



Creating Inappropriate Heroes.

By Laura Rose

Abstract

We've all caught ourselves thinking and feeling things like: "If I want it done right, I need to do it myself." "There's no one else to do it". "It always falls on me." "Why am I always the one that has to move/change/compromise/keep the peace, etc.

If we like feeling this way, then there's no issue. We are creating the perfect scenarios for ourselves. If you want something different, then below are some quick tips to avoid creating that trap for ourselves.

Introduction

Law of Attraction: "Without exception that which you give thought to is that which you begin to invite into your experience". Abraham Hicks.

In a previous article (12 Tips to Realistic Scheduling¹), I cautioned **Tip #12: Beware of heroics culture**. This common form of chaos occurs when heroics become the norm, not the exception. Organizations commonly expect additional hours and heroics to get their products out the door. But the office isn't the only place we fall into this trap. We've all caught ourselves thinking and feeling things like: "If I want it done right, I need to do it myself." "There's no one else to do it". "It always falls on me." "Why am I always the one that has to move/change/compromise/keep the peace, etc.

Under the Law of Attraction, those are the exact vibrations and energy that attracts more "damsels in distress". We've all heard the saying, "The reward for hard work is more work". But what can we do? We want to be valued. We want to do our best. We want to attract a dependable and reliable reputation. We want to be invaluable and indispensable. We like being the "go to" person. But we also want to stay sane. We also want a responsible work/life balance.

Below are some practical and fun tricks that may help.

- 1) Stop viewing everyone else as incompetent.

¹ Full article can be found at [http://www.rosecoaching.info/Articles/Twelve tips for realistic scheduling in a software development project.htm](http://www.rosecoaching.info/Articles/Twelve%20tips%20for%20realistic%20scheduling%20in%20a%20software%20development%20project.htm) or <http://thelaurarose.blogspot.com/>

A harsh statement, I know. But the simple truth is that, if you actually feel that you are the only person that can accomplish or be successful at XYZ; then you see everyone else as incompetent. People pick up on that vibration and will either give-up trying to please you or take advantage of you.

If you view yourself as “the savior”, you will continue to attract people that need rescuing.

If you really want to “save” and “liberate” them, help them to follow their own guidance, not yours.

Note: Loving parents and family members often fall into this trap. Recognize that it’s your child’s life. Guide, mentor and encourage them to learn to guide and trust themselves. Offer suggestions then try to disengage from your children’s individual choices. Your children have inner guidance and an inner knowing, that far exceeds what you may currently realize. Their life is really up to them.

2) Teach them how to fish

You probably are the best person for the job, right now. You probably are the resident expert. Capitalize on your expertise and hand-pick some disciples. Create an entourage to mentor and train. Become the CEO of your domain instead of the worker-bee.

I guarantee you will be able to expand your influence.

3) Take Me Time

Common complaint with self-made-heroes is that they don’t have time to actually “do the higher-level work”. Consider blocking out calendar time for that “me time”. Put the phone and instant-messenger on Do Not Disturb. Allow the email and voice mail to collect, and schedule a specific time to review them. This allows you to get a block of “undisturbed me time”.

Take lunch away from the office, at a bookstore or a short walk around the building. Getting away allows you to clear out the cobwebs, and envision creative ways to solve what’s most on your mind.

Pause several times during the day to ask yourself, “Is this the most effective way to resolve this? What’s the bigger picture? Is this actually someone else’s responsibility? Would the higher-level Win/Win be gained a different way?”

Ask, “Taking everyone else and everything else out of the equation, what would benefit me more in this particular juncture. How can I make the most of this opportunity?”

4) Time-Boxing

In the 12 Tips to Realistic Schedule, I talk about **time-boxing** and the proper way to say “yes”. We want to be a team player. We want to be helpful. There are ways to say “yes” that doesn’t introduce chaos or stress.

A good technique is time-boxing. When someone comes in with an “unexpected” request, schedule a convenient five-minute meeting with your friend in which he or she explains the issue to the best of his or her ability. Determine the priority and urgency of the request compared to what it already on your plate. Not everything is equally important and urgent. Once they understand your current obligations and priorities, many people are happy to wait until the next day or next week for your focus. Use that information to estimate how long it might take you. Check your calendar or schedule to see if you can fit the appropriate time and explain,² "I can spend nnn minutes on this at 10:00 on day XXX. If we haven't discovered or fixed the problem by then, we will need to re-evaluate the level of effort required, the priority of this, and get someone else involved." After that appropriate time limit has expired then **STOP** and re-evaluate.

Time boxing is a great way to say "yes" without introducing chaos.

With the above strategies you are still a team player without derailing your other commitments.

5) Don't feed someone else's monkey

Everyone feels, at some point, that they have an annoying monkey on their back. It happens. Please make sure it's your monkey. Don't feed someone else's monkey for them. Otherwise, you'll always be feeding that monkey.

Sometimes we do things because we've always done it that way. Pause and ask yourself, “Is this a MUST HAVE for me? If it isn't, whose is it?” If no one takes ownership then announce that it's no longer needed and cross it off the list.

If someone owns up to it, guide and mentor them on how they can accomplish their goals. Once the guidance is dispensed, disassociate yourself with the specific of how they choose to accomplish it.³

6) Don't be the source of the chaos

Chaos is introduced when a request is submitted with little or no lead time. People are often unprepared to respond on a moment's notice. There will always be a handful of urgent and important issues that arise, causing our schedules to be chaotic for short periods. Even so, don't compound the situation by introducing more chaos into your schedule or your teams. Lead by example and be aware of your effect on others. Reward the behavior you want to encourage. Stay calm, responsible and give people enough lead time on tasks to adequately respond and accomplish the common goals. A

² ASAP doesn't mean drop everything, although some people assume "as soon as possible" means "as soon as *humanly* possible." With some patience and communication, it is possible to control and structure a hectic schedule.

³ Loving parents often fall into this trap. Recognize that it's your children's life. Guide, mentor and encourage them to learn to guide themselves. Offer guidance then try to disengage from their choices.

very appropriate response is “We would love to help you, but we don’t have enough time or resources to accomplish exactly what you are asking in the timeframe you have scheduled. I’m happy to meet with you to find an alternative solution. Maybe there is another high-level solution that covers the essence of your concern. Let’s meet tomorrow for 30 minutes at 10:00am to discuss this in more detail.”

If, more often than not, you find yourself in the midst of the drama, you are contributing to the excitement in one form or the other. It could be as simple as listening, nodding, offering sympathy or empathy. It could be adding fuel to the fire by sharing similar incidents and stories. The best way to disengage from the drama is to walk away. Don’t listen, don’t notice, and don’t interact to the gossip, rumors, or drama.

7) Work on things you want to work on

Certain things need to be done. But it’s not always necessary that you have to do it. We normally have a few options regarding any project:

- i. Create a list of positive aspects for “someone else” to champion the project. Use this opportunity to develop and grow someone else.
- ii. Split the projects into multiple tasks that highlight and compliment other teammate’s strength. Some tasks that you don’t like to do, others may find enjoyable and challenging.
- iii. Discover another way to accomplish the essence of the task that is more interesting or challenging to you.

But what if you cannot modify or hand-off the task? You can’t always just “work on the projects that you want.” That’s a sure fire way to be shown the unemployment line.

The answer is to change the way you think of the project. Create lists of positive aspects to doing the project. Visualize the positive consequences of doing the project. Be creative on how to execute the project that is entertaining and fun for both you and your team. Expand its value by taking the task to the next higher-level solution. Get excited about the project. Your enthusiasm will be contagious and you will have your pick of your collaborators.

8) Visualize your dream team

If you find yourself surrounded by complainers and “no-doers”, change your response. When people complain, acknowledge the importance of their issues and offer positive suggestions on how “**they**” can change their environment. Offer positive aspects to the current situation and be enthusiastic about their ability and empowerment to improve their situation. Line up with what you want **them to achieve**. Help them see that they are already empowered to change and control their situation.

These responses typically result in either two conclusions:

- i. Most people will start taking responsibility for their own situations
- ii. The others will stop coming to you for help.

And isn't that what you really want. Don't you want to attract reliable, capable, empowered and responsible co-creators?

At the same time, visualize the type of people you want to surround you. For instance: I attract harmonious clients in all my projects, interactions and aspirations. I work with competent, dedicated, and reliable individuals. Everyone is appreciative, supportive and cooperative. The people I have meaningful contact with already value and respect the services I provide. We easily collaborate and grow together, in every aspect of our interaction. I feel valued and people gratefully pay for the services I can offer. I offer exactly what they need at the proper time they need it, at the proper way for their best advantage. We have similar and harmonious goals. No one criticizes or notices things that we do not like about each other or the situation.

You will be surprised the caliber of folks that will start to cross your path.

Conclusion

Although this is not an exhaustive list of ways to improve your work/life balance, I'm confident that they will provide some ease to your daily and increased workload. I'd be happy to hear from you regarding any of these ideas, especially if any of them help you and your team.

About the author

Laura has been in the software and testing industry for over 20 years. She's worked with such companies as IBM, Ericsson, Staples, Fidelity Investments and Sogeti in various client advocacy and project management roles. The techniques she uses in her business coaching and client advocacy work saved these companies both time and money, which resulted in on-time, quality product delivery with higher client satisfaction.

Laura now uses her client focus, project, quality and people management skills in her personal life coaching career. As a personal life coach, she helps people integrate their goals and dreams into their everyday lives. Laura uses creative and practical tools to help her clients realize what really matters to them. They then follow-through with project and time management techniques to create the reality they really want.

Laura authors many articles and workshops on time management and strategic scheduling. She is also the founder of the electronic magazine *the Rose Garden: the Art of Becoming*

Laura offers **one-on-one career and life coaching, small group coaching, seminars and workshops**. You can learn more about her at www.RoseCoaching.info and contact her at LauraRose@RoseCoaching.info or <http://thelaurarose.blogspot.com/>

