

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

Divide & Conquer

A few years ago I presented a NAMM Idea Center session on the topic of delegating tasks to free yourself up to focus on areas of potential growth. You won't be surprised to hear that the topic generated a lot of interest. There are thousands of retailers out there who, most of the time, are wearing all the hats in their operation: They are inventory control, CEO, CFO, HR, security, IT, janitor and even salesperson of the month. Usually, these retailers feel that they are the only person who can handle those duties. In reality they have never really allowed anyone else to try.



Delegation is not just about handing off duties and responsibilities, it's also about being organized

One of the many problems with that mindset is that you only have so many hours in the day. If you are out at lunch and a customer walks in looking to make a large purchase, you can not expect your staff to ask them to wait or come back when you are present. In other words, it's time to make some changes. You are probably losing sales.

A friend of mine is a sales manager for a local luxury auto dealership. Car dealerships may get a bad rap, but they are models of organization. At most music stores a salesperson usually will have only a few people to deal with, other than customers. At car dealerships, things are more complicated. Salespeople may have to deal with the customer, lot manager, sales manager, finance manager, detail guy, and mechanic, but those wide contacts help them close deals. Music stores, mostly with smaller staffs, should take advantage of their small scale and delegate responsibilities more effectively.

My buddy explained that when he arrived at the car dealership there were no streamlined processes in place, and sales were suffering because of the lack of organization.

What happened? "We learned efficiencies,"

he said. "We developed open lines of communication, instituted a training program to help those with lower volume bring their numbers up and put people in positions to be accountable and responsible for *their* department's budgets and bottom lines, and not *everyone's* budgets and bottom lines. Six months later we had better trained, informed people who had only a single manager. We

all knew each other, and knew what that person's role in the company was."

In other words, they had asked people throughout the organization to be accountable for their specific performance. If you are free to worry about yourself, not what everybody else is doing, your performance will go up.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATION

Delegation is not just about handing off duties and responsibilities, it's about being organized. You have to understand the complexities of your organization so you know exactly who has the right skills for the particular job at hand. That will give you clear insight on how to hand off tasks and have peace of mind that they'll get done at a high level.

At my own stores I reorganized some of my staff and how we did things. I made sure that everyone knew what each other's job functions were and made a point of giving everyone a chance to have a greater sense of purpose. It wasn't always easy. I relinquished a few jobs that I had always reserved for myself. Was it always done to my specs? No, but it gave them the added responsibility and gave me more time to do other things. **MI**

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