Employee Engagement with Dorsey Sherman | 031

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.

Jamie V. Parker

Hey Ops Managers. Employee Engagement. It's the thing we all want. We kind of have this underlying knowledge that when team members are engaged, we can deliver better results, and probably have more fun too. But what really drives engagement? And on a practical level, what can you do to impact engagement? My friend, Dorsey Sherman, joins me for a conversation about this exact topic, and the great thing is, it ties directly into the theme we've been covering, which is --- How are you as a leader spending your time?

Now the conversation was fabulous, and I actually broke it up into two different episodes. So you can get the first half here today, and next week, we'll close it out with the second half.

You ready? Let's jump in and talk about employee engagement.

Today, I want to welcome to the show Dorsey Sherman. Dorsey and I actually do a lot of work together through the Women in Lean - Our Table group. So if that's something if you're a woman out there, and you want to really find community, I encourage you to go check it out. I'll put the link to the website and the LinkedIn group in our show notes today. So Dorsey, glad to have you.

Dorsey Sherman

Hey, Jamie, glad to be here. Thanks.

Jamie V. Parker

We're going to talk about leadership today. Before we jump into that, can you introduce yourself? Tell us a little bit about who you are and how you help folks today?

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Dorsey Sherman

Okay. Sure. My company is called Modele Consulting, and I am almost completely Certified Leadership and Executive Coach very close. I completed my certification at Case Western in Cleveland, Ohio and really excited about that. So that's a big focus for 2021 is doing one on one coaching for individuals who are interested in personal growth and development.

The second thing I do is kind of take the coaching approach and use it to help leaders take on more of a coaching style to leadership. So, myself and a collaborator Toni Benner. She and I have done a series of workshops, called Coaching Conversations, which is really about --- How to be a leader as coach, and then I am also a Lean Consultant. So my expertise is in Toyota Kata, Improvement Kata, Coaching Kata. So I work with organizations on improving business performance, using that kind of teaching approach.

Jamie V. Parker

Fantastic. All right, I love all of it, and Dorsey will probably be back joining us on the show, when we dig into coaching, I'm planning out a whole segment there. So we'll have her back. So Dorsey I asked you on today, you and I were having a conversation a couple weeks ago, not on the podcast or anything, just a conversation, and we were talking about leadership and some of our experiences. You made a comment, and I thought, "we need to have this conversation and share it with my audience". So you made a comment about -- Leadership really is this relationship. When you're thinking about leading people and what is that really -- You said, "Really, it's a relationship". So tell me more about what you mean there?

Dorsey Sherman

It is this idea of engagement. So if I could show you a visual, it's like the process and at the end of the processes is Organizational Performance. So when people want to improve Organizational Performance, they may be focused on results, their outcome metric, their KPIs, or hopefully they look at process, they look at lean, but a big driver of performance is engagement, and so what I mean is; job satisfaction, commitment, retention, discretionary effort, those drive performances. Well, what drives engagement -- the biggest driver of engagement is to go back to the organizational behavioral research, which was part of my training at Case Western is from two things.

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One is something called the leader member exchange, and that influences the sense of perceived organizational support. So, Leader member exchange is basically the relationship between the leader and employee. When that's good, then there's a sense the employee has this sense of perceived organizational support, aka the organization cares about me, and those two things together create engagement, they create satisfaction, commitment, retention, discretionary effort, and that's from research by Melvin Smith at Case Western, and so it's like, we start at the wrong end. So we're trying to influence the back end of the process in Organizational Performance, but it's this route, which is our relationship with employees and leaders, and that's like, how we treat each other, like any relationship. Is there honesty, trust, communication?

All those kinds of basic things that I think we overlook in search of like a fancier? You know, what I mean? Like a more complex solution, when and then at the same time, you say, Well, how often do you meet with their employees, we'll never I don't have any one on one meeting with my employees, or we meet quarterly, we meet yearly for performance reviews, and it's like -- Okay, interesting, because that's actually the root of the root. But that's, I think, I've found to be fascinating.

Jamie V. Parker

And I'm really listening to this and thinking about -- Listener on the other end here is like, Hey, I'm an Ops Manager, I've got stuff to do, and I'm expected to deliver results, and so maybe I'm having gaps on equality or productivity, and so now I'm going to jump in, and I'm going to go use my process improvement, and I'm going to go -- have my visual boards, I'm going to talk about the gap, and I'm going to try and figure it out, I'm going to go do all of this, and the drive this -- I gotta hit the number, I gotta to hit the number. Because maybe I feel pressure, maybe I don't, but I probably feel some sort of pressure to hit results, and so it becomes this whole conversation. And everything is now about quality, everything is now about productivity, whatever it is --- that gap is -- and it does become very results heavy.

Dorsey Sherman

Yeah, and it's like, how's that working?

You know, what I mean?

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It is kind of that really important reflection. Is what you're doing now getting you the results do you want? I mean, do you have the engagement that you want? And is that leading to results? Well, great.

But if you aren't, then it's kind of --- I saw your LinkedIn post today, Jamie, about those core questions. What am I planning is my next step, what do I expect, what actually happened, and what can I learn? I mean, what I would say is, what we know -- what leans all about -- Your process creates your results. So it's all about --

And part of that process, I would say your relationship with your employees is part of that process. It's like the very beginning of the process before --- or that happens simultaneously with the worker actually adding value, and doing --- adding value to the organization. So is that process leading to engagement or not?

Jamie V. Parker

Yeah, well, because it's almost like --- I think when we go at this whole results, heavy, how's that working for us? Well, it's almost like, we end up playing whack-a-mole. So we can drive and push a result - as long as we're driving it and pushing it, and then the moment we kind of start to turn away to something different, then typically, it's like, oh, now it starts to dip, because we're not really addressing it at the core, which to your point, you're kind of coming in at the wrong end, and trying to hammer it at the results side, and so I love this idea. Okay, so, what if you want sustainable results, what if you want this engagement, where you're not the one driving it, but instead the team is creating it because there's that commitment level, and that really goes back to this engagement piece you're talking about?

Dorsey Sherman

Yeah, exactly. I think there's a huge opportunity, and obviously, it's not that easy. Of course, what does everyone say --- don't have time --- I don't have time to meet with employees, I don't have time to have one on one. So it's kind of like, if you don't have time for that --- I guess it's just looking at how are you spending your time, and what's the value that's being generated out of how you are spending your time? That's kind of the reflection question.

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Jamie V. Parker

Yeah, and if I could draw an analogy to the production side for Ops Managers, you don't have time to follow all of these production steps. But then somehow we figure out how to have the time to redo it.

Right, like, . . . We don't have enough time to follow all the steps to get it right at the beginning and ensure it is right at the beginning. So we start to make short cuts, and then when that rework happens, we have to find the time, and so it's almost like that here is --- but do you want to spend it on that back end or do you want to spend it on that front end?

Dorsey Sherman

Yeah. Right. Yeah, that's a great point, how much time we spend dealing with problems or quote poor performance, or whatever the issues are, with no kind of front end investment.

Jamie V. Parker

Mm hmm. All right. So let's say that -- I'm agreeing with you. I'm like, Yeah -- no -- I totally get an Engagement relationship. All of that makes sense. But how do I build a relationship -- Because, you know, we're not talking about necessarily -- my best friend over here or going out for beers? -- What does it mean, when we say, "Hey, it's really building a relationship with your team?" How do I do that?

Dorsey Sherman

I mean, it's such a good question. It's kind of like, how do you build a relationship with anyone? You know, what I mean? It's like, how do you make a new friend? I mean, there's some basic things of ---

Number one, I would say, "Unstructured time" --- Time that's not related to task completion. That's just like, coffee with Jamie, or you know what I mean? It's like, open time, where there's maybe not an agenda. I'm not checking up on your projects. I'm not asking you to tell me --

You know, the coaching habit question. His number one thing is what's on your mind? --- Just that complete or like, how are you? You know, like, how are you really? And then, zipping your lip, and just listening to how someone is --- I mean, to really leave space for someone to answer that question. How are you? I mean, to be honest, I think that's pretty rare, and so --- I don't mean to oversimplify it, but it is

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kind of like time and space, and really making it a goal and then intention around what does that look like. --

Another piece, I would say -- if this is something that you're striving for, in terms of your leadership, getting feedback right now on a 360 degree evenon like the impact you're having, and how you're perceived, and information about ---

Maybe there's a disconnect between your intention and impact, like, you might think you're a really good coach, and Matter of fact, there was a really interesting Harvard Business Review study where it was like in the 80%, of Managers think they're a really good coach, and the employees of those managers said, well, they're just telling us what to do. But sometimes there's a disconnect between the relationship you think you have and what you actually have. So that can be an interesting kind of input in terms of data, and then -- I mean, what I say --- it's really the process improvement. What are you striving for, what do you want, and then getting some data on where are you now. Then really starting to experiment with how do I change that, what does that look like for me, and what's comfortable for me? --- Maybe it's a gemba walk and checking in with people, maybe having lunch with people, whatever it is? I think everyone has to find their own way with that improvement mindset.

Jamie V. Parker

Yeah, for sure. So, we're kind of talking about engagement and building this engagement with people, and sometimes, when we start talking about this as a path to --- you know, Engagements, kind of that front end input path to results. You might hear somebody say something like, okay, yeah, yeah, I'm all about it. "But what about my problem child?" Like, how do I deal with the person who just -- you know --- it's the 30-year team member who doesn't want to be here, and they won't get engaged at all? How do I fix that? How do I deal with what I might call quote unquote -- I am using quote unquote, because I'm not encouraging you to use this language but language you might hear someone refer to say like, their "problem child" is how the type of language sometimes I hear people use?

Dorsey Sherman

Yeah, that's what someone that is always the question. It's like, yeah, yeah, this is great. But how do I fix this person? And what I would say is, you can't change anyone.

Like number one, you cannot fix other people. So if you're going into a coaching --- if you think you're going to coach someone to change them, which I do think that's what people think, you know what I mean? Like, we're going to have this coaching relationship, and I'm going to impose some external

standard on you, some organizational standard of behavior, and I'm going to mandate, but call it coaching. It's not going to work; it really probably isn't going to work.

So, how do you change for performance? I mean, I would say, I'm not an expert on this. But number one, I would say is what is working all about --- Like how do you mined for gold, instead of digging for dirt. You go into the gold mine, and you don't look for the million tons of dirt, you're looking for that lump of gold.

So we also know focusing on what's working, focusing on the positive, focusing on strengths, and then giving feedback that is collaborative, that asks for ideas that maybe shows or --- reflects factual observations, not editorial observations. In other words, not my opinion of how you just gave that presentation, but your personal --- How it impacted you and facts about it, and then talking about the impact, talking about what ideas do you have? And really, I think, I guess the other huge part of dealing with performance is -- What role have you had as a leader in creating this situation? That's really the self-awareness piece that I think is so key --- and underestimated --

I am going to Say it one more time -- What role have I had as a leader in creating the situation of poor performance, i.e. setting expectations? --- Training, development. Whatever it is, I mean, the role of leadership is to manage the process, so that people can work to their full potential. It's not to say it's leadership's fault for everything. But it is really about ---

It's so easy to say that this person has a problem -- Jamie's a problem. Sell his problem, these people are all problems, and to kind of shine that spotlight outside of yourself, but how are you contributing? What are you doing? Even before having a feedback conversation, it's like, how can you own that part of it, and kind of prepare for that in terms of talking to somebody. Those are my ideas and I say that I am in no way an expert, but I do think there's some missing pieces in how we try to fix people.

Jamie V. Parker

Yeah, and so I mean, I think I love that -- First like, hey it's --- you can't fix people. So like, let's not approach it from that way, and instead, think about how we can create an environment, are we doing the right things. I love the self-reflection part in the role of the leader. I have a friend who's been staying in my guest bedroom for a couple of weeks, and listen, so I've been able to kind of hear some calls, and hear some of the stuff as I walked through the house.

He was talking about -- There's this COO and who is like just complaining about the people. "They do this, and they don't do that". I'm thinking, that's really probably more of a reflection on that COO than it is on the individuals. Especially just hearing how broadly he was describing that problem, like, it's everybody else, almost.

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But yeah, how people interact and their level of engagement and commitment. There's absolutely -- It's 100% they own it. I can't make someone.

They own it. AND I can absolutely influence it. So, as a leader; it's not this position of privilege. It's really a position of responsibility.

Dorsey Sherman

Yeah. Right. I mean, the other great lesson I learned from Cheryl Jekyll is -- she says--- the shortest route is through this positive feedback and encouragement. We're so short on giving anyone any specific, like, here's this --- this was really good, but this specific thing was so good that you just did like that. Maybe there's a good job or an Atta boy on the back but giving people feedback on what again, it's like what's working and focusing on that sort of generative positive mindset instead of the deficit is. Cheryl Jekyll taught me, it's the short road, it's the short way home -- versus focusing on what's not working.

I think the other thing you do then is set it up in your mind as a conflict. You know, like I have this poor performer and so it's like dread to deal with the situation. And then it's like procrastination, and then it turns into a year later, and nobody's talked to this person. You know what I mean?

Jamie V. Parker

We're all laughing cuz we're like, yes, that is what's happening.

Isn't Dorsey great? Yeah. At the time of recording, Dorsey didn't know that I was doing a whole series on the question that Patrick Adams brought us back in Episode 24. How are leaders spending their time? So as we were talking about this, she was saying that exact question. I really had a hard time controlling my giddiness. Just to be honest.

Now, Dorsey really gives us insight into this question from a different angle. You see, so far in this series, we talked about time and if you're kind of feel like you're treading water, how can you go about looking at your time and creating more bandwidth for yourself, and applying continuous improvement and problem

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solving to your work to get more of the right things done, and we talked about how to develop your own Leader Standard Work, and use the idea of Leader Standard Work really as a process for learning and improvement.

Now, in this conversation, Dorsey really challenged us to think about whether our Leader Standard Work includes the human element, the relationship building, and not from a compliance perspective. We heard her say it, we don't want to come at it from a standpoint of, "Oh, I'm supposed to do this. So let me add it to my leader Standard Work, and then let me check it off." Because when we come at things from a compliance standpoint, that really comes through.

So here, we've had this whole conversation. What's your next step? Well, here's my recommendation for your next step.

I want you to do a gut check on the status of the relationships between you and each member of your team. What is your intention for those relationships? How do you want them to be? How do you think they are now? And remember this last one? How could you learn how your team members perceive them? Remember, Dorsey talked about how sometimes what we think is kind of different from what our team members think. Our perceptions, our experiences can be different. So those four things again, what is your intention for those relationships? How do you want them to be? How do you think they are now? And how could you learn how your team members perceive them?

 All right.

So that's it for part one of this conversation. I'm going to put Dorsey's contact information in the show notes, which you can find at https://processplusresults.com/podcast/ Then you can find Episode 31. Make sure you mark your calendar for St. Patty's Day. That's Wednesday, March 17. Because this conversation with Dorsey will continue as we dig into how to use one on ones to build relationships. Until next time,