Welcome to Hiring, Firing, and Inspiring an Exceptional Team!

**<click: Once upon a time…>**

I’m Seth, and to introduce myself and explain why I feel qualified to stand up here, I want to tell you a quick story.

<click: show team>

Once upon a time, I joined the programming team at my current company. I was a pretty good programmer and I spent six or seven years on this team as an individual contributor, slowly gaining more and more technical leadership but really not *responsible* for anyone except myself.

<click: promoted to management>

Eventually, however, I was promoted into management. My head grew a few sizes, and instead of spending my day doing code reviews in Visual Studio I began spending my days doing TPS reports, time sheet approvals, 1-1s and other super awesome and exciting stuff.

<click: Things were great for awhile>

Things were great for awhile and the team seemed happy and productive. I encouraged them to be open and honest with me about problems they might have, no one said anything, and so I believed there not to *be* any problems.

<click: but all good things come to an end>

But all good things come to an end, and eventually

<click: someone quit>

Someone quit. There had apparently been some morale issues and some communication dysfunction that boiled over and drove that key team member to leave.

<click: shook>

This really shook me.

<click: uncomfortable>

This was my first real blow as a manager, and I faced the uncomfortable truths that everything was *not* sunshine and rainbows for everyone.

<click: worked hard>

But instead of letting things fester, we worked hard to address those issues, and things are on the right track. The team is productive and healthy and continues to succeed.

<click: 3 months later>

Some of the strongest evidence of this came a few months later, when something amazing happened.

<click: hey team, haz job>

The person that had left came back. A short stint on a new team had made him realize that while we aren’t perfect, we’re still a pretty exceptional group, and he’d rather be here than anywhere else.

<click: yay>

So we welcomed him back with open arms 😊

<click: what’s the point?>

My point is that I have an exceptional team. Some of my team’s success is because of our natural individual tendencies to work hard and be successful. If you hire good people, they tend to do good work.

But a big part of our success is *despite* our other natural tendencies. We’re all imperfect human beings, we all make mistakes, we all sometimes act on emotion and not logic. When that team member left, the remaining members did a lot of hard work. I personally spent a lot of time examining the ways that we interacted with each other, the ways that we communicated, and the ways that we both engaged in and avoided conflict. I learned a great deal about not only my own team, but about people in general, and I want to share some of those things with you.

However, I really want this talk to be more than just a random collection of things I do to make my team happier.

As I went through that learning and research process, I learned about some aspects of management and leadership science that I was totally unaware even existed. And as I learned about these things, I realized that in some cases I was actively (but unknowingly) contributing to the very dysfunction I was trying to address!

**<click: stuff you don’t know you don’t know>**

The point of this talk is to focus on “stuff you don’t know you don’t know”.

You all know *some* stuff about management and leadership and people already. And there’s probably some stuff that you know you *don’t* know, but you could at least recognize when you’re in a situation where you’d need that knowledge, and how to go about getting it.

But if you’re like me, you don’t have deep experience with this stuff. I was promoted into management because I was a good individual contributor, and someone thought “hey, Seth is great at programming and working with computers, so obviously he’d be great at management and working with people too!” What could possibly go wrong?

I wasn’t given any training, and none of my 20 years of technical experience really prepared me for what it meant to lead a team. And as a result, I had some pretty big blind spots where I didn’t know that some concept even existed, let alone when I might want to apply it.

<click: bring in 3 images>

Some of the things I’m going to introduce are some ways to recruit and hire team players that are aligned with your core values, how to use DISC personality profiles to improve communication with your team, and how to use the Cynefin framework to empower your team to make their own decisions.

I’m not going to dive super deep into any of these topics, I just want to introduce them and move them into your “things you know you don’t know” bucket. I want you to know enough to recognize opportunities to use them, so that you can seek out deeper knowledge when you need it.

If you’ve been in a leadership role for a long time, or if you’ve already applied these things on your own teams, then this talk probably isn’t a good use of your time and you won’t hurt my feelings if you “law of two feet” you want out of here.

**<click: recruit using core values>**

As a manager, one of your most important responsibilities is making sure that you have the right people in the right roles. But how do you attract the “right people”, and how do you identify them during the hiring process?

At Heuristics, our entire recruiting process is designed around our core values…

**<click: hire team players>**

I think that a good manager is a “force multiplier” for the team; he or she helps the team be more than the sum of its parts, and to be more productive as a group than the members would be working independently.

In order for that to happen, however, you have to have a team that is *capable* of working together. This can be harder than it seems.

One of the books that made the biggest impression on me was “The Ideal Team Player” by Patrick Lencioni. In it, he identifies 3 characteristics that are shared by the best teammates.

<click: humble>

First, team players are *humble*.

<click: hungry>

Second, team players are *hungry*…

<click: people smart>

Lastly, team players are *people smart*…

<click: The Pawn>

Let’s look at what happens when we hire someone that is lacking those characteristics.

Someone that is only Humble can be considered a pawn…

<click: The Bulldozer>

If someone is only hungry, then…

<click: The Charmer>

Likewise, if someone is people smart but not humble or hungry, then…

<click: Accidental Messmaker>

What if we hire someone that has two of the characteristics, but not all three?

Someone who is humble and hungry, but not people smart, is an accidental messmaker…

<click: Loveable Slacker>

Someone who is humble and people smart, but not very hungry, is a loveable slacker…

<click: Skillful Politician>

And lastly, someone who is people smart and hungry, but not humble, is the skillful politician…

<click: all three>

Someone with all three…

<click: TODO>

<click: Now what>

OK, so you’ve done all of that stuff and you’ve finally landed this awesome new employee that’s super aligned with your values, a total team player, and ready to join this amazing team you told them about.

Now what?

I believe that teams are immutable; when you add or remove people, you don’t just *change* the team, you create an *entirely new team*. This new team is susceptible to all sorts of disruptions as a result of new communication paths, new behavior patterns, etc.

**<click: Design the Alliance>**

One way that I like to head off those disruptions is an exercise that’s called “Design the Alliance”.