Hello. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you for dialing into our series of blog videos, and this week I want to talk about three ways you might be hurting your employees' productivity.

Now, we talk about the need for senior executives in family businesses to redefine their roles and focus on high payoff executive functions versus sort of task functions that a $15 employee can do. On the other hand, let's look at the other side of that coin. How do senior leaders hurt their employees' productivity? And this came from an Inc Magazine article. A little bit of research done by Stanford University. And they came up with, and we agree with, three ways that executives hamper their very own employees' productivity.

The first is assigning time consuming tasks. Most of your people are already pretty well occupied, and a new task distracts them from previous projects, and causes them to wonder about focus, and direction, and things like that. So many times in smaller businesses, there's a sense of shifting priorities, and I literally have heard people say "I want you to do this, this, and this," an employee questions them, and I say, "Forget it. That was last week. That was a different customer. This week, we're going to do this." And you can just see the employee's eyes rolling because they have this sense of continually shifting priorities and a sense of frustration. There's not a clarity of direction in their company.

So, one way to cure this is to have a well thought out plan with big picture objectives. Sure, you need to shift priorities from time to time, depending on customer needs, weather, all kinds of different variables, but having a big, overarching plan with your mission, and your vision, and your values, and your overall direction for the next three years, let's say, that is a cure to this shifting priorities problem so many family businesses struggle with.

The second problem is that senior executives don't always understand the power of their words, even offhand comments. The most famous example of that is ... Well, it may be apocryphal, but I think it's supposed to be true. When King Henry II of England complained about Thomas Beckett, the archbishop of Canterbury, who was ... As always, back in those times, the church and the state were bickering a little bit about supremacy, and who got to make decisions and things. And King Henry famously said, "Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?" And he said it kind of in jest, kind of in frustration, but four knights, having heard this comment, actually assassinated Thomas Beckett. A purely unintended consequence, according to history, but a real thing.

And so, you don't realize in your organization sometimes you say things as simple as "The coffee wasn't good today," or "Why don't we have bagels at our morning meetings?" You say something small like that, and people take it as a directive because, after all, in most companies, and maybe even more so in small companies, people want to appease and please the chief executive. So, the cure here is just watch your tongue. Watch what you say. Make sure that if you're joking, that people know you're joking, and they don't rush off and assassinate your priest because you inadvertently said something wrong.

And the third thing is delegating to your employees and then not trusting them. This is a big problem we hear all the time in family businesses about the frustration of micromanaging, and maybe even worse than micromanaging is second-guessing. So, you give the employee the right or the responsibility to make a decision, and then you come along a week later, a month later, or whatever, and you begin to second guess the decision. You sort of yank the carpet out from underneath the employee's feet.

The cure here is, okay, if you're thinking about delegating, maybe it's better off to walk before you run, and give the employee decision power over some smaller things first and put them to the test a little bit before you suddenly give them decision-making power over a big project, or a big customer relationship, or a big financial transaction, or something like that.

I guess the point of all this is we want you to focus laser-like on your own time management skills, but we also want you to focus on getting the most productivity out of your people. Don't be a bottleneck in your organization when it comes to decisions. Don't reserve too many decisions for yourself. You must delegate in order to be as effective as you can be. Either you've got the right people on your bus, and you can trust them, and you can delegate them, or if you find that you can't trust them, or you can't delegate to them effectively, what does that tell you? You've got the wrong people on your bus.

This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.