

Helping by Not Helping

An underground phone cable had been cut by a construction crew, who called the phone company.

The repair crew arrived before their supervisor but went right to work and were making good progress when he arrived.

The supervisor saw that the crew had everything under control, but as a newly appointed manager, he was nervous.

He started firing questions at the workers down in the hole: Did they need more equipment? How long would it take? What had been cut? Did they need more workers down there?

At this last question, the veteran foreman looked up and said, respectfully, "Son, we can only put so many men into this hole at one time. The fastest way for us to fix this problem is to just fix it."

And that's a good reminder for any leader. Sometimes the best way to help is not to help.

That is particularly true when you have associates you trust, who have a demonstrated record of good performance, and who have a desire to use their initiative and creativity to fulfill responsibilities – and find ways to do their work better.

– Beecher Hunter