted and that you can lose your job if the "Risk Train" derails. As a result, the vast majority of people in organizations are trained at a very early age to take no risks and allow no actions that could result in negative consequences. As a result, things that should be able to be done in short order require countless meetings, unending reports, analysis and studies, and frustrating delays that often don't make sense operationally. Good people learn how to become expert at not making decisions! Everyone wants to take credit for the things that go well...everyone ducks when things don't work out and one person usually gets to bear the burden for failure.

Whether it was the fearlessness of youth or the cluelessness of inexperience, I chose early on to just do things that I saw needed to be done. It began while I was still in the Air Force. The military is not known for its patience with "mavericks" and those who don't follow the chain of command. I learned the hard way to think through my actions before I charged off into the great unknown. But I rapidly developed a reputation as a person who could get things done much faster than my peers. This actually accelerated in my corporate life. The real secret to the success of this strategy is understanding human nature. The vast majority of the time, the things I and my teams "just did" worked out just fine. In fact, almost always. And the people who would not have given me permission were just fine with taking the credit for the things that got done. You've been there and seen it for yourself. Those above you often take credit for what you've done. I wasn't as concerned with who got credit as I was with just getting stuff done. And I learned over the years that those who need to know almost always know who **really** did the job anyway. Few people truly get away with taking credit for others work long-term.

Let's take a moment to look at some real issues you need to be aware of if you follow this path.

1. If your boss is a micro-manager. You've got to be very careful as being an individual who is self-motivated and prone to "just do things" makes these people incredible nervous and they often view you as "high risk". Rightly or wrongly, you have to be aware of this and act accordingly. Twice in my career I worked for people who were extreme micro-managers. The first time I did not truly understand all the dynamics and it was a very rocky relationship for the first year or so. And it was MY responsibility to make my boss comfortable! Remember...No matter what industry or what job title, your number one job is to make your boss look good. That is why you get a paycheck. We may not agree with the boss or even like how they do things. But our job is to do what they need done the way they want it accomplished. If you find yourself in this situation, you can still get things done...just modify your natural inclination to do things with an approach that keeps your boss in the loop by telling them what you are doing to the greatest degree possible!
2. You may find yourself in a situation where your boss lacks confidence or lacks a strong knowledge of his or her job. This is actually more difficult than the situation above! Your boss may react out of fear more than pettiness. You have to recognize that for what it is. And rather than feel superior or look down on them, take the opportunity to become their ally. Go out of your way to help them and show them you are not a threat but a true resource that can help them. I promise you, if you are any good at all, you will someday get promoted into a job that is over your head and one that you don't feel prepared to accomplish. You can still get things done while you use the situation to help your boss **and** your team succeed!

Think about how much we can get done when we don't spend a lot of time trying to get permission! This concept of seeing something that needs to be done and just doing it can change how you achieve success in your career over the long-term. We all are frustrated at how long it takes to do things. We all see things we know should be done but we watch as



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nobody does anything...Nothing world-class about that. That's why my leadership motto is: *See the Need...Seize the Opportunity...Share the Victory!*

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