

Welcome to my presentation about the book: Turn the ship around: A True Story of Turning Followers into Leaders by David Marquet- Commander of the nuclear submarine USS Santa Fe

This is the model of the Santa Fe submarine. And This is Commander Marquet.

The short story is Captain Marquet was trained to be ready for taking over the USS Olympia but were assigned last minute to another ship, the Santa Fe because the current captain quit unexpectedly. At that time, Santa Fe was the submarine that everyone giggled at, because it has the bad morale, lowest retention rate (only 3 out of 135 sailors reenlisted), lowest score on inspection. It was at the bottom of the list. The Santa Fe is a completely different ship, so he realized would have to somewhat rely on his crew members, especially in decision making.

Captain Marquet was well-trained by the Navy about leadership but he started to question the traditional approach of leader-follower. Because the ship is good heavily upon the CO but a good ship can go bad overnight when a new CO come in. Good leadership is measured during the time the leader was present and performance after they're gone, either failure or success is because of the new CO. So he was really questioning that and he wanted to do something different with this ship.

1) The first day, he went around and greeted everyone. In the watch room, he asked a sailor what are these buttons. And that sailor would say: "Sir, this button does this. This button does that... And this button... ahmmm, sir sorry I don't know." And he looked to the captain for the answer. Now Marquet didn't know answer because again he wasn't trained to take this ship. So it was embarrassing but he had to say it: "I don't know either". "Let's press it and see what happens!". So if someone asks you, the leader, a question, and you say you don't know how do you feel? Embarrassed, fearful of losing credibility. That "you should the answer!".

Many wouldn't say "I don't know" and maybe just make an answer because of their fear of ignorance, of looking like they don't the answer. Captain Marquet thinks that the moment you say I don't know. You unleash the power of learning in yourself and in your people. You're making it safe everyone to say "I don't know" and that opens the door to curiosity and a learning mindset.

Myth: Good leaders know all the answers

Fact: Good leaders say "I don't know"

2) Second day, they went straight into drill where the crew had to deal with an imaginary fault: the nuclear reactor that powers the ship broke down, the submarine will start using electric motor that runs on battery. Meanwhile, they have to figure out solutions and fix the reactor before the battery runs out. So to make it even harder, create a sense of urgency, Marquet ordered to increase to speed of the electric motor from 1/3 to 2/3, draining the battery faster. "Ahead 2/3" he ordered. Navigator ordered "Ahead 2/3". Nothing happened, it was moment of silence and awkwardness. The captain looked at the guy carrying out, he just shrugged his shoulder and finally said "Hey captain, there is no 2/3 on this submarine, only 1/3". It was embarrassing! He turned to the nav "Hey nav, do you know about this 2/3 situation" "Yes sir I did" "Why did you order it?" "Because you told me to"

These people were trained to be compliant, do what they told and not to question any orders.

What is the problem with this model? Okay, [abc] tell me what's the problem? The problem is he was the one that gave the order. Good order plus compliance = happy, everything is smooth. Bad order, a captain for the wrong ship and crew's compliance is deadly combination for disaster. They are going to die if it's not fixed, especially this happens during combat! You want to have ship to function effectively and fight the enemy in the absence of the commander because what if he died from a heart attack or got killed?

What he decided to do is to shut up and stop giving order. It was a scary decision to make as leader because you have this fear of uncertainty, losing control of status, power, becoming irrelevant, risk, of people going to you and ask you solutions. You have to overcome this control issue.

Myth: Good leaders give good orders

Fact: Good leaders give **no orders**

So in this approach, there are **two problems** that need to be solved: For your people How do turn people from “Tell me what to do” to be the decision-makers? And for yourself: How do trust their competency, that they know what they’re doing and that their decision is right? There is fear on both side.

First, For the people, DON’T WAIT for them to come forward “Oh when you show initiative, then I let u have more responsibility” It doesn’t work because of power structure, they’re always yielding to you so as leader, you gotta step back.

When you stand behind them, ordering them to turn left and right, you’re saying I don’t care what’s going on here and here in you. You’re suppressing the fire inside. But everyone has power and everyone is great. Our job is to recognize that, make it safe for them to do what they need to do and get out of their way.

So how to make it safe. Starts with language. When they say they’re going to do something, instead of “Are you sure?” => doesn’t make them feel safe and show some doubt. Say “How likely are we going to be on time” vs “Will we launch on time”. The more complex the situation/problem, the safer we need to make the situation for more creative thinking. They’re stressed, they have to adapt to new way of thinking as leader, so they have to think like next level in chain of command, work harder, think ahead. What you need to do is to make them feel safe and remove barriers for them.

Going from “Captain, Can I request permission to submerge the ship” “Okay, submerge the ship” to “Captain, I intend to submerge the ship because abc, xyz so it’s safe to do so” “Very well”

Captain Marquet develops a system for communication: instead of him giving orders, his sailors would communicate what they’re thinking, their decision making by saying: “I see...”, “I think we should do this... because ... xyz” and embed context, their thought process, the why for their decisions and eventually make the decision and carry the decision and just tell your boss, “Ok boss I did it because abc” The boss on the hand of course instead of saying “Hey, go do this, with no explanation” “Ask them what do you see, what do you think” “What would like to do?” etc.

Second, for you as a leader, how do you give control to people? By providing competence and clarity.

The new language system they use that embed context and the why for reason give clarity, transparency. It also require the sailors to demonstrate they have technical competence to back up their decision. If they don’t know, then it will also be revealed. That is where room for improvement in competency shows. We can learn and train people to fill in that lack of knowledge.

Another thing with clarity. At the beginning, everyone on the ship seems to forgot the connection between their day-to-day activities to the bigger goal: to run the submarine, fight enemy during combat and protect US border, freedom and constitutions. So everyone needs to share this same view so that every decision they make, it is in the interest of the bigger goal and they never lose sight of it. Every single person in a organization has to have clarity about the mission, vision and the goal of the company.

He went on to change or even eliminate many other existing processes and standards and create new ones. Eventually, instead of decision being made at the core, it is propagated out to edge. From Centralized to decentralized control.

The results:

1 thinker and 134 doers turn into 135 active thinkers, engaged, involved, committed, passionate, participated leaders.

- Reenlisted 35/35 sailors
- highest score on inspection, other captains called to congratulate and everyone thought Marquet was just clever and gave very good orders. Even Stephen Covey the author of 7 habits of highly effective people. When he visited the ship, he said "This is most empowered workplace I've seen in my life. But I haven't seen giving any orders" "Yeah I'm trying to get out the order-giving business"
- *So actually, great leaders give no orders* because they have a team that takes initiative, proactivity to do what they need to do without being told
- sailors after sailors got promoted.
- 10 out of 14 officers became captains of submarines themselves. It's like you create a company with 14 people and 10 of them go create a company for themselves and become the CEO. You create more leaders.

So good leaders:

- 1) get people to think
- 2) push the authority to the information
- 3) and give control to create more leaders.

Do you want to be the leader who take control or give control?

1. Cross functionality
2. Continuous Improvement
3. Lean Thinking, System Thinking, More with LeSS
4. Whole-product focus
5. Transparency
6. PO: provide safe envi
7. PO: provide safe envi
8. PO: provide safe envi, SM: openness, humility