

"Leadership is Language" by L. David Marquet

"How is it that a person could be more afraid of pushing a button without permission than dying in a fiery explosion?"

Redwork is doing and learning.

Bluework is planning, deciding, and reflecting.

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- Control the Clock** (instead of obey the clock)
- * Schedule and practice calling pauses: "Time out," "Hands off," "We're between steps"
 - * Not "we'll tough it out," instead "call a halt, save the day."
- Complete** (instead of continue)
- * Completion is transition to bluework
 - * Celebrate what people control: efforts, not outcomes
 - * Appreciate, don't evaluate
 - * Observe, don't judge
 - * Prize, don't praise.
 - * *Just describe the action and how that made things better.*
 - * Celebrate small wins along the journey

*We say things like "motivate" or "inspire."
But what we mean is manipulate and coerce.*

Beware of escalation of commitment, e.g. "Failure is not an option."

- Collaborate** (instead of coerce)
- * Let the doers be the deciders
 - * Vote first, then discuss
 - * Invite dissent, ask non-binary questions, embrace outliers
 - * Provide intent not orders, give information not instructions
- Improve** (instead of prove)
- * Don't try to add improvements during redwork. Save your improvement ideas until the next reflection.
 - * Forward, not backward: "what do we do next time?"
 - * Outward, not inward: "If someone else had to take over this project, what would you say to them to make it even more successful?"
 - * Process, not people: "Thinking about the work itself, what do we think could be improved?"
 - * Achieve excellence, not avoid errors

- Commit** (instead of comply)
- * If a person has no choice but to say yes, then what we have is compliance.
 - * Learn, don't just do. Decisions are hypotheses to test.
 - * Align *actions*--not beliefs and mindsets--to support the decision,
 - * Chunk it small but do it all. Incremental work allows completing and includes pauses.
 - * Separate the decision-maker from the decision-evaluator

- Connect** (instead of conform)
- * Flatten the power gradient, the social distance there is between one person and another.
 - * The rule of power gradients is that the steeper the gradient, the more difficult it is for information--think, truth--to flow upward.
 - * When leaders admit they don't know, they allow the team to admit that they don't know.
 - * Vulnerability is anything but weak.
 - * Assume good intent

The idea that emotion does not belong in the workplace is a relic of an era when we didn't need people to exercise good judgment or make important decisions. As the need to get everyone involved in the uncertainty of bluework increases, so does the need for emotion in the workplace.

SEVEN WAYS TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

1. Instead of question stacking, try one and done.
2. Instead of a teaching moment, try a learning moment.
3. Instead of a dirty question, try a clean question.
4. Instead of a binary question, start the question with "what" or "how."
5. Instead of a "why" question, try "tell me more."
6. Instead of self-affirming questions, try self-educating questions.
7. Instead of jumping to the future, start with present, past, then future.

The leader's obligation is to listen to the dissenters, not to stall decisions until each is convinced of the new direction. If you have asked your team to execute a particular decision, and there are people on the team who don't believe it is the best way to go, you do not have to convince them that it is. You should let them hold on to their ideas. As long as they commit to supporting the decision through actions, the goals of the organization are met.