
BEING A LINCHPIN

COO OPS

A linchpin holds things together.

In a machine, the linchpin is essential for all of the parts to work in concert. In an organization, the linchpin is a person or process through which a majority of tasks are completed.

Sometimes the linchpin is the founder or entrepreneur. As the company grows, the linchpin tends to shift to a COO, Operations Manager, or Executive Assistant. They are the person that makes the operations of the business function. Without this role, the company would lose substantial momentum.

Some of you would describe yourself in a linchpin role within your company. Others may see critical processes that are holding the company in a healthy state of tension. This discussion is meant to explore how linchpin roles or processes can be helpful for a company, and how it can be detrimental when power or control is intentionally hoarded by a person.

In thriving organizations, the systems and processes are the linchpin instead of a single person. If that is already true for your company, then you are headed in the right direction. If that is not true for you, let's explore what is keeping it from being a reality.

LINCHPIN (N): A PERSON OR THING VITAL TO AN ENTERPRISE OR ORGANIZATION

LINCHPIN TEST QUESTIONS

An easy way to determine if you are in a linchpin role is to ask yourself these questions:

- When someone on the team has a question, are you the person they contact?
- If the owners are out of the office, do people assume you have the answers?
- Does your job title or job description fail in describing the work you do on a regular basis?
- Do you feel like your role acts as a “catch all” drawer for tasks around the company?
- Do you feel stress when you want to take a vacation or be out of the office because of how the company will function without you in it?
- Are you regularly creating your own solutions or processes in the company without being asked?
- Was it difficult for you to take the time away to be at this session today?
- Do you trust the other people on your team to do their work at the same level you would do it?

DISCUSSION

- As you look through these questions, what parts resonate with you?
- Are there parts of these questions that used to be true for your role but are not true anymore?
- Do you feel stressed looking at any of these questions?

BE REPLACEABLE

WHEN YOU ARE REPLACEABLE, IT MEANS YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO TAKE ON NEW RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES. OUR PURSUIT IS TO CONSISTENTLY FIND WAYS TO REPLACE OURSELVES WITH PEOPLE, AUTOMATION, OR ADDED EFFICIENCIES.

WHAT IF WE ARE NOT REPLACEABLE?

If we are afraid of being replaced, you will act in a way that hoards information or tasks out of a belief that it is self-preserving. It may help you in the short term, but the long term effects can be burnout, frustration, and a constant state of unnecessary stress.

Early in your career, you are rewarded for your ability to get work done. As you progress, you are increasingly rewarded for your ability to get work done with and through others. Finding ways to continually replace yourself is a mindset that shifts your focus from you needing to be the one who completes tasks to ways of empowering others to get things done. We will dive into this topic in greater depth in Session 8.

DISCUSSION

- When you look at the words “Be Replaceable,” what is your gut reaction?
- If you wanted to take a two week vacation starting tomorrow, how well would the company be able to function without you?
- What has helped you replace yourself in different roles throughout your career?
- When has replacing yourself not worked well for you?
- Have you replaced aspects of your role with systems and processes that elevated the organization?
- How can you recognize talent in your team members to know who can take on more responsibilities?

AS YOU PROGRESS, YOU ARE INCREASINGLY REWARDED FOR YOUR ABILITY TO GET WORK DONE WITH AND THROUGH OTHERS.

SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT GUIDE



It's your chance to be in the Spotlight. You have 10 minutes to focus on a specific challenge you're facing. These sessions are intended to be fast paced and help generate ideas and new perspectives on your issue. Here's how the Spotlight is organized.

3 MINUTES – PRESENTING THE PROBLEM

You will present the problem to the group. The more crisp and clear you can be with the problem, the better advice you can expect from the group.

3 MINUTES – CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

The members of the group will ask questions to clarify the problem, the desired outcome, or other aspects about the issue. They cannot and will not offer solutions or advice during this time. You may respond to the questions asked and add additional context if a question sparks something else you'd like to add.

4 MINUTES – SOLUTIONS & IDEAS

This is where the collective wisdom of the group is on display. Any members of the group can provide ideas, solutions, or insight for ways you can address the issue.

CONCLUSION – RESTATE THE ISSUE

The person in the Spotlight can restate their problem and summarize what was helpful to them from the suggestions in the group. If there are follow up actions, introductions, or other action items, make sure they are documented.

QUESTIONS TO PREP FOR YOUR SPOTLIGHT

As you prepare for your Spotlight, here are some questions to determine how to present your problem to the group.

- Is this a problem you want to solve?
- Are you open to additional insights or perspectives about your issue?
- Is this the real problem or merely a symptom of a deeper issue?
- Is this problem meaningful to your job or your life?
- If this problem was solved, would it give you capacity to work on issues with greater significance to the company?