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SAILING WITH A CREW OF CATS: LEARNING TO LEAD AND MANAGE

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Steve Sligar: The three of us are from an agency called the Center for Sight & Hearing. I am the vice president; Cathy is president; and Kathy Schlueter is on the board of directors.

Management can be difficult. Can any of you relate to a situation where you are attempting to get a task done and other people may have other agendas? Or other ways of communicating that are different from how you communicate? That is today's topic. Trying to lead and manage people who are independent, just like shepherding a crew of cats. Those of you who own a cat know that a cat is independent and does not take orders very well. Cats seem to like to do their own thing. In order to work with a crew of cats, we will look at three topics: leadership, management, and communication style. That is, how do you prefer to communicate: reading, Signed English, PSE, ASL, assistive listening devices, speech reading? And, also important is the need to consider how leadership, management and communication interact.

Cathy Diederich: It is important to understand the functions and definitions of leadership and management. There is a very simple definition of their differences: you manage *things* but you lead *people*. One of my favorite quotes by Margaret Mead is: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Two examples of this were the revolutionary war and the Red Cross, which was founded by Clara Barton, a nurse in the civil war. So, one definition of leadership is enabling a group to engage in the process of developing, sharing, and moving into a vision and then living it.

Leadership really has to concentrate on the bigger picture and the mission of the organization or group that is getting together. Here are some examples of what leaders do: motivate, inspire and help others realize their potential. Dale Carnegie said, "We need to give people an example to live by". So, when you are dealing with people, look at their potential and treat

them so that they will be inspired to live up to their potential. Lead by example. This way you lose your inhibition, selfishness, and you can make a difference.

A leader also has to know the organization. Kathy will explain this topic.

Kathy Schlueter: In an organization we need to know who our members are. In an organization such as ALDA, you must know who the members are so needs can be met, especially for people who have lost their hearing from illness or trauma. We provide network opportunities; we have local chapters and groups; and we have an annual ALDA convention. A few individuals in Chicago set it up in 1987, and now we are spread out, all over the world.

Steve Sligar: As I said earlier, managers need to manage things. Some of the things they manage are time, money, and the activities of people. Managers also keep calendars, write correspondence, and fill out forms and records.

Kathy Schlueter: It is a very important responsibility, as a leader, to go to your meetings with a full agenda. You need to put things down in black and white to remember what you want to say. You need to be clear and announce your name, business and function in the organization.

There are differences in leadership and management. Leadership is on the left and management is on the right. Leaders steer the boat and tell us which way we are going to go. Managers are downstairs making sure the job gets done. But they both have to communicate.

Steve Sligar: It is critical that leaders know how to express the ideas of the organization and be able to articulate the mission and values. The managers should be able to explain very clearly to the people that they are managing what it is that they need to do and how they need to do it. So communication is vital in both roles.

What is your communication style? There are different styles and different ways of communicating. Usually one of them is dominant in that you will use one style more than another. There are four styles that describe general ways of communicating and these are analytical, driver, expressive, and amiable or social.

Analyticals like to gather facts, to get information and data—reams of data, lots of data. Before an analytical will make a decision they want to know all the facts. The down side of their communication style is that because they are so fascinated with data, they may appear to be aloof or disinterested in communicating with other people. Though that may not be true at all.

Driver types like to get stuff done. They communicate in order to get stuff done. They have a to-do list, which they follow and make sure that stuff gets finished. The analytical's office may be one where you cannot find anything, because there is so much data. The driver's office on the other hand may be filled with almost every manual you can think of, neatly filed in bookcases.

Expressives communicate to share ideas and to create ideas. When they get an idea, they are totally committed to that idea. That is, until the next great idea comes along, in which case they completely abandon their previous great idea in favor of their newest great idea. And what happens is that they appear never to get anything done. Their offices are generally in complete and total disarray. Expressives never, ever play poker because they are going to completely

give away their hand—their face is an open book, unlike drivers who can have the greatest poker hand in the world and you would never know it, because they are trying to get the pot.

The last group is the amiables or the social groups. These folks communicate to form relationships. They must have a relationship to do business. They like to chitchat. They strive to communicate to form relationships. They may appear indecisive because they don't want to make a decision before they check with everybody to make sure it will not rock the boat.

What does the style have to do with the assertiveness? Assertiveness is telling people how you feel. So, people that are analytical and amiable are going to ask people and gather information before giving an opinion. They are going to find out what other people think before they tell you what they think, whereas drivers will plow right ahead, and expressives, are going to show you how they feel with their words and body language.

Now, let's talk about body language for the different groups? Analyticals and drivers are very controlled people. They have stone faces and do not show feelings much. Amiables and expressives are going to show how they think or feel. If it's a social person, they are going to have lots of open body language. Expressives are going to have a lot of natural gestures.

You cannot change your style. You can't change the other person's style. But you can change how you approach somebody else. If you are a driver and you have got to communicate with a social person, you cannot change the fact that you still want to get stuff done and you think that talking with someone about their kid's soccer game is a waste of time. You do not want chitchat. Whereas the social person wants to know you and make sure they can trust you before doing anything else. So, what happens in that situation? You are going to fail in your communication. We need to come up with things that allow us to communicate with each other, despite our varied styles. First, it may be that you need to change from getting facts to building consensus. Asking for the opinions of others is also a good tactic. Socials, when you talk with analyticals, you have to try to be more detailed and documented. As for the drivers, you have to be very direct and specific about your requests. With the expressives it helps to show emotion about what is discussed—mirror what they are doing.

The thing is, if you recognize the communication style of the other person, if you can meet him/her there, then you give him/her a reason to feel good about him/her and s/he will be open to communicating with you far more than if you just start in and you work on your own style. You need to recognize yours and the other person's style and use it.

Managing a group where there are multiple styles present can be tricky. If you have handouts, make sure there is one with facts. Plan time to be creative. This gives you a chance to both look over the facts and a chance to do it in a social situation. If you have got a hundred people, the best you can do is to communicate with 25 of them at one time. And you are going to lose some. Now, you need to identify individual communication styles. If I am working with the treasurer for ALDA, then I am going to make sure that all the budget information is available so that the treasurer can look at the data before we discuss it. However, if I am presenting to members of ALDA, I will pass out that information and give some time to discuss the information in a group to meet the relationship needs of the socials.

How many of you know the Golden Rule? “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Now there is something we call the platinum rule. “Do unto others, as they would like to be done unto”. We do this by recognizing and using our knowledge of communication styles.

When you go to an analytical, be sure to have your facts and information straight. If you are trying to persuade them to do something, leave them something to read. They are going to read it. If you have a driver, be sure that you are prepared in advance before you go in the office. Be brief and to the point, and stay on the drivers To Do list. For expressives, you must give them deadlines and pin them down; otherwise they will stray to some other idea. Bring them into the process and use creativity and problem solving. Amiables like to chitchat and like to do it before business. I am a strong amiable. I have the pleasure of working for a strong driver and there is the potential for conflict. I like to chitchat. Cathy could care less about chitchat. So, what we have had to do in the past seven years of our working relationship, is I need to get down to business when she says “Yes Steve?” and she responds to my telling her I had a great weekend when I say “Hi Cathy,” and then we proceed with business. She adapts her communication style so we can communicate, and I reduce my need for social chitchat. You have got to do that in order to have working relationships and relationships with people on your committees and in your organization.

It is important to recognize that leadership and management both have a common thread of communication. It is important that a leader practice good management by having agendas and tending to the details of an ALDA meeting. People communicate differently and need information presented in different ways. A leader also practices clear communication through recognition of both the leader’s personal style and that of the members. When the management part of leadership is combined with effective communication, then you will have a great ALDA team and not have to feel like you are sailing with a crew of cats!

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