

## *Help Employees Think for Themselves*

*By Donna Rawady*

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Are your employees consistently coming to you for answers or to help them make decisions? They may not know where to look for information, or they may know where to look but find it easier to ask you. They might lack confidence in their own decision-making abilities or be afraid to make a decision without the validation of others.

As a manager in these situations — especially in the midst of high demands — you may find yourself providing answers or direction to employees instead of coaching them toward independent thinking and decision-making.

Here are a couple of quick and effective ways for you to begin encouraging more independent thinking, which provides long-term benefits and successes:

- When you're approached for guidance or help, ask for the employee's input first before offering an answer or direction. Simple questions such as, "What have you thought about trying or doing in this situation?" or "What have you already tried?" or "Where have you looked?" can open up dialogue and provide a coaching opportunity. This approach will help to set a standard for participation, give the employee an opportunity to contribute, and give you the opportunity to measure his/her efforts and capabilities.
- When you're managing or coaching employees who repeatedly lack the confidence to make what you hope are independent decisions, create a log and note the times they've approached you with uncertainty, yet offered excellent recommendations, ideas or strategies. After gathering a few examples over time, remind them of their successes and reiterate that they have built your trust in their judgment and abilities. This feedback begins building their confidence in their own judgment and decision-making for the future.

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