



**CAPRICORN**  
*...it's just easier!*

**Other resources in step 9f:**

- **No other resources**

**Letting go of your business**

There's an undesirable social trend that seems to be impacting on most businesses and government departments – too many people refuse to take responsibility for their actions.

Is it because they feel incompetent or insecure or perhaps this is the way they've been trained – or not trained.

Too many business owners dream about finding staff who might take more responsibility, not just for their own actions, but for diagnostic decisions, workshop policies and ethics.

Business owners are constantly frustrated by the thousands of simple questions asked of them every day, such as, 'What do I do on this job?' or 'Mrs Jones wants to know when her car will be ready?' or 'Can we take another booking on Monday?'

Simple enough questions that the owner could do well without.

If this sounds like your typical day, you may be surprised to learn that questions like these don't necessarily indicate that your staff are useless or don't care.

In the vast majority of cases, employees bother the boss with questions because this is the way the boss has trained them.

Responsibility begins at the top.

Research reveals that it takes up to three months to create a habit. So that means that when a workshop owner jumps in and makes decisions for a new employee or apprentice during those first few months on the job, what they are actually doing is reducing the employees'

ability to make decisions. They are creating an employee is who is less likely to take responsibility.

Applying the habit theory, it follows that it will take up to three months to change these habits and turn employees into staff who take responsibility, capable of making simple day-to-day decisions.

The owner of two big Sydney auto electrical workshops recently took a three-month long service holiday of a lifetime (he actually went to Brazil to watch the football World Cup). The businesses survived and the bank balance stayed intact.

When asked how he managed to leave his businesses for three months, his response was very simple and logical.

‘Get your systems and procedures in place and give your staff the responsibility to run them. You will be surprised at how much responsibility staff will take when you ask them,’ was his answer.

He was able to spend his holiday happy in the knowledge that he had left competent staff to take responsibility and make the simple decisions they were employed to make.

### **Clarify staff responsibility**

Staff need to be clear on what their responsibilities entail and what is expected of them.

If this needs some work, refer back to the TaT Biz session on workplace agreements (July 2012). There are a number of downloadable templates that can help with this process.

### **Work on your procedures**

The business owner must build the systems and write the policies and procedures that staff can follow. Without guidance, they will do it their way and that in itself can cause more frustration.

### **Support their decisions**

Another busy workshop owner was surprised to see two of his technicians enjoying their lunch at 11:50am while the other techs were still working. ‘Why were they starting their lunch a whole ten minutes before the normal time,’ he wondered.

He was perhaps justifiably annoyed, but he discovered that his service advisor had made the decision to let the two techs take an early lunch break because their ordered lunch had arrived early. The owner sensibly bit his tongue and trusted the service advisor’s decision, which was his to make.

The owner did not undermine his service advisor’s authority, regardless of whether he disapproved of the decision.

The sensible move is to support whatever decisions staff make and if the boss disagrees for some valid reason, the best approach is to pull the decision maker quietly aside and explain why a different decision might have been better for the business.

### **Don't just do it yourself**

Sometimes it is faster and easier to just jump in and do it yourself. This may help get things done in the short term but in the longer term it is only making staff less competent.

It is worth spending extra time to clearly explain what needs to be done. Whenever staff ask a simple question the owner's only response should be, 'What do you think?'

Encourage staff to come to management with questions and solutions, never just questions.

### **Step away**

Business owners and managers must learn to step away and let the people they have employed make the decisions and take responsibility for the things they were employed to do. When the owner's financial wellbeing depends on the business, stepping away is one of the hardest things to do. The business naturally becomes a big part of their life.

When the business is small an owner can effectively micro-manage everything. Once it grows micro-managing will turn the owner into his own business bottleneck.

Believe it or not, the owner or manager doesn't need to know everything about every job in the workshop.

If a service advisor is engaged, let them be a service advisor. Let them deal with your customers and do the job they were employed to do.

So here's the challenge. If you want the freedom that should come with a well-run workshop then it's time to recruit the right people, assign them to the right position, train them, mentor them and then leave them alone and let them get on with it.

The place to start is [www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn](http://www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn)

*Just go for it!*