



Do Nothing!: How to Stop Overmanaging and Become a Great Leader

By J. Keith Murnighan

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Imagine you've just come back to work after a two-week vacation during which you actually relaxed, without calling in or checking e-mail. You discover that there are no pressing issues and that, on the contrary, your team scored a big new customer and fixed a nagging problem during your absence. No red flags or fires to put out.

Sadly, for most leaders this scenario is only a dream. They constantly check on what's happening because they expect the worst (and usually get it). But Keith Murnighan shows that not only is "do nothing" leadership possible, it is also far more effective than doing too much.

Great leaders don't work; they facilitate and orchestrate. They think of great strategies and help others implement them. They spend their time preparing for the future. They take a comprehensive view of their terrain while also noticing key details so they can confidently choose the right forks in the road.

In other words, great leaders don't do anything—except think, make key decisions, help people do their jobs better, and add a touch of organizational control to make sure the final recipes come out okay. In sharp contrast, most leaders are too busy actually working to do these things—and their teams suffer as a result.

Do Nothing!'s practical strategies and true stories will show you how to set high expectations for your team and watch it rise to the challenge. It will help you establish a healthier culture by trusting people more than they expect to be trusted. And it will help you overcome your natural tendencies toward micromanagement so you can let people do their jobs—even when you know you could do their jobs better.

As Murnighan writes, "My experience suggests that you will be

surprised—wildly surprised. People on your team will reveal skills you never knew they had and will accomplish things that go far beyond your estimate of their capabilities. They might not do things the way you would do them, but they will get results you never expected. Everyone has hidden talents, and most leaders never discover them. Before you reject this approach, ask yourself: what if you did nothing and it actually worked?”

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Editorial Review

Review

“Murnighan uses rigorous research to provide detailed advice that will help leaders do their jobs better, develop more adept and committed followers, and suffer from less stress and overwork. Even though most business books present new wine in old bottles, *Do Nothing!* is the rare book that provides a refreshing perspective and tangible advice on leadership that isn’t available anywhere else.”

—ROBERT I. SUTTON, author of *The No Asshole Rule*

“With *Do Nothing!*, Keith Murnighan has clearly done something—something significant. He’s reconceptualized the idea of effective leadership through a compelling analysis that allows existing and prospective leaders to see how to work both less and better at their craft.”

—ROBERT B. CIALDINI, author of *Influence*

“Too often, new leaders find it difficult to delegate previous responsibilities or create a sea of activity during times of crisis. Instead, fighting these tendencies will lead to more effective leadership. Murnighan does a fantastic job demonstrating how this contrarian approach can actually be applied successfully in business. A must read.”

—MATTHEW B. McCALL, partner, New World Ventures

“Murnighan has, in what is both a unique and an innovative turnaround, identified that, contrary to popular opinion, leadership turns out to be as much about what you don’t do as what you do. The best leaders today and in the future will look more like basketball coaches than great players, rarely engaging in the day-to-day delivery but more often focused on strategy and doing little other than letting great players run with the ball.”

—GLEN TULLMAN, CEO, Allscripts

“*Do Nothing!* provides a unique and somewhat counterintuitive approach to running a business. By moving away from micromanaging, Keith tells us that we can help employees grow and give ourselves more time to focus on the bigger picture. This valuable guide will help everyone who reads it to manage better and accomplish more.”

—MICHAEL REINSDORF, president, Chicago Bulls

About the Author

J. KEITH MURNIGHAN is an award-winning professor at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and an active consultant and trainer for a host of companies around the world. His research has been cited in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, and *Forbes*. He lives in Evanston, Illinois.

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