

Introduction

The Reasons for this book

I wrote this book because I am a trainer. I present ideas to business people like you, who want to get more out of themselves and others. Usually, I present ideas in the form of seminars; fifteen delegates working through the material over a period of two to nine days.

The delegates told me that the methods I presented were making big improvements to their abilities as managers and leaders. Some of them asked me, "What book did you get these ideas from? I want to buy a copy"

I said "I didn't get these ideas from one book. I got them from reading hundreds of books. I got ideas from all of them"

"Then you should write a book yourself, I would buy it"

That thought stuck in my mind. It occurred to me that it would be more efficient if I wrote the ideas down in the form of a book. That way I can present the ideas to more people. That would be good business.

Then I was lucky to meet James Alexander, the publisher of management books 2000.

James said, if you write the book, I will publish it"

I said "Great"

So that is our story.

What about you?

Why should you invest any time and effort to read this book?

There are four good reasons:

1 If you are in business, you are in the businesses of people.

People are your primary resource. People are your customers, suppliers, financiers and workers. To get the most from your business, you need to get the most from *people*. This book is about getting the most from people.

2 In business, you cannot force people to do anything.

Why? Because we live in a free market capitalist economy. The key word here is free. Only the army, police, customs and prison service are authorized to use force. You, the business manager and team leader cannot use force. Instead, you have to persuade, teach, and inspire people to give more. Many people have not learned to persuade. They try to force their ideas. So they come across as "too pushy". This book will improve your ability to persuade.

3 Today's economy requires that people continually learn new skills.

So there has to be somebody who can teach. There will be occasions when *you are the teacher*, or manager. You need to develop and train others to become more informed and skillful. You are a life long mentor and manager. But have you ever learned how to teach? Most people have not thought about the best ways to develop others. This book will help you to manage, train and inspire other people. It is packed with interesting and practical techniques. Are you ready to discover them?

4 Everyone has their ups and downs, their strong and weak points.

It is easy to handle a person when they are feeling strong and working to their strengths.

But what about the opposite? What will you do for the person who is feeling weak, and at their worst? What are you going to do?

Occasionally, your role will be to counsel people through tough times. Have you ever studied the techniques you will need? What are you going to say? How will you turn them around? In this book, you will find some ideas that will be like gold to you.

I have divided this book into four parts:

Part one is about the attitude of mind needed to be a good manager and team leader. We will discuss the ideas of “continuous improvement” and “optimism”.

Part two is a discussion of the key skills that are the bedrock of both management and Leading. The skills are the themes that appear repeatedly throughout the book. They are the “must have” abilities if you want to improve your results.

The ideas include the practical skills of language, and listening and it also includes important concepts such as building the self-image

Part three takes the key skills and applied them specifically to Leading. We need to discuss the advantages of Leading method, the nature and tactics of Leading communication and a step-by-step model.

Part four of the book is about management. We will cover a definition of management, then I want to introduce a concept called “the success formula”. It will be the basis of our management model. We will learn how to give effective feedback, both on target “positive” and off target “negative”.

We will finish on the concept of “change” and how change is the essence of improvement

Before we get into the material, may I just say my thanks?

- Lindsey for your support and encouragement.
- James Alexander for having the patients and trust to publish my thoughts.
- The many previous authors that have taught me through their books.

So if you are ready, lets plunge in and start.

Section one

The optimists code:

Continuous improvement

Section one

The optimists code: Continuous improvement

1.1

All managers and team leaders have to believe in the principle of “Continuous improvement”.

Continuous improvement is a belief-system that says, “*No matter what the current situation, improvement is always possible*”

Think about that statement for a moment. Let it sink in.

“No matter what the current situation, improvement is always possible.”

This statement, if accepted as the basis for action, is the root of an optimistic attitude.

Holding this belief as true is very useful for you as a manager or a team leader. Your role is to help people solve problems and fulfil their potential. So you need to create and sustain the *right attitude*. If you want to manager people *you have to be an optimists at heart*.

Imagine you are faced with a person who is in a situation that is causing them emotional pain and distress. Imagine you tell them:

“I know you are in pain right now. But things can and will get better. Lets work out a plan.”
What positive feelings will be inspired in the mind of the other?

Now instead of that, imagine you listen to the person’s sad story and say,

“I really feel sorry for you. How terrible. You are so unlucky. How does all this make you feel?”

Yes, you are being sympathetic, but would these words be likely to inspire a positive change? Or would they more likely invoke a feeling of sorrow?

A pessimist has an opposite belief to ours. A pessimist believes that “no matter what the current situation, *it can always get worse*.”

We must never be pessimistic. What would happen if you were in troubled times and you visited a team leader who was a pessimist? How much help would a pessimistic manager be to you?

Not much.

A belief in continuous improvement, that “improvement is always possible”, will be useful to you both when people are facing good times and bad.

What about when things are going really well?

In those circumstances our “Improvement is always possible” belief is a guard against complacency.

For example: In 2002 I worked for a while doing some leadership training at a Honda factory.

In the reception of the factory was a brand new example of their latest model. At that time it was a new “Accord” motorcar, gleaming in the lobby area.

I realised its purpose was to demonstrate to visitors the quality of their production. It was presented with a feeling of pride.

I was very impressed with this example of stylish, functional engineering. I even wanted to buy one.

Then, I noticed two Japanese engineers standing in the corner, looking at the Accord. They were holding clipboards and they were making notes.

One of them was frowning. They seemed to be critically analysing their car. They were not admiring it. They were already thinking about what improvements could be made.

I approached them and addressed the nearest man. "Excuse me. I was admiring your car. I think it is wonderful".

He said "Thank you".

I said, "I noticed that you seemed to be unhappy with certain aspects of the car."

Then the engineer said something important "You do not seem to understand. We are very happy with the car. But we are never satisfied".

"Happy, but not satisfied." I repeated it to myself.

That phrase stuck in my mind. It is a key concept.

What if the engineers were 100% happy and 100 % satisfied with their product?

So much so that they produced the same version of the Accord the next year. And then again the year after.

Question: if they kept making exactly the same car, how long would they stay in business?

Answer: not long.

Create and sustain a firm belief in "Continuous improvement". It creates hope and optimism. It guards against complacency.

So as a manager and team leader remember this phrase "no matter what the current situation, improvement is always possible".

(Note: we will talk more about optimism in section three)

1.2 Two kinds of improvement

Improvement can be and should be continuous. There can be two kind of improvement.

They are:

1. Evolutionary improvement
2. Revolutionary improvement

Evolutionary improvement

Evolutionary improvement is a form of change that is based upon the principle of making small daily improvements to the current situation. Building on what you already have.

Revolutionary improvement

Revolutionary improvement is a form of change that is based upon throwing out the old ways, and starting from scratch with new ideas, and new methods.

Let us examine each one in turn:

1.3 Evolutionary

Evolutionary change is nature's way of improving things. It is based on the idea that big improvements are the sum total of many small improvements. If a person wants to make big changes in his situation, he can do that by making small ones. Small changes "stack up" over time.

For example, I lift weights. If I want to improve my Bench Press by 30 lbs, I start by adding 2lbs to the barbell **today**.

Over a period of time my body adapts to the new stressor and I become stronger. When I have adapted to the additional 2lbs, I add another two pounds. Slow but steady increases over a period of weeks or months will pay off in big strength gains.

I call this type of progress "Baby Steps".

I believe in Baby steps because they work. They work because they are do-able. I can see how I can make a small improvement here, a slight advance there. And if I commit myself to continually, (I mean every day), making small improvements, over the year, they stack up to noticeable and substantial gains.

Could you use the same approach to help others?

Could you suggest that the person does not have to create a huge change today, but they could and should make a small improvement. And then another tomorrow. And again the day after. Could you convince someone to engage in a series of small baby- step improvements?

Yes you could. Because it is easier to help people make *small changes* than it is to have them make big changes.

And the good news is that *small changes make big changes*.

Examples of "baby step", evolutionary changes are legion:

- Car design is evolutionary
- Children growing up is evolutionary
- Cities developing
- Gaining or losing weight.
- Technological advance

If positive change is so simple, how come everyone doesn't do it?

The answer is, Baby steps improvements are easy to do, but **easy not to**.

Anyone can say, " Why bother? Such a small change will not make any difference".

And they are right. One small change will not make *much* difference. So they fail to make the small changes that could contribute to a big improvement.

In fact, through inaction, many people fall into the trap of allowing the principle of "baby steps" to work *against them*.

They allow small faults, small regressions, and small degradations to creep into their habits. They say, "It is only one. One will not make any difference"

Many times people find themselves in bad situations because they have fallen behind gradually over years, a little bit at a time. Now they find the numerous small mistakes, taken over months and years have created a crisis.

This could happen in their health, their finances, relationships or business.

You can think of an example of this happening in your own experience can't you? It is everywhere.

So as a manager and team leader learn this phrase:

“Success comes though Baby steps. Easy to do, but easy not to”

1.4 Revolutionary

Revolutionary change is the opposite to “baby steps- evolutionary change”. Revolutionary change is more radical. It is improvement based upon , not on building upon the old design, but on *throwing out* the old design. Starting from new, with a blank slate: new methods, new beliefs and new systems.

Revolutions are dramatic, exciting and costly. They can also be hugely beneficial. Sometimes “baby steps” is not enough and you will have to manager and counsel someone through revolutionary changes.

For example:

Suppose you were in the vinyl record manufacturing business in the 1980s. You were making the best vinyl records in the country. You were committed to continuous improvement in the form of baby steps. Every week you were thinking of ways to improve the quality and quantity of your vinyl records production.

Then you heard a rumour.

You heard that there was a new music format called Compact Disc, or “C.D.”. Apparently, it was possible to record music onto this disc “digitally” to achieve a far better standard of sound than could be achieved on vinyl records.

But you know nothing about CD technology. You are an expert in vinyl. Your business is not tooled up for CD manufacture. You have millions tied up in vinyl manufacture.

So you say to yourself “ I am safe. This C.D. technology will not catch on. Nobody will dump their record collections and buy the same music again on CD. It would be too expensive”.

If that had been your stance, what would happen?

The world is changing. It always has. It always will. As a result, the *context* in which you find yourself is in a state of flux. It is the same for everyone else too. Technological advances, changes in law, or political culture can make your current methods obsolete.

Sometimes it is a mistake to keep adapting what you have. Sometimes you have to throw out the old, retool, reinvest and start from scratch.

Examples of this type of change are:

- Fossil fuel to nuclear energy
- Public sector finance to private sector partnership
- Newtonian physics to Einstein relativity
- Redecorate the house or sell it
- Marriage guidance or divorce
- Train and develop the employee or dismiss and rehire

There are huge potential gains to be made with revolutionary change. But with the huge potential gains are the following considerations:

Revolutionary change is:

- Usually irreversible
- Often expensive
- Uncertain in the result
- Stressful

Revolutionary change can be:

- Lucrative
- Exciting
- Liberating
- Necessary

As a manager remember this phrase from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus:

“Everything flows and nothing abides”

1.5 Points to think about

So, as a person who wants to help others through business management and team leadership, it is important for you to consider some key questions:

Are you committed to being an optimist?

Will you manage your attitude to others and accept the idea that “no matter what their current situation, improvement is always possible”, or will you allow cynicism or pessimism to creep in?

Are you committed to continuous improvement?

Two kinds of improvement: Evolutionary and revolutionary. Can you learn to make a judgment? What kind of situation is the person facing?

Is it one where the solution will be found by building on the existing structure?

Or should this person consider a more revolutionary approach?

The answers you have for these questions colour many things don't they?

1.6 Exercise

Grab a pen and do the following:

- Name two real life situations that would require a “baby steps - evolutionary” approach to find a winning solution.
- Name two situations that would require a revolutionary approach to achieve a profitable solution.

Evolutionary baby steps	Revolutionary - Clean sheet

Part two

Nine Key Principles

Part two

Nine key principles

This book has nine fundamental principles that re occur in different guises throughout. They form the roots of both management and Leading skills. We will talk about them in depth, one by one, but let me present them to you briefly here, so you will know what to expect later.

1 Ask more questions, make fewer statements

What happens when you ask people a question? It causes them to think of an answer, either aloud, or mentally. Because asking questions triggers thought, intelligent questioning is the key to influencing others towards the positive change.

2 Be specific, not vague

Some people are not clear enough in thought or language. They have muddled minds; therefore they become unsure and indecisive. If you want to help them, you should train yourself to be more aware of language, and to insist on clarity. Vagueness is a vice.

3 Use the affirmative, not negated language

Affirmative language is talking and thinking about what you do want, would like, and do believe in.

Negated language is talking and thinking about what you do not want, would not like, and do not believe in.

Too many people focus their minds on their troubles and the causes. That is, they are stuck in the mental habit of Negation. But continually thinking about what you *do not* want is not enough.

To help others, learn to have them focus their minds on what they *do want*.

4 Objective thinking

Objective thinking is “the act of identifying the facts of reality without distortion from wish, whim, desire or prejudice”

If you want to help people, you will want to help them to distinguish fact from fantasy, fact from fears, the objective from the subjective. Many people confuse their “gut feelings” as proof, their opinions as Truth. Your role as a manager, is to help them think objectively, and to assist them to separate their facts from their feelings.

5 Focus on the future not the past

The focus of your conversation should be based in the future, not the past. The past is gone. It cannot be changed. The future is not yet here. It is can be changed. Your task is to help people to make decisions today that will shape a better future.

6 Use pleasure/ pain Consequences

People do things for one of two reasons; either to gain pleasurable outcomes or to avoid painful ones.

The problem is that many people do not consciously think through their associations. They link pleasure and pain to the wrong things. Right now, you may be linking emotional pleasure to things that are bad for you. For example, name a food that you find pleasurable, that is in reality bad for you. Can you name a habit that you often perform, because you find it pleasurable, even though you know you shouldn't, because it is bad for you?

Everyone can name at least one. What is yours?

Your task as a manager is to have the person check their pleasure/pain associations.

Have them think carefully about what constitutes pleasure and what constitutes pain.

7 Distinguish between Long term v short term consequence

We live in a "now society". Many look for instant gratification. Wise decisions however are based, not on the short-term payoff, but on the long-term consequences. So your job is to change their mental focus from the short-term effects of their current actions, to the long-term consequences.

8 Map out their ideas on paper

When you are listening to people, you cannot remember everything unless you make written notes.

And one of the best ways to make written notes is to learn the mind-mapping technique.

When you mind map what you are hearing from others, it improves listening, stimulates the next question and proves to the speaker you mean business.

9 Protect the self image

The self-image is the idea that a person has of himself. People tend to act in accordance with their self-image. If a person has a bad self-image, they tend to be non productive.

People with a good self-image are usually more productive. So to get the most out of people, always work to build up their self-image. Conversely never attack the self-image.

1 Ask more questions

1 Ask more questions, make fewer statements

If you were to discover that there was one verbal skill that would dramatically improve your ability to manager and counsel others more effectively, would you be willing to practice it until you were an expert?

That one vital skill is asking *intelligent questions*.

What is the difference between “asking a question” and “telling somebody something”? Here are some definitions to clarify the difference.

A question requires an answer in either thought or action.

A question requires the person to evaluate, or re-evaluate a fact or idea. It causes the person to judge or decide. It causes the person to consider the causes of an event, or its possible implications.

Questions trigger thought.

And since human thought directs human action, questions can elicit a *change in behaviour*.

Lets contrast questions with “telling”:

“Telling” is making an assertion about what *you* think .

An assertion is “a statement that purports to be true”. So when you make an assertion, it tells me about *you*, the way *you* think. That *may* affect the way act. But it probably won't. I act in accordance to *my* ideas, not yours. You act in accordance with your ideas, not mine.

So here is the point.

When management and team leadership, ask more questions, make fewer assertions.

Some people think that questions are used only to ask for information. But is that the only way you can use them?

No. Questions can be used more creatively than that.

With questions you can:

- Ask for agreement
- Gently challenge a belief
- Gain involvement
- Generate options
- Clarify thinking

Why is it better to ask questions?

When communicating with others it is often better to ask questions because, people do not like being told;

They do not like being told what to do nor told what to think.

Instead, they prefer to be shown an idea or asked to do an action.

For example, which would you prefer: to be *told to do something*, or to be *asked to do it*?

Most people prefer to be asked, don't they?

If you are being **told** what to do or think by someone else, how does that make you feel?

Might you feel the other person is being a little too pushy?

And as a manager and team leader you cannot afford to come across as "pushy".

If someone keeps pushing you, what do you feel like doing?

Pushing back.

Telling people what you think they should do, rarely works. In fact it is counter productive because "telling" can set up a resistance in the mind of the listener.

Sir Isaac Newton put it this way

"For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction"

You are in the business of creating positive changes in others, so you want to avoid doing anything that inspires opposition.

And you want to do everything that creates a feeling of mutual agreement.

Remember this fundamental fact of human nature:

You cannot force a mind.

People tend to think what **they** want to think, not what **you think** they should think!

And as action follows thought, you must influence the *thinking* of another if you want to change their actions and improve their results.

You cannot force a mind. It is just human nature.

If you try to force a mind, you will lose.

So, rather than forcing, why not try leading it, with questions?

Why are questions so much more useful?

They are more useful because they cause the person to think of the answer. The answer may not be verbalised, but it will occur anyway in the privacy of the others thoughts. And by inviting a change of direction in thinking, we are opening the door on the possibility of new actions and new results.

A second reason that questions are more helpful to you is that they stimulate answers from the inside, as opposed to you attempting to force answers in from the outside. As a result, questions can seem a less "aggressive" form of influence.

Let me show you an example:

Imagine you are management a manager Julia, who has admonished her colleague Rebecca, in a highly visible way. You want to help Julia to make changes to her style.

Imagine trying this approach using assertions:

“Julia. I need to tell you something. I think that you were wrong to speak to Rebecca in front of everyone else. If you speak to Rebecca in front of everyone, you will make her feel angry. So you should take her aside and say it in private.”

The points you make are true and valid, but you are **telling** Julia, so she may fight you.

Instead, what would happen if you asked these questions?

“Julia. I noticed that this morning you reprimanded Rebecca in front of all her friends. May I ask you; If you had made an error, what would you prefer; to be corrected in public, where every one can see, or corrected in private, where nobody else can see?

(Pause)

So, please, next time Julia, if Rebecca makes another mistake, wouldn't it be better to take her aside and speak to her in private?”

1. F Two useful types of questions

There are two very useful types of questions I would like you to perfect:

- Questions that ask for minor agreements
- Questions that challenge belief systems.

Let us look at each in turn:

1 F. (1) Questions ask for minor agreements

Being a good manager and team leader is a skilled job.

You need to be able to contradict and challenge others, but in an agreeable way.

We want to avoid unnecessary resistance and conflict. So it is important to ask questions because questions can stimulate “Minor agreements”.

A “minor agreement” occurs anytime that you say something that causes the other person to say “Yes”.

Could you find ways to use questions to stimulate the other person to say “Yes”?

With every “Yes” you get, as a manager, you take one step forward.

Questions can have the effect of winning **minor agreements**.

How could you use questions in this way? You do it by taking *assertions* and transforming them into *questions* by

“Tagging on” a question phrase.

Examples of tag question phrases are:

- Isn't it?
- Wasn't it?
- Can't we?
- Can't you?
- Wont you?
- Wont we?
- Could they?
- Wouldn't you?

You get the idea, don't you?

As you speak, gently scatter tag questions, changing your assertions into questions that invite an agreement.

What happens if you gently ask for agreements, as you speak?

Three things:

1. You gain minor yeses.
2. You increase the level of understanding and trust.
3. You “take them with you”, mentally.

Imagine that, as their manager, every time you can win a “Yes” from the other person, you score ten points.

And your goal is to score points.

If you do not ask for minor agreements, i.e. if you fail to get “yeses”, you may lose.

Why?

Because without “yeses” you’ll lose the trust and confidence of the people that you are management. If you make too many assertions, they may begin feel that you are not taking their feelings into account.

Another effect of tag questions is they “hook the mind” of the other person.

When you ask a question, what happens in the mind of the listener?

They answer it.

They do not necessarily say anything aloud, but they *think* of the answer, and that has the effect of keeping them more involved in what you are saying.

Compare that to a person who drones on as they tell you what they think you should do.

After two minutes, what happens?

You drift off. You don’t want them to drift off, so bring them back with questions.

Remember: Questions keep people mentally engaged.

Exercise, Look back at the last two pages and count the number of questions I have asked.

Do you think my use of questions was intentional or accidental?

Why do you think I asked so many questions? Write down two reasons:

1

2

1.f.(2) Ask questions that gently challenge limiting belief systems

- I define “belief” as a “personal evaluation of what is true”
- A *belief system* is “An organised view of the world that affects the persons feelings and actions”
- A “Limiting belief” is a belief system that puts mental restrictions on the person who hold it. Those restrictions prevent the person from expressing their true potential.

People can only do what they believe they can do. So a persons true potential is expressed only to the degree that he believes in himself. We want to maximise the expression of a persons full potential so we have to maximise a person’s self-belief. Putting the same point the other way, *we need to have a person break through limiting beliefs.*

So, as a manager, your job includes:

- Helping people to become conscious of their own beliefs.
- Helping people to identify contradictory beliefs.
- Helping people to identify un-realistic beliefs.
- Helping people to identify dis-empowering beliefs.
- Helping people to upgrade their self-belief.

All this is done more effectively with questions.

Sometimes, what people *believe* is true, can be more trouble to them than what actually is true!

What I mean by that is: Do you know someone who creates stress for themselves by reacting to non-existent problems?

They respond to events that are in their own mind only.

So as a manager, we may need to challenge dis-empowering belief systems.

Remember: We respond to two things:

1 Reality (for example, cold temperature may cause us to respond by shivering)

2 What we **believe** is reality (For example, an unfounded fear may also cause us to respond by shivering).

People are not only influenced by the facts, but also by their beliefs about *what is possible*. A person’s “belief system” may hinder or help them.

For example, do you know someone who has the education, has the knowledge, but does not achieve what you think they might because they lack Self-belief?

You may find that the person you are management and team leadership either lacks self-belief, or worse, actually holds negative belief systems about themselves. The Negative self-beliefs that hinder their progress.

Under these circumstances, wouldn’t it make sense to gently boost their self-belief, or challenge their negative belief so as to permit them to access more of their potential?

But how? You cannot just say “Think Positive!” and expect that to work.

Again, the way forward is to ask good questions that will inspire a re evaluation on the part of the listener. You want them to re-evaluate and upgrade their own self-belief. Ask them great questions.

For example: Imagine you were working with Nigel, who had to make a presentation to a group of important decision makers. Nigel, said, "I can't make that presentation because I could never stand up in front of all those people"

You could say, "Don't think so negative. You will be fine. I'm telling you. Just think positive!"

That would not work, because you are telling, not asking.

Instead, you might ask questions to have Nigel gently turn a corner. Like this:

"The person who can do the best job of this presentation is the person who best knows the material. Out of you and John, who knows the material the best?"

Nigel says, "I do"

So are you the best person for the job?

Well yes. But I hate public speaking.

Why?

It makes me nervous.

Is it possible for someone to make a good presentation even though they are nervous?

Yes. I suppose. Provided they knew their stuff.

"You know the material the best. And if we gave you the support you needed, do you think it would be possible you could win over your nerves?"

Nigel "I don't know. Maybe it is possible. But I would need you to help me."

You "When you say help, how do you mean?"

Nigel "I would need help with structuring and organising my material.

You "If you had that sorted, so you had a step by step plan, would you feel stronger?"

Nigel "Yes. A bit"

You "So if you and I worked on the notes and built a step by step plan, do you think you could do a decent job?"

Nigel "Yes. I reckon I could."

Great. Well done!

We have gone from "I can't make that presentation" to "Yes I reckon I could" by asking questions.

Why not develop your ability to become a "Skilful questioner"?

Think of the benefits you would gain.

Going on. Belief systems may be about other people.

We all have attitudes to "the world at large". Some of them are optimistic and some are pessimistic.

Because you want to develop yourself as manager and team leader, you want to inspire optimistic belief systems in others.

That would be a good idea because optimism allows people to access their potential. If people believe they can do something, they will access their creative mind to discover how.

If they do not believe they can do something they will not access their creativity, because to them, it would be a useless waste of time. So optimistic people have a tendency to achieve more.

And their achievement inspires even more optimism.

Pessimistic people achieve less. And then their lack of success justifies their pessimism.

Some people ask me: "How can I inspire optimism in a pessimist?"

I tell them "You cannot just say, "Cheer up. Think positive. Look on the bright side!" That annoys most people.

Rather, the answer is to continually ask questions that inspire thoughts that will *lead to optimism*.

Let me give you an example: Listen to this example and notice how it is all done with questions:

Imagine that Joss says to you:

"I would like to go for the job, but I would never get it!"

You: What would you need?

Joss: What do you mean?

You: What would you need to get the job?

Joss: I would need more experience in sales

You: If you had that, would you have a good chance?

Joss: Maybe

You: Didn't you have to sell yourself to get the job you are in now?

Joss: Yes, of course. There were six other candidates!

You: And weren't you successful then?

Joss; Yes

You: So might you have a chance to get the new job too?

Joss: Maybe?

You: What would be the first thing to do, to get the job?

Joss: Get an application form

You: When shall we get it? Lunchtime?

Joss: Okay.

Notice that you did not argue. You didn't say, "Don't be pessimistic. You have to have more faith in yourself" That direct assault on his belief system would fail. Let us summarise what we have discussed in this section

- Ask more questions, make fewer assertions.
- Because, you cannot force a mind.
- Practice asking questions that gain minor agreements.
- Practice asking questions that gently challenge hostile or destructive beliefs systems

2 Be specific, not vague

Most people are not clear enough in thought or language. They have muddled minds therefore become unsure and indecisive. If you want to help them, you should train yourself to beware of language, and to insist on clarity. Vagueness is a vice.

Discovery Questions

To be effective, your management and team leadership should be based on the facts, not guesses or false information.

Commit to being a reality based, fact orientated manager and team leader.

As such, you will need to be able to be an expert in the following skills:

I want you to become good at separating:

- Fact from Imagination
- Fact from Opinion
- Fact from Feeling

It is common for people to become confused and frustrated because they fail at this point. They believe that:

- The fears they imagine are actually true. (Without checking)
- Their personal opinion has the same status as a fact
- What they “feel” is true (intuition and gut instinct) is the same as a fact.

So it is important to ask questions that will allow you to discover the truth and separate that from the person’s beliefs, interpretations, feelings and opinions.

How do you do this? Ask discover questions. Discovery questions are questions designed to pin point the objective, specific, factual “evidence” concerning an event, person or thing. There are three different kinds of discovery questions I would like to discuss with you:

1. Generalisations
2. Unspecified verb phrases
3. Ambiguous phrases

Let us discuss them:

2. 2 The first way you can do this is to *listen out for generalisations.*

Making a generalisation is the act of creating a “universal statement” from the evidence of a limited sample.

We all generalise. It is a form of thinking.

For example, we see that a puppy dog that wags its tail when it is happy. Then we see another, then a third. We might generalise and say "All puppy dogs wag their tails when they are happy".

Now the question arises: Is that generalisation true for all happy puppy dogs?

Maybe. Maybe not.

Generalising from a limited sample is a natural thing to do. It saves us time and effort, but it not always reliable.

For example, if one Policeman treats you harshly, you might generalise and say, " All coppers are BLANKards". This will be a generalisation based upon one experience. We often generalise and come to erroneous conclusions, which we then take "as a fact".

People who fail an exam sometimes say, "I can't pass exams. Never again!"

They generalise from one example and react to the generalisation as if it were a fact.

Can you see how this might hamper the individual's performance?

As a manager, it will be necessary for you sometimes to question the generalisations to check that the generalisation is

1 Valid reasoning

2 Not outdated.

First, listen out for any generalised, unspecified groups of people and ask, "When you say BLANK, who do you mean?"

Going back to an earlier example:

Your friend says, "All coppers are BLANKards"

You "When you say All Coppers, who do you mean?"

Friend: Like the one who stopped me last week for speeding"

You : So not all coppers, but the one who stopped you last week, was a BLANKard"

Friend "Yes. Him. "

Now you have correctly challenged the generalisation and broken the power of the prejudicial thinking, to a certain degree.

Another example. If Joseph says

"They wont allow it"

You: "When you say "they", who do you mean"

Joseph "The management"

You: When you say The management, whom are you talking about?"

Joseph: "My line manager"

You "So did you really mean "Your line manager will not allow it"?"

Joseph "Yes. Her."

Again, you have correctly challenged the generalisation and made the problem smaller. Now Joseph has to work to change one persons decision, as opposed to fighting the amorphous "They".

Can you see that challenging generalisations like these can shrink problems and make them seem more easily tackled?

Here is another example:

Liz says: "It seems to me there are people who are against change"

You: When you say "People", who do you mean?"

Liz "Everyone"

You "Who, specifically?"

Liz "My family for one"

You "Who in your family?"

Liz "My dad. He always thinks I am incapable of making my own decisions".

You "So you think your father is against the decision you have made to change your career, is that it?"

Liz "Yes"

Can you see again how, by questioning the generalisation, the problem has:

1 Become more defined

2 Become smaller.

The key idea I am making here is this: Try to get to the specifics. Do not allow yourself or the other to talk too long in general statements. Get to the individuals, not the general groups.

In addition, it is important you do *not to interpret generalised statements in your own way*, without checking.

Why? Because your interpretation may be different from the other persons meaning.

For example, imagine your colleague, Steve, says to you, "Nobody gives me the opportunity I need"

You, the manager/manager might misinterpret this as an implied criticism of yourself.

You might interpret this as Steve meaning, "YOU, have not given me the opportunity I need"

Is that a reliable interpretation?

Suppose you questioned Steve to discover the specific behind the generalisation.

The key unspecified group here is the term "Nobody".

Instead of jumping to conclusions, decide to question the person to discover to whom he is referring.

You might phrase the question as :

You "When you said "Nobody", who do you mean?"

Steve : The government."

You : Who do you mean : "The government"?"

Steve: They will not give me the educational grant I applied for"

You(Persisting with the question); Who do you mean "The Government"?"

Steve: The education admissions officer at the further education college in the high street."

The important things here are:

1. Notice the generalisation
2. Question and check the generalisation.
3. Be aware that other people often treat their generalisations as facts. Tread carefully.
4. Do not Mind-read the other person. Do not assume you know whom he has in mind. Ask him.

What would happen to your effectiveness as a manager/team leader if you have the habit of interpreting messages in *your* way, rather than in *their* way?

You would fail as a team leader wouldn't you?

So ask discovery questions.

Second listen out for un-specified actions (or verbs), and ask, "How do you mean?"

A verb is a word describing an action or a state.

Verbs describe what people do, or how they are.

Verbs are activities, like reading, writing, understanding or completing.

Verbs include "States of being", like "being happy, sad, full, upset, excited.

Many verbs are specific, but many others are vague and generalised.

Become more aware of vague and generalised verb phrases.

When you hear them, decide to dig a little deeper into the minds of the people you are management to have them reveal their exact meaning.

It is important that you do because most verbs have more than one possible interpretation.

One way to discover the exact meaning is to listen out for vague or unspecified verb phrases. When you hear a generalised verb phrase, one that could be interpreted in many ways, stop and ask for more detail.

The way to gain more detail about a verb phrase is to ask the question "How?" or, "How specifically" or "In what way do you mean, specifically?"

For example:

Michael says, "I need you to help me with this letter"

It might be wrong to say: "Give it to me then. Ill do it."

Why?

Because, the verb "help" has more than one interpretation.

The point again is this: *find their specific meaning by questions.*

Maybe, like this: When you say, "help", Michael, how do you mean?"

Michael: "I mean, do you think I should quote him, word for word, or should I just summarise the meeting?"

Discover the specifics. Do not guess at meanings. Do not interpret their meaning. Have *them* clarify their meaning. Ask them to be more specific in their use of language.

Language is the tool of thought. So the clearer their language is, the clearer their thinking is.

And the clearer their thinking is, the better for all concerned.

Another example:

I say to you "I am being hampered"

You : "Hampered?" How do you mean?"

Me " I cannot find the time to finish this project"

You (checking the verb phrase) " When you say, "can't find the time", what do you mean?"

Me " I need to prepare my materials for next weeks meeting and I need to finish this report"

You "When you say, "prepare materials" what do you mean?"

Me "I need to put the boxes in the car ready for Monday morning."

You "They are already in the car. I saw them this morning"

Me "Oh. Good. Thanks"

Notice how "Being hampered" and "I don't have time to finish this project" is very far in meaning from "I need to put the boxes in the car for Monday morning".

Language is often confused.

Do you know people who make things confusing?

Your job as a manager is to "un-confuse"- to bring clarity; to impose order on chaos.

You do that by asking for specifics

And one way to do that is asking for specified verbs.

3 Listen for ambiguous phrases and ask for concrete examples

Asking for "Concrete example" means asking for one of the experiences from which the generalisation was originally drawn.

If you hear vague phrases, it is often useful to ask for a specific example.

That has a number of advantages for you, the manager:

- It is an easy question to remember to ask.
- It reconnects the person to reality
- It gives the person the opportunity to validate the generalisation, or
- It exposes the generalisation as potentially faulty or out of date.

Here is an example of "asking for a specific example" of a generalised phrase:

Elaine: "My staff have been making my life difficult lately.

You: How to you mean?

Elaine: They just do not how me the respect I deserve.

You: In what way?

Elaine: In every way.

You (Still trying to get an understanding of Elaine's meaning) "Elaine, give me a concrete example of what you are talking about, to illustrate for me what you mean"

Elaine; In the team meeting last week, I asked everyone to be ready to start at nine o clock and not one of them arrived for the meeting before ten past. The last to arrive did not come in until half past nine. And she never even apologised to me for being late.

In this example, asking for an example is a good way to gain a definite understanding of the vague term " making my life difficult" and "not showing respect"

By the way, I often ask for more than one concrete example.

If you can get two or three examples, you will gain greater understanding of the specific factual events that gave rise to the generalisations and judgmental language.

Remember, your task is to get to the facts.

Never allow yourself or the other to evade unwanted facts. To move forward, you must help the person identify and understand all the pertinent fact-ors.

How?

By asking careful and intelligent “discovery questions”.