

Triple Your Team's Production Without Promising Extra Bonuses or Salary Raises.

Imagine yourself as a teacher at a school for children with special needs. Specifically you are working with a child who was born with a syndrome which decreases his cognitive ability.

You ask this child to draw you a picture of a ship.
You think it is something he would enjoy doing.

But unfortunately, the child gets very upset and doesn't do anything.
Why?

Because the tasks seems to be too complex for him.

What if you change your approach.
You split the "project" into smaller tasks:

- get a box of pencils
- sharpen pencils
- get a sheet of paper
- find a book with pictures of ships in it
- find a picture you like

- etc.

Now you ask the child to follow this plan – and celebrate completion of each step.
The child happily follows along.
He is happy. And the picture of the ship is produced in no time!

Does this example teach you anything?

Think about your team members.

Some people can take a complicated task – and figure out by themselves how to do it.
Others would fail at it, but could succeed if you give them a step-by-step plan.

You can make people NOT productive by giving them tasks which are too complex for them. You can make people VERY productive by splitting big jobs into small tasks.

For a very capable employee you may try to give big tasks. For a less capable or less experienced person it is better to give much smaller tasks.

Your skill as a manager is in finding the level of granularity for each member of your team.

Below is a great example how this approached worked.

When I was a student (in Moscow, Russia, September 1975), we were sent to suburbs to collect vegetables (carrots). The task was simple. We were separated in pairs, and each pair had a ~120 meters

long row of carrots to collect in 1 day. There were 6 pairs of students starting side-by-side like runners at a sport competition. Although we were crawling on our knees, not running. At the end of the day nobody has finished their norm. In fact, most pairs haven't even done 50%.

This continued for several days, until our manager (who was a 1st year post-graduate student) made a very simple change. This change was magical. And very simple.

He has split 120 meter rows into 6 short pieces 6 meter each. Then he has given a set of 6 such pieces to each pair of students.

So instead of having one lone (120 meters) row, we now had 6 short rows, 20 m each. The total length was still 120 m = 6×20 . It was just split into pieces.

Here is the day norm before and after this restructuring:

Before:

XX

After:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

All 6 pairs before:

[illegible]

All 6 pairs after

[illegible]

You could ask how this could make any difference? Well, let me tell you.

This day the whole field was finished by 2pm! It took only 5 hours to do what before was taking 2 full days (16 hours)! This is more than 3 times faster!

Why this has happened? I don't know the scientific explanation. But I can tell you how it felt.

You start working on one row, and pretty soon you see that you will reach its middle soon. So you decide to take a short break once you reach the middle.

But when you have gotten there - you could see that it is actually very easy to finish the row - and then take a break.

And when you made 1st row - you see that now only 5 left. And you estimate how long it took you to finish the previous row - so you can tell when you will finish the next row.

Etc.

The work started to feel manageable. And everybody rather enjoyed the process. It was addictive.

So, do you want to increase effectiveness 3 fold? Then plan your work (and work of your team) as a set of simple manageable self-contained and self-rewarding steps.

And don't forget to celebrate completion of each task.