As a manager, it’s easy for you to overpower the members of your staff. After all, you’re the manager; so generally speaking, they have to do what you tell them. As a result, there is the real potential that as a manager you can stifle innovation, perpetuate inefficiencies, and slow the growth of your staff members.

All that said, why do so many managers do this to groups? Well, there are many reasons, including:

- Being controlling by nature
- Sheer strength of personality
- Hiring practices that only hire “yes people”
- Not respecting the ability of their staff members
- If there is a large differential in professional level between the manager and his/her staff
- Bullying staff members by yelling and/or intimidation
- Micro-managing and thus personally driving every detail
- Not delegating challenging projects to your staff

All of the above items are examples of the things that managers can accidently, or purposely, do to their staffs.
If you are the kind of manager that does these things on purpose, know that in the very short term you will most likely be able to control your staff, but in the longer run, your team will most likely vote with their feet and find new jobs. In addition to the potential of making your team miserable, this type of management can also create the following management challenges:

- High turnover causes reduced productivity and increased hiring and training costs.
- A reputation of being an over-bearing manager makes it difficult to hire internal company employees.
- If someone who previously worked for you gets promoted quickly, they may end up as your boss.
- Issues related to high employee turnover and a poor reputation can put your job at risk.

If you are accidently treating your team as described above, you have the same risks related to high turnover and a poor reputation. After all, you are treating your team in the same manner as those managers doing it on purpose. At the end of day, in business, it’s your actions and results that are measured, not your intentions.

Ok, so what does this have to do with treating your staff like they are smart? The answer is rather simple; instead of telling your staff what do, create an atmosphere of trust, innovation, teamwork, and two-way communication. This is, of course, easier said than done, but the following tips may help you move in that direction.

1. First and most important, learn about yourself. That is to say, try to gain a clear understanding of how you are being perceived by your staff and others.
2. Learn to delegate those projects that help the members of your team grow professionally.
3. Solicit your team’s opinion on how to improve department processes.
4. Welcome unsolicited suggestions from your team members. Should you not like the idea, thank them for their efforts, explain to them why the idea cannot be implemented, and ask them to continue thinking out-side-the-box.
5. Be careful not to “shoot the messenger” when you are given bad news from a team member. If you do, they may never tell you about department problems again.
6. When appropriate, include your team in department-level decisions. It will help you get their buy-in and you may actually end up with a better solution.

7. Don’t worry that one of your team members may one day be able to replace you. Remember, if you can’t be replaced then you can’t be promoted.

The primary advice and takeaways from today’s column is to know that:

- Being an overbearing manager can cause major management problems.
- Treating your team with respect and encouragement will help them grow and help you prosper as a manager.

Until next time, manage well, manage smart, and continue to grow.

Author Bio:

Eric P. Bloom is the president of Manager Mechanics LLC, a company specializing in Information Technology (IT) leadership development and the governing organization for the Information Technology Management and Leadership Professional (ITMLP©) and Information Technology Management and Leadership Executive (ITMLE©) certifications. Contact him at eric@ManagerMechanics.com, follow him on Twitter at @EricPBloom, or visit www.ManagerMechanics.com.