

Really Knowing Your People

Supporting Workbook

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"Without the softer skills, perhaps some of the people skills were a little bit lacking, which is where I thought management should work."

Management and leadership aren't just transactional

"I learned softer skills from dealing with people.."

Daniel remembers that when he started as a bench scientist that his experience of management was transactional and that was gained from the people that managed him at the time. He observes that this was organised but lacked soft skills and the human touch. Daniel recognises that he has learned soft skills from working with and managing people. Helping people with challenges by being approachable, using empathy and listening to people.

Daniel's approach can be summarised nicely with this quote from Sir John Timpson, the owner of Timpson:

"Our bosses don't tell anyone what to do. They do their job by helping every team member become the very best they can possibly be."

Daniel does this by getting to know the people in his team and understanding their needs.

☐ If people are having problems, they want to be listened to and heard and helped, rather being referred to policies and procedures and told what they should do.

Notes and reflections: _____

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Bring people together

"I saw that as a real good opportunity to try and push people together as a team and build a much bigger, much more productive, happier team, ultimately sharing experience between the groups to try and better the department."

Starting in his current role, Daniel recognised that bringing people together to get to know each other and most importantly, share information and ideas, was going to help enormously. In this case he instigated a coffee morning. But you could choose something that would work for you and your team. Daniel's team use this to help solve problems and find out who can help. Despite some initial hesitancy, colleagues have embraced this initiative and wouldn't be without it now.

- □ What's your version of Daniel's 'Coffee Morning'?
- ☐ The secret to making this initiative work is to try and stimulate the conversations that are not happening currently.
- ☐ Mixing up colleagues from different teams can reveal solutions to problems, because people have different skills and strengths.
- □ Finding out who can help is always a good outcome.

Notes and reflections:

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People are not numbers on spreadsheets

"You have to really try hard to keep the people at the centre of management if you want to be successful."

Daniel describes the difference between management being transactional, and leadership having people at the heart. There are clear differences between the two. His advice is to work hard to keep your people at the centre of what you do as a leader. And whether you think so or not, if you're managing a team of people, you are their leader. Daniel gets to know his people and what makes them tick. He works hard to make these relationships positive so that he is approachable and keen to listen and understand.

- Building your leadership style around getting to know your people is hugely helpful.
- □ Don't let the pastoral side of your role slip.
- □ How well do you know your team? What makes them tick? How could you find out more?

Notes and reflections:

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Find the time

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"The reality is it's not very often true that we can't find a window of 10 or 15 minutes to spend some time having a conversation with somebody."

We hear it a lot. Time is an issue. Daniel suggests that we make the right choices and make time for those important conversations with colleagues. There's probably nothing more important, in our role as a leader. He also makes the point that if you can give your team the reins, delegate to them and trust them to do a great job, you free up some valuable time for leadership.

- □ Can you find more time by saying no more often? It can be scary to say no, but a no now can always mean a yes later.
- ☐ True delegation means not only giving responsibilities to your colleagues and team, but also the authority to carry them out, their way.
- □ Chances are you have time, but are you choosing to do something else?

Notes and reflections: