



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – April 2008

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

Just *trust* your equipment!

A few weeks ago, I went zip-lining. For those of you who don't know, zip-lining is an outdoor adventure activity where you "zip" over tree-tops and valleys at high-speed, harnessed to a pulley on a stainless steel cable. Over the course of a morning, I completed eight zip-lines varying from 30 to 300 feet from the ground in elevation and from 100 to 750 feet in length. I loved it! However, one thirty-something participant was clearly afraid of heights, and he struggled to overcome his fear as he completed the first and second zips. Because he was so frightened, he stiffened his arms and gripped on to the pulley for dear life, and inadvertently made the journey harder, while also increasing his likelihood of injury. I listened as the instructor tried to coach him in the correct technique. "Trust in your equipment," said the instructor. "You know that this cable is certified to hold five thousand pounds and you only weigh less than two hundred. You know that there are three independent galvanized steel safety clips holding you to the pulley and that you and I check each one before you step off the launching pad. You know how to turn the pulley so that you are facing in the right direction." He paused for effect. "You've done everything to ensure that your equipment will work for you. Now just *trust* your equipment."

If you are a leader, then your people are your most fundamental equipment. But are you able to let go and just *trust* them? You know they have the skills and the training they need. You've established checks and balances to ensure that nothing significant will go wrong. You've set the direction and pace for your department. But is *your* fear causing you to hold on tightly instead of letting go? Are your individual insecurities causing you to micro-manage your people, thus making it hard for them, and eventually setting them up to fail? If you've done everything to ensure that your people will do the right things at the right time, efficiently and profitably, then let go and just *trust* them to do a good job.

Postscript: as the morning progressed, the scared zip-liner's confidence and ability increased. At

the end of the course, they gave him the “Most-Improved Zip-Liner” award!