



From Managing Compliance to Inspiring Commitment

Lessons from a recovering command-and-control manager

“There’s no crying in baseball!”

It’s the iconic “A League of Their Own” line, when Coach Jimmy Dugan (Tom Hanks) shouts in exasperation as one of his players bursts into tears. Although he had just yelled horribly derogative judgments at her, he can’t believe such an outward display of emotion is showing up in the game of baseball. Because, as he states so simply: There’s no crying in baseball.

That’s what I learned about business, too. As I worked through my career, I learned things like:

- “Check your emotions at the door.”
- “Keep your personal problems at home.”
- “It’s not personal. It’s business.”

The reality, though, is this: Business is personal. Humanness is at the core of business. And leadership is a relationship.

How do we address the personal, human side of business and leadership with our inherent management expectations of delivering results?

As managers and leaders, our jobs are multifaceted. We play different functions in our interactions with team members. These functions exist on a continuum, ranging from directing to connecting. We direct our teams — providing feedback, vision and clear priorities. We share our perspective, our experiences and our reasonings. We teach new skills and new ways of thinking. We coach team members as they practice new skills so they can move from basic to expert levels. We connect with our team members, generating trust and commitment.

Traditionally, our application of these functions has been lopsided, with most of our interactions on the directing side of the continuum.

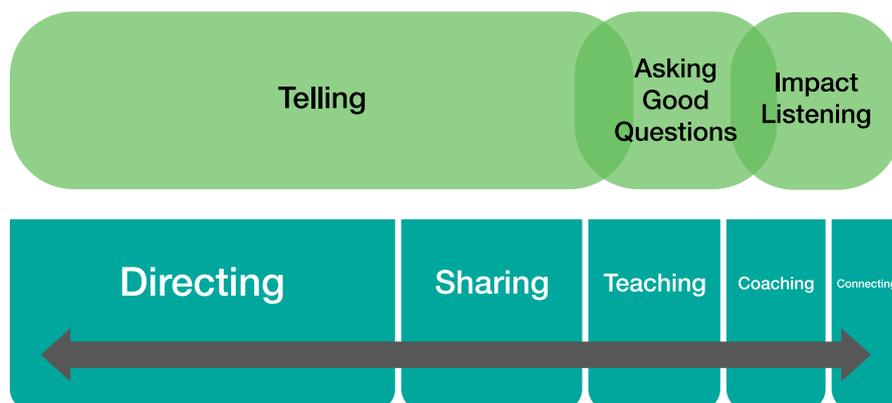
I get it, because this was me. I am a recovering command-and-control manager. I wasn’t a bad person — I just didn’t know any better. I was emulating what I had learned from managers that went before me. But I was also stuck — stuck managing to compliance and constantly following

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By Jamie Parker, Process + Results Leadership Coaching

Traditional Management Behaviors



“When managers give answers, they’re not coaching, they’re directing.”

up. Dragging people along with me and muscling through implementations. And of course, when I turned my attention elsewhere, compliance dropped.

While command-and-control management can deliver results in the short term, it doesn’t last. It results in managing to compliance, day after day. To transition from managing compliance to inspiring engaged commitment, one must:

- Choose a different balance
- Improve effectiveness in each function
- Set intention

Choose a Different Balance

There was a time when this lopsided command-and-control management was the norm. While it probably wasn’t liked too much, it was at least expected. But times change. Millennials have joined the team and are in search of greater purpose, while previous generations reach certain milestones and start to care less about climbing the ladder and more about leaving a legacy. Lopsided, direction-heavy management doesn’t work well with these changing generational patterns and expectations.

To connect on a greater level, it’s essential to move past the imbalance of traditional management to a more balanced approach.

By reducing the amount of directing and sharing, management increases the amount of connecting and coaching. The key to choosing a different balance is simple: Tell less.

Directing and sharing are both one-way functions. Managers will set the priorities and goals, tell the team what they want done next, map out the game plan of how the team will hit goals, and share what they’ve done in the past to be successful and why they think certain priorities matter most. See the pattern? It is management telling

the team, and making their perspectives the priority.

Choosing a different balance means telling less, asking more and listening the most, regardless of one’s position.

Improve Effectiveness in Each Function

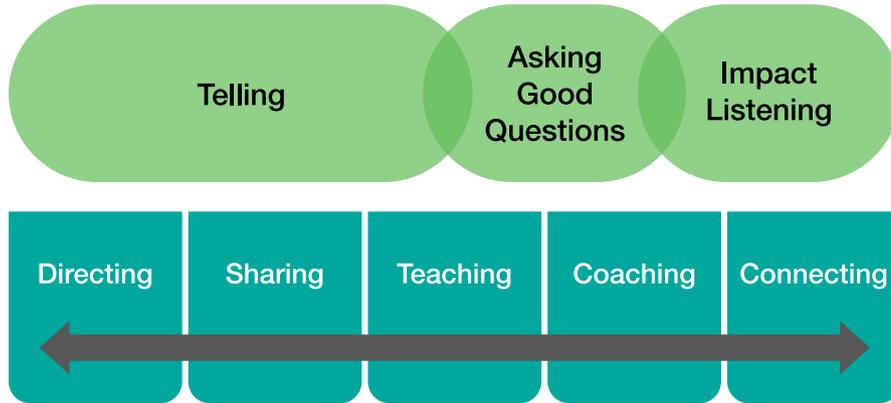
Bringing greater connection doesn’t end with balancing out interactions. To gain more commitment, the following five leadership functions should be maximized by incorporating greater connection-generating behaviors into all of them.

Here are ways to improve effectiveness in each function:

Connecting: The best way to connect with team members is to truly and effectively listen. Managers should start by assessing their readiness. If they’re not in a position to give their full attention, it might not be the time to engage. When they do, however, they need to be present. Turning a cell phone upside down on the desk doesn’t count. Put it in a drawer. Step out from behind the computer. The manager should clear their mind of distractions, and show the team member they are present and focused on him/her through eye contact and body language. Using derivative responses reflects back what has been heard and indicates checking for understanding. Lastly, employ silence. Too often when the team member stops talking, leaders jump right in. Managers should stop themselves and allow silence to create an avenue for the team member to continue sharing. Using impact listening to connect with the team member means approaching the conversation from a point of empathy.

Coaching: The purpose of coaching is not to give answers or solve problems. That’s right — stop giving the answers and then calling it coaching. When managers give answers, they’re not coaching, they’re

Process + Results: Leadership Behaviors



directing. The purpose of coaching is to help develop team members' capabilities by giving them an avenue to learn through practice. Keep in mind that practice includes failure. So be sure to celebrate the courage they demonstrate in trying a new task and the resilience they show when they get back up and try again after failing. Ask good coaching questions to help team members work through situations. Good coaching questions are open-ended, non-leading and non-judgmental. Asking good coaching questions creates a safe space for team members to practice and develop expertise, while generating greater levels of connection, trust and commitment.

Teaching: When teaching team members new ways of thinking or working, managers should be sure to use all three languages: auditory, visual and tactile. Auditory means speaking verbally so they

hear. ("Let me tell you.") Visual includes pictures, videos and demonstrations so they see. ("Let me show you.") Tactile includes simulations and hands-on activities. ("Here, you try.") Using all three languages in teaching helps managers connect with more team members since people learn in different ways. Be sure to ask questions and create open opportunities to listen while teaching.

Sharing: So often, sharing stays in a cerebral place. Leaders share their thoughts, what they've done in their pasts and what they've seen other teams do. To build greater connection when sharing, be vulnerable. Share feelings, failures, lessons learned and fears. Share humanness. Team members are expected to be vulnerable in front of their managers as they learn new skills, receive corrective feedback and try to improve their performance. Make this easier and create



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greater levels of transparency and trust by being vulnerable with the team.

Directing: The purpose of feedback is to impact future behavior, and it is a core component of directing. Managers should increase the amount of reinforcing feedback and recognition they give to encourage team members to repeat positive behaviors. Give recognition freely and be specific about the values and behaviors being recognizing. Team members will feel acknowledged and seen. They'll do more of those recognized behaviors. And, as an added bonus, receiving more reinforcing feedback means team members will be more open to corrective feedback when it's needed.

Set Intention

Deliberate action is key. As managers approach an interaction with a team member, they must set their intention for the purpose of the interaction. Which of the five functions is best suited for the situation? What do they hope to achieve? How do they need to show up for this individual in this moment?

Leaders are busy, and often that translates to haphazard interactions with their teams — interactions that leave them disappointed with the outcome and leave team members confused about which

“version” of their manager they're going to get on any given day.

Pausing to set intention creates purpose that inherently improves the value and outcome of an interaction. This can be maximized even further by asking for permission for that intention:

If the intent is to give someone performance feedback (directing), ask, “Can I give you some feedback?” or “Can I share an observation with you?”

If the intended interaction is to coach, ask “Can I ask you some questions in a coaching role?”

If it's a teaching moment, ask “Can I show you a technique to do this work?” or “Can I ask you some questions to serve as a teaching opportunity?”

If the team member says no, then don't proceed in that moment. Just come back to it later. When managers ask for permission this way, it ensures the team member is in a position to hear them. It also creates more clarity for team members on what to expect from their managers in that moment.

It's easy to get stuck in the trap of managing to compliance — of checking and following up and monitoring team member work. But this trap puts a self-imposed constraint on the amount of engagement and commitment you receive from the team.

Taking action to choose a different balance, improve the effectiveness in each function and set intentions are the ways to transition from managing compliance to inspiring commitment.

In the aforementioned “A League of Their Own” scene, the umpire approaches Coach Dugan and offers some advice: “Good rule of thumb: Treat each of these girls as you would treat your mother.”

Gender theme of the movie and scene aside, the advice holds true in business, too. Business is personal. Leadership is a relationship. To build connection that inspires engaged commitment, we must treat our team members like people. People that have inherent gifts. People that matter. People that we genuinely care about.

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