

Thinking Outside the Hierarchy: The Value Injectors in Your Business

With the rapid growth of technology in the 21st century, society has developed a specialist mindset. The focus has shifted to field experts and their technical prowess. Some might attribute this shift to the rise of Millennials and the retirement of the Baby Boomers, but no matter the cause, the fact remains: the specialist mentality has been placed on a pedestal. There are certainly times and situations that require the keen eye of a specialist, but sometimes something more is required to sustain progress.

The traditional, hierarchical structure of many businesses often only encourages this specialist mindset. It departmentalizes production and compartmentalizes thinking. We've seen the problem occur over and over in even the most successful businesses. Despite specialists' attention to detail, they often overlook the bigger picture. This is where individuals who might be technically strong in one area, but also know about a little about a lot of other things—can help. We call them the "Value Injectors."

There is a special, talented pool of such individuals out there who, when identified and presented with the opportunity, can provide team members with the right balance of support and direction to help them achieve key objectives. Value Injectors generally function outside of a company's traditional hierarchical business structure, and because of this, they are free to move from department to department and project to project, adding value and perspective that a specialist is unable to deliver.

It is possible that you already have Value Injectors within your organization. They are the individuals who always seem to help others overcome obstacles and move beyond impasses. They set the compass and help other employees stay on the right path. If you already have these Value Injectors within your organization, it is very likely that they currently play a dual role. Because these individuals have other primary duties and responsibilities, organizations are not making use of their full value-adding potential. The Value Injectors are bogged down with day-to-day tasks, instead of remaining free to support and respond to issues as they arise.

If you can identify Value Injectors within your business, try to redirect their daily tasks to others within the organization, perhaps to the specialists. This will give your Value Injectors the flexibility to move in and out of production as necessary. Having even one employee whose sole purpose is to inject value into others' work will create a noticeable return in the quality of your products or services.

If you do not already have a Value Injector on your team, consider hiring one. Ideal candidates have executive or senior-level experience in one or more small organizations. They previously might have been senior managers, supervisory directors, vice presidents or chief operating officers. Individuals with this type of background have the interdisciplinary experience necessary to give other employees specific, solid, and correct direction. Keep an eye out for applicants who have worked their way up through an organization and played a key role in a business's growth. Better yet, look for individuals who have played an important role in the growth of multiple startup businesses, who have experience in different corporate structures and knowledge of a variety of products and services.

While a specialist's credentials are attractive, he or she is not the best fit for this "generalist" position if that is all they bring to the table. The Value Injector doesn't need to be an expert in every situation. His or her purpose lies in questioning, assessing, guiding, and making suggestions based on the big picture.

In any organization, it's best to have a mix of talent. You need a balance of individuals and skillsets to be both innovative and successful. Traditionally, we've limited our businesses by adhering to a strict

hierarchical structure, creating missed opportunities that result from working in silos. However, by identifying and empowering the Value Injectors to function outside of this structure, we can span the gaps and produce better results. In a society that has grown to be so rich in data and content, but poor in meaning, Value Injectors can provide vital context and balance to our world.

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