

# Turn Soldiers into Generals

by Taras Boyko

A prominent Russian commander once said, “Only a bad soldier does not want to become a general.” In other words, an employee’s future will be determined by his or her efforts to reach specific objectives, goals, or even dreams.

Some aim to become managers and make more money. For others, objectives are not based on private interests, but on doing fruitful work for the benefit of the company. They do their best to contribute to its welfare, even if their contribution is not always seen, because they want it to become strong and effective. In either case, a person can apply 100 percent of their knowledge and experience and become a general, that is, an expert in their field.

In the end, however, *motivating staff toward professional growth* is a manager’s responsibility. This rule is important for both secular organizations and those that work in Christian publishing. Consider the example below, describing a typical relationship between an employer and an employee in a small publishing house in Ukraine.

The manager interviewed several candidates. In doing so, he emphasized his dedication to Christian publishing. He talked about miracles, revelations, and spiritual victories, all of which are essential in his work. What about the future employee? Necessary qualifications for him were membership in a local church, skill in prayer, and a valid driver’s license.

One candidate had none of these qualifications but was still hired. Why? Because the manager, who wanted to trust in God without question, believed that it was not by accident that this person appeared at that very moment. As for training, the new employee was told, “You will learn on the job.” As for salary, it was enough just to keep him alive and not let him die of hunger.

The emotional stories that publisher told about the importance of service and the opportunity to become part of a creative team of Christians inspired the employee and prevented him from asking about his salary and work schedule. Those questions seemed unspiritual and too pragmatic.

Eventually, the employee asked for dismissal. He was either disappointed with a lack of organization—or was fired due to poor performance.

Does this situation sound familiar to you? I know it well. The publisher above is your humble servant.

When I remember my first experiences in the publishing field, I recognize I was confused about ministry and business. I felt a breakthrough in 2000, when I attended “Dare to Soar,” a Cook seminar in Budapest. There I learned that Christian publishing is 100 percent religious service and also 100 percent business. Why not 50/50? Because God gives us *carte blanche* in managing human and financial resources, which we can waste like wicked and lazy slaves or use to the fullest potential.

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## Your most valuable asset is your team.

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When I came back, I was a new man. I put everything in order. Many “insoluble” issues were converted into tasks with quick and constructive solutions. St. Paul’s Christian Bible Fellowship grew. We sell books in Ukraine, Russia, and the U.S.; publish *Knigonosha* (“colporteur”), a newspaper on Christian book publishing; and hold a monthly book fair in Kiev which brings together more than 40 publishers and book sellers from all the regions of Ukraine. In the last five years, St. Paul’s Christian Bible Fellowship has distributed thousands of Bibles and established a mission in Russia. In time I learned to identify the point where business ends and grace begins. And now, each of our 18 staff members has specific duties, understands them, and knows how they contribute to our goals.

Looking back on my eight years of Christian publishing experience, I can honestly state that the most valuable asset you have as a manager is your team. Invest in your employees. Pay them good salaries, encourage their initiatives, compliment them on successes, point out their failures, and teach them. There is no greater blessing for the organization than conscientious and zealous employees—soldiers eager to become generals. ▽

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