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## Press Release:

Charlotte Observer Column - Career Coach Posted on Mon, Dec. 19, 2005



### Sounds like an assessment is what you need

**Issue:** Slow-learning employees

**The scenario:** Owner of a small service business in Charlotte with 20 employees, most of them on the job more than three years. As the business grows, he has less time and attention available for his employees, but he feels like they are constantly tugging on his sleeve for help. He feels like they should know what to do by now; are these expectations unrealistic?

**Coach:** Harvey Smith

Wouldn't it be nice if you could run your business by yourself and not have to rely on anyone else? You could keep the books, handle the phones, solicit new business, service existing customers and keep the office looking spiffy. That way everything is exactly as you want it.

Start-ups don't work that way. With employee issues, my entrepreneur clients benefit from assessing three issues: Clarity of delegation, how they communicate and whom they hire. Fortunately, you're willing to delegate. *How* you delegate makes a big difference, though.

Ask yourself these questions: Do my employees have job descriptions (in writing)? Do they truly understand what I expect from them? Have those jobs changed since they were hired?

First, one of your roles as a leader is to create clarity with your employees. Agreements about jobs need to be in place for a healthy and functional organization. Check in with them on a regular basis. Hoping your employees will figure things out is not an effective business strategy; maintaining a consistent, low-level communication that prevents employee misconceptions is.

Second, effectively communicate your needs. Entrepreneurs can be so rushed that they bark orders and intimidate employees (you indicated that you have a time crunch and lose patience). When people are stressed, they only remember about 30 percent of what they hear.

Is it possible that you communicate your needs in broad strokes and forget to give appropriate details? Start-ups evolve, and everyone needs to be brought up to speed as a company changes. Share the bigger picture—the context—and employees will have a smarter stake in the outcome.

Third, look at your hiring process. You may have hired some people who are not suited for their positions. (Entrepreneurs are often good at their business concept but not necessarily at hiring.)

After you have your job agreements in place, if an employee is still under performing, perhaps his or her strengths are best utilized in another position, maybe another company.

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