



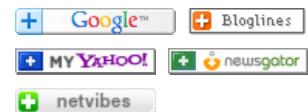
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Lessons from Leaders: ZL Technologies

Recognize This! – Be willing to frustrate employees if doing so helps them develop into leaders themselves.

This week, I'm focusing on leadership lessons from top executives. Today's insight comes from Kon Leong, co-founder, president and chief executive of ZL Technologies, in [an interview in The New York Times "Corner Office" column](#).

Since my last couple of posts were rather long, I'll keep today's short. When asked what it's like to work for him, Mr. Leong responded:

"Certain aspects of my management style are extremely frustrating. There are many, many questions posed to me, many decisions asked of me. I try not to make them. I respond with more questions, because I want them to find the answer. It can be very frustrating to my employees, but I'm trying to get others to scale up and learn. They understand and accept my approach, but many still feel frustrated because they just want the answer."



From this one paragraph, I see three clear leadership lessons:

1) Avoid the easy path.

It's often more expedient and easier to simply make decisions for others. Indeed, many would describe that as the job of the senior executive – to make the hard decisions. But wise senior leaders know others will never develop into true leaders themselves unless they learn the process for finding the answers themselves. Yes, you should coach people in how to find the answer, but don't make the decisions for them. (In fact, it can be quite harmful to do so as making too many decisions leads to [decision fatigue](#) and ultimate poorer outcomes.)

2) Create opportunities for others to grow and develop.

Most organizations have clearly defined career paths and learning and development programs. And these are good and valuable. However, also be sure to take advantage of opportunities in the course of the daily work to help others grow and develop. As mentioned above, let them (or, rather, insist on them) making key business decisions, even as you mentor through the process.

3) Be willing to frustrate people to help them grow.

Understand that this management approach won't always make you popular and may make employees who "just want to get it done" think you're delaying progress. Be willing to play that role in order to create the opportunities to grow the next generation of leaders in your company.

What management style frustrates you? Can you see ways in which that style could actually be to your benefit?

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