

In college I achieved a minor in psychology, which some days I contend I use more than my major in business administration. In one of my psychology classes, I had to read a book with the title "If You Don't Know Where You Are Going, You'll Probably End Up Somewhere Else", written by Dr. David Campbell. I thought about a couple of weekends ago when I was driving son Ted to a basketball game at Urbandale High School. Several of his friends drove themselves to the game and I asked Ted if he thought he could find his way there from Ankeny. He casually said, "Maybe; I don't know."

So the next day as we climbed in the car for another game, I told Ted that it was now his job to navigate the car to Urbandale while I drove. He agreed to go along with my little game. All of my children have been blessed with the ability to read a map, but not all of them possess a very good sense of direction. At this point, primarily because he has his head buried in an iPod or is asleep most of the time when we travel, I wasn't sure where he would fall on the spectrum.

Ted had no problem getting on to the interstate and heading south, which frankly surprised me a little bit. His first real test came at the intersection of I-80 and I-35. Ted knew he had to exit to the right, but wasn't exactly sure if we were going to head east or west on 80. What he did know was that we needed to stay as far right as possible, which, in fact, was the correct answer. I was starting to think he was going to find his way there!

Once on I-80, Ted had 6 miles to make up his mind if we were going to exit on the correct road. Trying to be cool, I stayed in the middle lane, as to not give away the fact we did need to exit. As the exit came closer, I started to worry because there was a lot of traffic in the right lane, and Ted was giving me no indication that he thought we should exit. I made a quick mental calculation to see if we could get to the game on time and miss the correct exit. While we probably could have made it back in time, I chickened out and got off the interstate at the right place without Ted's input.

As owners and managers of small businesses, we often give our employees goals. It could be a certain amount of sales or a certain level of productivity, but most of the time we tell them where we want them to end up. It is not as often we tell them how we want them to get there, or even the best way to get there. Often it feels like we are testing them.

I invite you to take some time and think about your employees who have goals. We are almost half way done with the year, and it is a good opportunity to look at those goals to see how accurately you predicted. If you are not where you want to be, your employees should know how to get there. Or do they have their heads down, focusing on things that might not be pertinent? It is time to get our employees involved so we can get to the destination, because everyone will benefit.

After exiting the interstate, Ted successfully (with just a little more help) guided us to Urbandale High. Now I am confident that if he had to, he could drive himself there. I am not as confident that we have time or the desire to replay this scenario for every high school in the CIML. You don't need to have a psychology minor or read a self-help book to figure that out.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.*