

Episode 001: Respect People vs. Deliver Results

Welcome to Lean Leadership for Ops Managers, the podcast for leaders in Ops Management who want to spark improvement, foster engagement, and boost problem solving - AND still get their day job done. Here's your host, Leadership Trainer, Lean Enthusiast, and Spy Thriller Junkie, Jamie V. Parker.

Welcome to episode one. I am excited. It is awesome. I'm scared. Ain't that the truth? Don't we have lots of emotions when we're trying something new? If you're new to me, hi, I'm Jamie and I am a recovering Command and Control Manager. And I'm not saying that just to be cute. I used to tell my managers that "Hey, it's really pretty simple. Employment is a contract. We agree to pay the employee a certain amount of money every two weeks and we agree that we're going to have a physically safe working environment. That's our part of the contract and they agree to basically do what we tell them to do." It's not that hard. I used to look at my team as talent on a chessboard. How can I move people around? I was known for turning teams like, "Hey, I can go in and whip them into shape and turn teams around and get people to move on or quit quickly, so I can get new people in." I would go into the struggling store or the struggling cluster of stores or the struggling district and that's what I was known to do. I made a career out of it and that's why I was so curious 12 years ago.

I was a retail district manager visiting a store and Enid said, "Can we talk?" You see, Enid was somebody that I looked at my chessboard and I thought that he was way in over his head. My goal, my desire was for him to step down, move into this tiny little store over there so that I could promote somebody else into his position. So Enid said, "Hey, can we talk?" We went into his office and I sat across from him. He said, "Listen, I went home last night. It was late. It was eight o'clock, nine o'clock at night, late like it usually is these days. I walked into my house and as I got a few feet into my house, I stepped on a toy and it hurt. I screamed, I yelled at my kids and I looked down, and my three year old had a look of fear on his face that I have never seen before. That's when I knew I needed to talk to you because I can't keep doing this. I can't hurt my relationship with my kids just because I'm trying to do what you want me and need me to do here in this store."

So here's the part of the story where I'm supposed to tell you that, "Oh, that was a wake-up call and I started to realize how much influence we had and help people or people", right? This is supposed to be my big aha reveal. Except it wasn't. What really happened is that secretly inside, I was jumping for joy. I was trying to feign empathy. I was trying to look really concerned, but I wasn't. Inside I was like, "Yes, yes, yes!" because now Enid is ready to step down and I get to move in who I want to move in. I can move all the pieces on the chessboard. I was so excited because you see, I was under pressure. It was under pressure to get results, to hit my numbers and not to do it six months from now, but to do it now. If you're an Operations Manager, you probably get where I'm coming from, right? You got to get work out the door, you got to hit your numbers, you've got monthly targets, you've got quarterly targets. There is no leeway, there's no ramp up, there's no forgiveness period. Sound familiar? Yeah, it creates a lot of pressure too, and at the time, I didn't know how to handle that pressure, other than to push and push and push.

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When I work with clients, here's what I hear. I hear "You know what? I want to run Kaizen events and I want to do improvement events, but we have to get work out the door. I want to lead with respect for people and treat people well and have them really enjoy working here and recommend this place, but at the end of the day, we have a business to run. I want to empower people to make decisions and to make improvements, but we've got to get results fast." I get it because that's exactly where I was with Enid, and while I didn't learn the lesson then, what I've learned since then is this. Enid wasn't the problem, I was. You see, Enid could have grown and developed, and he could have been successful and he could have balanced both. That was possible. I just didn't see it. And here's what I want you to know, is that it's not a choice. It's not a choice where we say, "Hey, I want this BUT I also have to do this". So it's not a BUT it's actually an AND, or sometimes I even say plus. So it's, "I want to run Kaizen and have continuous improvement events and activities AND get work out the door. I want to lead with respect for people and treat people well and have them love this place and recommend this place as a great place to work AND run the business effectively. I want to empower people to make decisions and make improvements AND get results timely." You see, mindset and language and what we feel in our hearts and our minds matter. And as long as I think that Enid can't do it, then I'm looking for ways he can't and I'm projecting my doubt onto him. Yet, when I think Enid can do it, I open the doors to possibility. This is the power of AND.

When we stop viewing things as a dichotomy, as a choice between this or that, and instead we start asking ourselves, how can we have both? How can we have process and results, process plus results? How can we have respect for people AND accountability? How can we have continuous improvement AND getting work out? This is the shift that we need to make. So let's talk about it this way. It is summer. It is hot. I live in Denver. It's been in the 90s most of the summer, crazy, crazy hot for us. So it's hot. What do you do? Of course, you go to the ice cream shop, but there are too many flavors to choose from. You want this, but you also want that. So what do you do? You can approach this from a BUT perspective - dichotomy, choice, either or, OR you can approach this from an AND perspective - I'm going to get two scoops, this flavor AND the other flavor. And I know you're saying, "Oh, but that's too much ice cream. I can't eat that much." Sure, then get a kid size with this flavor AND another flavor. You can share. You say, "I'm going to get this flavor, you're going to get that flavor AND we'll share." You can get one cone now AND a pint to go. You can get one flavor today AND a different one next week. This is how it works when we shift from BUT to AND. When we stop looking at it as a choice, where we can only have both of them so much and then at a certain point, then we have to choose. "I want it to be a great place to work BUT at the end of the day, we have a job to do" means, "In my mind, I think we can only have both up to a certain point at which point now I gotta get me in again. Now I gotta hold people accountable." And we want to shift that.

Here's the secret to the power of AND. Are you ready for it? Because it's elusive and most of us miss it. You have to believe even before you have it. You have to believe first even when that's not your reality yet because you're going to say, "But I don't have both, Jamie. You say it's the power of and yet I look at it and I don't have both." And I get that because we're going to work toward it. We're going to achieve it and

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so you need to believe it first. This becomes your true north, your ideal, your target. Believe first that it is possible to have this AND that. The next thing is just for us to figure out the challenge of how to get it.

So what does this mean for you? Here is your action, I want you to really reflect and catch yourself in a BUT mentality. Where is it that you are forcing yourself into a choice? Where is it that you're telling yourself "I can't have both I have to choose"? Catch yourself saying the word BUT and reframe it to an AND. How can you shift that to an AND mentality? Figure out the most important places that you need to shift from BUT to AND. That is your homework.

Here's the thing about Enid and his dilemma about being a good parent AND being a good manager and leader. He wasn't the problem, I was, because I lived in a world of BUTs. I want to help Enid feel less stressed BUT we've got numbers to hit. I want to devote more time to helping Enid BUT I've got my own responsibilities and deadlines. I want to help Enid be successful BUT I have to deliver results now. I don't have time to bring him along. I could have led better and I wish I had. So don't be like I was, choose to be an AND. Choose to add value, not to BUT it away.

So, here's the thing. This podcast is just getting started, and I'm going to ask for your help. I'm going to ask you to subscribe wherever it is that you listen to your podcasts, subscribe, AND share it with one Ops leader. As we go along this podcast, we're going to talk more about how do we not just believe in AND, how do we also achieve it? How do we not just say I want this? How do we work toward it? How do we identify and overcome challenges? What are the things that we need to do? How do we need to interact with our team members? What are the skills we need to develop, and how do we do that? We're going to dig into all of that as we move along this podcast and I'm so excited to have you here along this journey with me.

You've been listening to Lean Leadership for Ops Managers with me, your host, Jamie V. Parker. For more information about me and how we can work together, head on over to ProcessPlusResults.com. To help more leaders like you discover the podcast, give us a rating and review, and to make sure you never miss an episode, hit that subscribe button wherever you like to listen to your podcasts.