A WEEK IN *Learning*

I INTEND TO
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"Hey Bob, I'm having a problem with getting the vehicle reservation system to update like it is supposed to, and it is at least an hour behind." Jerry said to his manager. "Well, let me take a look at it." replied Bob. "I don't see anything wrong with the system. Try rebooting your machine and if that does not work, try uploading the last request again. If the problem continues, I'll have to give IT a call and put in a work order."

Conversations like this happen everywhere, all the time. In a typical leader-follower relationship, the follower goes to the leader when they have a question or problem. The leader then answers or fixes the problem, and they both go on with their day. As a leader, how much time do you spend in your day giving answers and solutions? This is what leaders are always supposed to do, right? Let's look at this from a different angle. One of the most impactful leadership resources that I have found is a book called *Turn the Ship Around*, authored by Retired Navy Captain David Marquet. His work outlines how the typical leader-follower method of leading people is not very effective. Following this, he describes a different approach of leading through the concept of Intent Based Leadership.

"We give control through the questions we ask others."

- **John Silva**

According to Marquet, a "typical" leadership approach involves <u>taking</u> control and creating <u>followers</u>. Intent Based Leadership is about <u>giving</u> control and creating <u>leaders</u>. Instead of a leader-follower method, Intent Based Leadership approaches leading through a method known as **leader-leader**. David Marquet implemented this leadership approach out of necessity after he became the Captain of a submarine that he was not familiar with. He realized he was no longer a technical expert, but his new crewmembers were. Marquet applied this concept by moving the authority to where the information was: the experts. Instead of giving orders, he gave the crew his intent, and they made the day-to-day decisions. By doing this, he turned his Navy Submarine, the USS Santa Fe, from the worst performing ship in the Navy to the best the Navy had ever seen.

Just like everything in leadership, it is easier said than done. We can all agree that giving control to others is a good thing - but how do you do it? There are several key points that Marquet discovered through the trial and error of implementing this new leadership concept, and I'd like to share two of them with you:

Competence and Clarity
Two factors need to be in place in order to give control: technical competence and organizational clarity. The person that you are giving control to needs the technical competence (know how) to do the job. This may mean
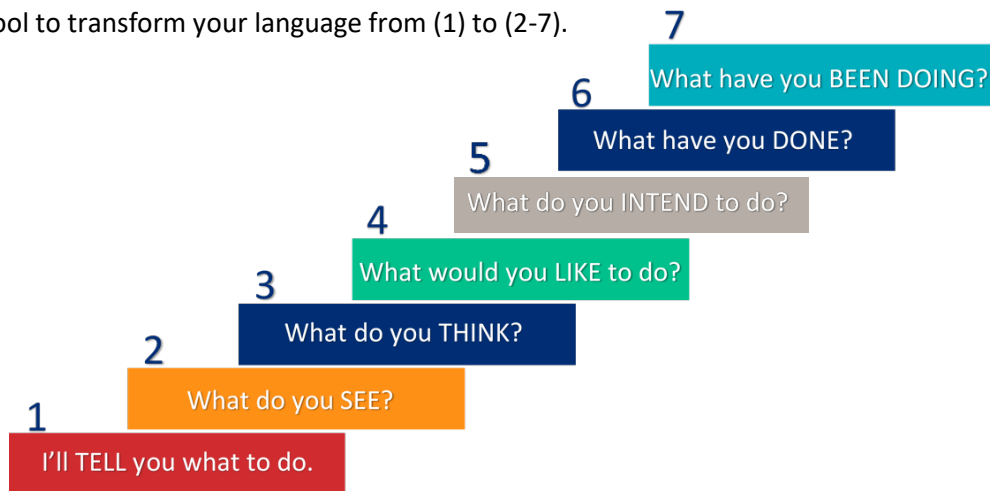
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some training is required to equip that person with the necessary skills. Next, and I argue most important, is organizational clarity. People need to understand the purpose of their job, *and why they are doing it*. They need to recognize that what they are doing directly impacts the vision. With these two factors in place, decisions can be made as if they are the CEO, or in this case, the Captain of the Ship.

Our Language

Much of how we lead is communicated with our language. We give control through the questions we ask others. When presented with a challenge, resist the urge to give the answer and fix the problem. Ask, *"What do you think?"* or *"How should we approach this?"* as examples. The goal with Intent Based Leadership is for the person to take control and go from *"What do I do?"* to *"I intend to",* or *"I've done".* Marquet developed a "Ladder of Leadership" tool, which outlines the incremental language we can use in order to give control. As a leader, you can use this tool to transform your language from (1) to (2-7).

7 — What have you BEEN DOING?
6 — What have you DONE?
5 — What do you INTEND to do?
4 — What would you LIKE to do?
3 — What do you THINK?
2 — What do you SEE?
1 — I'll TELL you what to do.

Based on applying Intent Based Leadership, let's revisit the situation at the beginning of the article, and see how it could play out differently with this approach:

"Hey Bob, I'm having a problem with getting the vehicle reservation system to update like it is supposed to, and it is at least an hour behind." Jerry said to his manager. "What do you see as the potential problem?" asked Bob. "I think it is the network capacity. It tends to slow down in the afternoons every day. I know it is scheduled for an upgrade, but that is not helping me." said Jerry. "What do you think could be a potential solution while we wait for the update?" Bob asked. "Prior to our automation, we used to keep our reservations manually. That could keep us accurate and up to date." Jerry stated. "Yes, I remember that. Let's use that process in the meantime." Bob declared. Jerry has the technical competence and organizational clarity to resolve the issue himself - he just did not feel that he had the authority to implement the solution. Bob, as his leader, simply gave control and the issue was resolved.

Take a look at your team. Who has the competence and clarity, right now, for you to give control? Challenge the leadership status quo and go from leader-follower to **leader-leader.** You and your team have the ability to turn your own ship around, and go to the next level.

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