

5 METHODS FOR GREAT MANAGERS

Leaders don't always get it right, but we can use every day and detail to move us forward and improve our leadership. Things can get off track when things get going fast in your leadership assignment. You will often find yourself leading in a space or situation you've never encountered before. That can be extremely overwhelming! Have no fear, though, my friend! Whatever you haven't gone through the back, I promise someone else has. While we could add many topics and thoughts to this chapter, here are some basic leadership actions that have helped me stay in "maintenance management mode" throughout managing people. These thoughts and tricks help keep the team in motion when things don't go perfectly.

Follow Through And Follow Up

You've had every meeting; you'd outlined how the event, meeting, assignment, etc., is supposed to go. Who is supposed to be where, and what's going to happen at the peak point of the day, and then without warning, something goes wrong. It's inevitable. It's not if something goes wrong; it's when. A leader's job is to always keep the momentum of your team. When things tend to go wrong, the focus shifts from what we are doing to the people we are doing it for. Emotions get tilted as expectations go down the drain, and before you have a full fledged raging figurative fire amongst what you're leading, it's best to simply teach and train people to follow through and follow up later. Following through with something is our way as leaders to show people that we realize something went wrong and something is not right, but we are in the middle of our mission, and we have a responsibility to the event/thing we are serving.

I've done things so poorly before when I pull someone in for a meeting in the middle of the event because my expectations weren't met, and I mess everything up. They leave the meeting feeling like a failure, they tell the other team members what happened, now the team is mad at me, and no one is serving our guests. Don't do that. Follow through and follow up. I've taken notes or voice memos during entire weekend events of things I want to follow up on later on. Going into a fresh week with fresh emotions and a few victories under your belt will help you translate your thoughts much better.

When the team is on edge and wants answers from you at the moment, simply say, "I realize this is important to you, and I want to give it the focus it deserves. I simply can't do that right now with all of these guests here. Let's follow through with the event today, and we will follow up on Tuesday." Empathizing with people tends to place people in a space of openness, and they begin to build trust with your leadership. Following up needs to be intentional, don't wait around for it. Have the meeting. Send the e-mail. Make the phone call, and get everyone on the same page, so you can continue the purpose of your vision.

What's In Writing

There has been an ancient war that has plagued leaders for eons: the dreaded "He Said, She Said War." It shows its face in every organization and every team at some point in time. I've always been amazed by the depth of this back and forth nonsense because, in all of my years, I have never hired anyone with the name "He" or the name "She," yet somehow they make it into every meeting, every water-cooler conversation and they think they have a seat at the leadership table. I'm being a bit silly for comedic sake, but the truth is that misinformation and inaccurate information is the primary frustration point in every team. People want to know what to expect and what is accurate. As we were developing the Phoebe system you've already heard about, one thing rose to the surface very quickly how we keep information accurate and official. We like to say, "It's not official unless it's in writing in official places."

This one rule of thumb has saved our organization so many pointless conversations and mismanaged time and has been the one propellant for synergy around the mission. Here's how it plays out. Let's say you're in charge of hosting the volunteer appreciation picnic in the park, and you're trying to figure out what food is going to be served. In the team meeting a week prior, it was a unanimous decision that turkey and ham sandwiches were going to be provided; however, two days before the event, someone made a passing comment to you that "Oh, that changed!".^[M4] You probe for more information only to find out that one of the volunteer group leaders, Bob owns a BBQ restaurant and wants to donate food for the picnic. At the same moment, you get a call

from someone who's at the grocery store picking up 47 packets of ham and turkey because they never "got the memo."

The confusion begins to set in, multiple versions of instructions are floating around the team, and you now have an open door for frustration to take over and set into your vision. The solution, have an official place for official writings. Memos don't count. E-mails are even worse. You want something that everyone on the team has access to, but only a specific person/group of people has the ability to update. The idea is simple. By having a singular place that everyone on the team knows is official, when questions arise on updates or changes, you simply point them to the official place for the official info.

It's like the screens in the airport that tell you where your flight gate is and whether or not it's on time or not. Whatever information is in that spot goes! Period. There are no leadership authority wars or trump cards allowed. Do you want to see different info become official? Tell the person responsible, and they will update it properly and timely. I've seen people use everything from a Google Doc in view-only mode to a dry erase calendar on the wall where a printed piece of paper gets tacked on the wall. Next time Bob wants to donate BBQ, you simply say, "What's in writing?". Think about it, The Holy Bible is a book of inspiration and instruction, and it's in writing! Our government constitution and laws it's in writing! Not to overdo it, but Habakkuk 2 says WRITE the vision down... Writing things down in an official place will give your team the information they need and your peace of mind about what to expect within the day-to-day aspects of your vision.

React vs. Respond

One of the most recorded miracles of Jesus's earthly ministry is the story of when he calmed the storm by simply speaking to it (see Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). It left an impression on the disciples, and I think it's one of the greatest leadership lessons (and life lessons) we see in Jesus.

If you're unfamiliar with the story, let me give you the sixty-second version. Jesus and his disciples are crossing the sea in the middle of the night when a thunderstorm develops. With crashing waves and turbulent winds, the disciples began to panic; when they woke Jesus, who was

sleeping at the bottom of the boat, he simply responded with, "Peace, be still.", and the storm was silenced.

Leaders are faced with the unexpected every single day, and when you are, you have a choice of what you are going to do with what's been handed to you. Are you going to react? Are you going to respond? Reactions are knee-jerk motions full of emotion and fear. Responses are alert calm, and full of faith. Your leadership will always require you to respond, yet sometimes we default to reacting. This is a leadership muscle that must be built, but it can be the single greatest tool in the life of a leader.

I've been an instructor for the American Red Cross for over fifteen years and have trained hundreds of lifeguards and even more people in first-aid and CPR. In every class, we spend just as much time teaching people how to respond as we do how to complete the actual skills. When you respond, you instantly take command and control of the situation. If you react, the situation now has control over you. Can things be scary? Sure. Aren't we allowed to have feelings and feel them? Absolutely. However, when you take on the role of a leader, people are looking to you for peace in the process of what you are taking care of. This will help your leadership in the field or in the meeting room. When someone accuses you of something to your face, reacting would become defensive and just blast someone. Responding gives you a chance to speak rationally and relationally, allowing you to slow things down, keep emotions at bay, and speak to the situation as much as you are speaking to the person.

On a spiritual note, when you respond vs. react, you are giving your faith the final say. You are making a decision on how you are going to handle things even before you have all the details. Faith is a foundational element of what we build upon, and your leadership will give you the patience to respond when you go in with faith first. Spirit first, system second.

Zoom Out

Let's face it. Some days in leadership are harder than others. One moment you feel you've conquered Mt. Everest, and other days you are

below sea level drowning in overwhelm. On those dim days, it's a great time to zoom out.

We've all touched a camera with the ability to zoom out; the perspective changes so quickly. Leaders focus on the wrong thing all the time. Go National Geographic with me for a second and imagine a tiny ant on a blade of grass. If we zoom out a bit to see the entire park that tiny ant is in, it's not so significant anymore. If we zoom out from the park and we see the United States, what we were focused on gets smaller and smaller. Sometimes as leaders, you just need to zoom out and focus [M9] on the right things. I know that person got under your skin and you didn't meet your quarterly goals, but zoom out and realize that you gave someone a shot to do something they have never done before and become someone they truly want to be. That's leadership! Zoom out from the first quarter of the year, and let's look at your life of leadership, staying faithful in the same community for over a decade! That's leadership. [M10] Zooming out can release a burden and give you a different perspective long enough to re-check your focus and zoom back in to lead through the rough patches. Leaders lead. Leaders lead better with a proper perspective. Zoom out a bit. It will help you. It will help your leadership.

Charging And Changing Batteries

It's fun and exciting to come out of the strategy session or write down a vision from an off-site retreat, but what about walking it out on a mundane Monday? Summer camp sounds like a fun thing to do until it's 1:02 pm on the clock, 102 degrees outside on the thermometer on the 4th day of a 5-day camp. At that point, you are ready to move on with things. When my shift leaders would come in, and they'd ask what the agenda was for the day, I'd smile and say, "Change the batteries!"

If you're the leader, you're responsible for the two most driving forces of the team, the atmosphere and their attitude, or as I like to call it, "The Double A's." Because so much of a team's success is the mindset, it's important that we do our part to help that mindset stay on track with the mission.

The atmosphere you walk in should be positive and full of light and life. Appropriate music can really aid as well. When you walk into the

room, you are walking into something that's already been happening. Maybe it was a conversation full of questions or a practical joke that just took place, and the entire room was laughing hysterically. (Those rooms are great to walk into). When you walk in, you walk in with authority to change the atmosphere and the authority.

James teaches us that Jesus had more joy than all of his companions. You should have the same that same kind of joy. People want to be around someone who loves what they are doing, not waiting to punch a clock at quieting time and run out the room like Fred Flintstone with cartoon dust clouds following them. I would tell the team to put two AA batteries inside of their pocket, and when their hands felt those batteries to always remember their first priority of leading. Atmosphere and attitudes.

Jesus never left a location the same way he found it. He always walked away with more life, more joy, and more purpose. Attitudes rub off on others like wet paint on a freshly painted sidewalk. You can feel when someone has a bad attitude, and whatever it is that got them into that funk, you have the ability to get them out of it!

Leaders care about people. Our role is to refocus their attention on the reason we are doing what we are doing. That's why having a mission and vision is so important because it gives you something to point to with team members all year long. Adjusting attitudes is like a pilot adjusting altitude. You have to do it gradually, and I'd suggest you always start with what's important to them before you talk about what it's important to you. Ask about how things are at home and let them share from their heart. After you've let them go first, you can begin to adjust the altitude of the conversation by reminding them of why we are here to do what we are doing. Stories or memories from other successful moments of their journey will serve you too as you make the climb to better altitudes of your conversation. At some point, however, they have to make a choice of where they are going to land. Will the attitude change, or will they need to take an extended break? Let's be clear. Sometimes the best thing you can do for your team and that individual is to send them home! If they aren't cooperating or doing their best to get on board, then you have to think about what's greater for other team members, the mission, and where you are trying to go at that moment. I

had a guy get super mad one time at another staff member, had I not shown up when I did, there is no doubt fists would have been flying. I quickly pulled him to the side, got his side of the story, and took him away from the public crowds to put him on "ICE."

Isolate - Isolate the situation from harming themselves or others.

Communicate - Let them communicate why they are so mad.

Explain - Explain what's going to happen if they keep going down this road.

I followed the "ice protocol" while he cooled down (pun intended) and then, out of the left field, said, "Do you want a Gatorade"?

With a confused look, he said, "Uhh, sure, ok."

What's so special about Gatorade? Nothing, but how are you going to stay mad at a guy that just gave you something for free? Trust me! It works every single time. People get tired, emotions take over, and sometimes you just need to let them go and take a nap. Elijah was running from Jezebel in the Old Testament (1 Kings 19) and asked God to take his life and just end it all! That's a pretty deep and desperate request. God's response was to take a nap and eat cake! I can completely get on board with those instructions! After a Gatorade and a quick power nap, he was back on top and ready to apologize to the rest of the team and move forward. At that point, you can say to yourself. "Ladies and gentlemen, we've reached our cruising altitude, and all attitudes are doing well and moving the mission forward." Atmosphere and attitudes are the building blocks of a great day for your team. Change the batteries often and watch your mission stay energized and effective in all they do.

Mastering Management

Managing people can be a mystery. You never know what you are going to get, and even the most stable, predictable people on your team have a line and a limit that will set them off. When you care for people as a leader, you have to have the maturity to recognize when a person is ready for the mission or when they need to sit out and take a break. Where the mission and vision can bring a sense of life to people who need something to grab ahold of, sometimes the best thing you can do is get people to a place where they recognize they need more guidance and help. Don't ever downplay people's words when they decide to open up

and share how they are truly feeling. If you feel over your head in a situation, the best thing you can do as a leader is reach out to someone else for help. Sometimes what we think can be fixed in a pep talk at the team meeting really requires months of intense counseling for that person from a highly skilled and trained professional. You do the best you can do and know when it's time to help someone get to another leader. It doesn't mean you are a bad or weak leader. It means you are wise enough to know your limits, and you want the best for that person. The best that you don't have the capacity to give. The mission you're leading is a parade. It's going to keep marching, and these tips and tricks are just a few items of the many out there that help you in the day-to-day duties of management. I'd encourage you to become a student of management and constantly grow your gifts through resources out there. As Craig Groeschel says, almost every podcast of "The Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast" (is a great resource to start with). "When the leader gets better, everyone gets better."

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BONUS CHAPTER

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