

**Dave Frees and Business Black Ops Present**

## **Intro To The Language of Leadership™ Mini Course**

**FIVE MODIFIED LESSONS FROM CAPTAIN DAVID MARQUET  
Plus Four Additional Tactics And Enhancements Directly  
From Business Black Ops Force Multipliers**

### **INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND THINKING**

If you believe that your role as a leader is simply telling people what to do and expecting them to do it, then you're not seeing the best possible results or work that you and your team could achieve. Rather, you're probably using an industrial age model of coercion.

It's easy to understand why and it's hard to break these habits. But, sadly, most current business leaders default to the way of speaking and leading that they inherited/learned from the time they were "workers" AND "doers" rather than leaders.

And, because we often don't get trained well in that transition, we fail to recognize that: 1) strategic thinking, 2) clarity of the purpose, values, and mission of the organization (and our teams), and 3) the ways that we communicate these with clarity and alignment matter very much in every aspect of leadership.

Once we understand those fundamentals, and can align our thinking and actions with them, then every aspect of business, from hiring (attracting exactly the right people with the right attitudes and skillsets), to onboarding, training, and leading, all conspire to optimize our success as leaders.

However, in today's dynamic information-based economy, where change is happening faster and faster, and leadership is more difficult than ever, your people and team probably have more to contribute to your success, performance and problem solving than simply following your direct orders or instructions. And those very "orders"/"instructions" may be holding performance back...severely.

**Finding a way to tap into their skills, perspectives and creative functions and to cultivate collaboration (without coercion) and**

**dissent (without division) can transform you from a bad or mediocre leader to a super productive, highly sought after and truly successful one.**

So what skillset can contribute to and enhance of those levels of leadership and performance?

Enhanced communications skills. It's easy to see why.

Better communications skills enhance all aspects of leadership. But that's simple to see and say but often seems hard to learn and to do. Learning these skills can seem time consuming and daunting. And becoming proficient (or even great at this) feels odd and difficult....at first.

But don't despair!

That's where this mini course comes into play. I'm about to save you some serious time and help you to boost your effectiveness as a leader.

As many of you know, I spent my whole life learning how to profile human behavior, to understand it, to lead it, and to manipulate it. I was trained as an interrogator, a negotiator, a marketer and a recruiter and, as a result, I have become a leader who trains leaders. And I take that knowledgebase seriously...even today.

That's why, when I came across the new book called "Leadership Is Language (The Hidden Power of What You Say and What You Don't)" by former U.S. Navy Captain L. David Marquet, I was delighted to discover a "radical new playbook for empowering your people through language to bring their best selves to work, improve their decision making, and to take greater ownership of their responsibilities."

Captain Marquet does something that I have been working on for many years, which is to create a framework that helps leaders achieve the right balance between deliberation and taking bold risks that pay off without endangering your success and your company or organization's mission.

Captain Marquet's work, along with my own techniques and strategies, will help you to put your team on a path to continuous improvement, amazing creativity, and inspiring one another to greater achievement. In short, you'll

become (with a little thought and practice) a way better leader who, together with the team, gets way better and more sustainable results.

In the book, if you wish to delve deeper, you'll learn more of the nuances.

It is filled with great examples told around the story of the doomed ship, the El Faro, whose Captain broke all of these rules and set the entire crew to their death – without complaint from the crew who seemed to sense their fate but also seemed powerless to stop it. It's worth reading.

However, in this short training you will specifically learn:

- Why (and how) you should “vote first”, then discuss, when deciding on a plan with your team rather than voting after discussion and after your direct participation as a leader.
- How to avoid seven common sins of questioning from binary questions, should we do A or B, to self-affirming questions. B is the better option, right?
- Why it's better to give your people information instead of instructions but, specifically what to do and how to do that so that it works.
- Quite a few other language patterns, skills, and strategies for better leadership through what you say AND what you don't.

In addition, you will learn several lessons from my days in profiling, interrogation, negotiation, and building models of exceptional persuasion and influence skills for leaders.

In particular, you'll learn how to detect some of the most important ways in which people are processing your information, and then how to use that to achieve higher levels of persuasion and influence while maintaining trust and open lines of communication.

Think about it. Most of us, whether we are selling, recruiting, or training, wait until the end to know if we were successful or not. But there are often subtle, and not so subtle, signs along the way that we can learn to detect and to adjust course. While the specifics of that skillset are beyond this

course (come to join us at a live event), the tools included here will take you to a new level of sensitivity to input from others, and to leading for high performance.

Specifically, you'll learn how to shift from what Captain Marquet describes as **blue work** (thinking together strategically) to **red work** (the doing and actual testing) which, under a better leader then informs the cycle of returning to more thoughtful and better-informed blue work.

Finally, we'll delve a little deeper into four strategies to guide your use of these five techniques to radically boost and to improve your leadership skills and language patterns.

So let's get to it...

### **Technique No. 1: The framework and model/cycle of blue work to red work to blue work.**

Captain Marquet was able to identify a very important process, its flaws as most practice it, and a very specific process for improving it.

He describes the two phases of work (historically) and creative teamwork/collaboration (in its more modern form) and how to lead them as blue work and red work.

Blue work is essentially higher-level creative thinking, planning, and the adoption of thoughtful and relevant strategies. This is the realm of thought and planning. It was historically (and often still is) the domain of "white collar" leaders and managers.

However, nothing really happens in the physical world until we move from blue work into red work, which is the actual doing of the things that were decided.

This red work...or the doing...was historically the domain of blue collar workers and the two groups did not collaborate or inform one another except through top down directives.

But, under a great and highly effective leader, red work, in turn, should be viewed as an opportunity to test the theories and hypotheses developed in blue work and then to return to blue work to modify and optimize it.

Thus, it's extremely useful to think of working with your teams as an ongoing and never-ending cycle of blue work, red work, and then back to blue work to adjust to the reality and/or to develop for new projects.

This is Col. Boyd's OODA Loop in action. Not just in marketing, but within the framework/cycle of blue work and red work.

Here are a few differences that Capt. Marquet charts on page 73 of his book that are useful in distinguishing what occurs in each phase (Some of these represent my modifications):

RED WORK	BLUE WORK
<b>Avoid variability</b>	<b>Embrace variability</b>
<b>Prove (Testing the theory)</b>	<b>Thoughtfully Improve</b>
<b>Act/Do</b>	<b>Decide</b>
<b>Repetitious</b>	<b>Novel/Dissimilar</b>
<b>"Physical" (Production/Performance)</b>	<b>More Cognitive (Planning)</b>
<b>Production</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
<b>Compliant</b>	<b>Creative</b>

<b>Process</b>	<b>Prediction</b>
<b>Conformity</b>	<b>Diversity</b>
<b>Simple</b>	<b>Complex</b>
<b>Hourly</b>	<b>Salary</b>
<b>Narrow Focus</b>	<b>Broad Focus</b>
<b>Steep Hierarchy</b>	<b>Flat Hierarchy</b>

## **Technique No. 2: The value of making a pause possible rather than preempting pauses**

Captain Marquet called this technique "controlling the clock" as opposed to the industrial-age and coercive clock that controls *you* all of the time.

Part of industrial-age leadership is, essentially, to condition people to keep working and to *avoid pauses*, to get things done on a timeline and without disruption. This, of course, starts with good intentions from management but can often create extremely bad results. And, let's face it, there are reasons (and times) to let the clock drive performance in order to get things done and completed.

That said, the PAUSE as described by Marquet is extremely valuable and can save teams and companies from disasters...think NASA and the Challenger disaster.

So what does he mean when he describes a "pause" and how can we "control the clock" to get better results and to avoid catastrophic failures?

Again, to most leaders (and especially those marinated in the language of the industrial era leaders), a pause represents a delay where no product is being made and no sales are occurring. As the author says "it shows up on the spreadsheet as "a waste" and should, in this way of thinking, be eliminated."

Therefore, in most organizations, people get promoted for being go-getters and making quick decisions and executing them in short order but those mired in "pauses" are marked as low performers. Implementation is prized over thoughtful planning and strategy. "Successful leaders have been taught and rewarded for eliminating the pause and driving production or completion without pause or with minimal interruption in "production.""

But, we now know that this is a flawed perception and model.

In fact, it's extremely powerful for a leader to be able to, not only create pauses when necessary, but in some cases, to model and to allow/encourage them and, in other cases, to trigger a pause where others could contribute *before* problems become more serious.

In Captain Marquet's book, a brilliantly-told tale of the sad fate of the cargo ship El Faro is a perfect illustration of the value of pauses and the importance of paying attention to your language, encouraging dissent, and in creating space for strategic pauses.

**Spoiler Alert: The El Faro could have taken a longer but safe route (and had a few chances to do it) where it would have minimized the effects of a massive hurricane. But, instead the Captain and apparently the crew (based on recordings and the ship's log) chose to take the open and dangerous route (missing several chances to divert) and losing the ship and all aboard.**

**A better leader who allowed, encouraged, and practiced the “pause” would have saved this ship.**

So whether you're trying to save a project, a reputation, brand or your team's lives, get better at the pause.

**Here's how leaders should use, encourage, and trigger the pause:**

As a project begins, make liberal use of the pause to allow input as to what's happening and whether or not you're on course.

But, as it progresses, be even more open to pauses in the process, when dissent is rising, AND at junctures when significant consequences are at stake.

The technique of permitting and encouraging pauses can even further be enhanced by giving the pause a name.

Some pre-planning operational pause signals could be saying things like, "timeout", "hands off," raising a yellow card or raising a stop sign or other signal with the hand. All movie fans know the Special Forces used a raised and clench-fisted hand gesture for stop. Use that if you want. And make sure everyone knows that it's ok to use it when needed.

Believe it or not, evidence indicates that it is extremely powerful to allow and encourage pauses, especially when danger, difficulty, or divergence from expected results is detected by one team member and, perhaps, not by others.

But this effect (gathering timely and vital information before things go to hell) can also be enhanced by **practicing** the pause.

Practicing means occasionally asking a team member to signal with a pre-agreed-upon signal, even when no pause is needed.

The leader must still acknowledge the pause. And, after acknowledging the pause, explorations of the reason for it are in order.

## **REVIEW:**

- 1) Know the benefit of the pause (stop seeing it as dangerous)**
- 2) Teach/model the benefit of the pause**
- 3) Name the pause (It makes it more of a real thing)**
- 4) Practice/Encourage the pause to set limits and reasons**
- 5) Optimize the pause using language patterns below to give permission and make it safe for people/dissenters to give warnings**

That brings up to the next technique which can enhance the value of these pauses and the level of your leadership.

### **Technique No. 3: The value of enhanced & customized language patterns for better leadership**

So whether you're practicing the pause (or any of the other techniques discussed here) you're modeling to everyone that dissent/input/creativity and problem solving are ok and that "calling a pause" is ok as well.

But there are better and worse ways to get more information when a pause has been called, by you, or by a team member, or when you're collaborating in the red work/blue work cycle.

Face it, if we're going to call or encourage the pause (or collaboration and input) then we should learn as much useful information from it as possible.

And this is where my legal training, interrogative and negotiation skills come in handy.

Some examples that you can consider and perhaps even rehearse, that allow for a more open discussion include:



"It seems like you think we might not be ready. What are you thinking?"

"Let's get the team together and revisit our decision."

"Sounds like we might need to reevaluate our supplier. What is the evidence we have that contributes to this?"

"Let's hold here and take a look/listen/gut check. What does everyone see, hear, think, and feel?"

"I can see/hear or I feel you aren't completely sure. Would you like to show me what you're seeing or thinking?"

"Tell me what's giving you pause."

"Is there anything else?"

This last one is particularly important because it helps us to go deeper. We can get even more data and perhaps more reliable thinking. It's very powerful and can be supplemented with some lessons from an earlier training I gave in negotiation:

"And...."

"And...what else?"

"Are any other things worrying you/informing you?"

#### **Technique No. 4: Blue Work/Red Work Collaboration rather than strict role segregation**

The industrial-age obey-the-clock play drives teams to move forward.

However, since we've separated the strategists/deciders (blue workers), from the implementers/doers (red workers), sometimes blue workers or leaders, shame, or threaten the red workers to do the work that they had little or no part in choosing.

**Coercion, however, is not the basis for optimal performance and/or constant improvement.**

The root of this problem is the separation of roles into red workers and blue workers, and the solution could be summed up as follows:

**Let the doers also have input during the process traditionally run by the strategists/deciders. And, after thoughtful development and then actual implementation, let the red work parts of the team inform the next level of blue work/optimization.**

This establishes a link in the cycle of red work to blue work that could completely transform (and almost inevitably improve) how things are done and the results that are achieved and sustained.

**So we are seeking to replace coercion (or perceived coercion) with collaboration but with permissible and productive dissent.**

However, many modern leaders still do not know how to encourage and “manage” collaborate, or how to deal productively with dissent. They give lip service to collaboration but drive conformity where dissent isn’t seen as a positive force but a negative to be quickly defeated or overcome through whatever means necessary.

Let’s examine both of those.

## **Technique No. 5: Moving From Coercion To Collaboration & How To Collaborate With Productive Dissent**

Let’s start with four important “rules”/techniques for establishing collaboration and permitted/healthy dissent.

- 1) In order to move from coercion to collaboration, it is important to consider “voting” or discussing options first rather than voicing your position, or determining a course of action and then discussing it. There's extensive evidence for why this is the case and then we'll talk about it in a bit.

- 2) Next, be curious but not compelling (ask the right kinds of questions and don't engage in use of “force”) and,
- 3) Invite dissent rather than drive consensus (however, there are ways to invite dissent without it being disruptive or destructive) and,
- 4) Give information, not instructions.

Now we will examine each rule/technique and ways to enact them in more detail...

### 1) “VOTE FIRST”, THEN DISCUSS

In the wisdom of crowds, the author Surowiecki tells the story of Francis Galton, a polymath who lived in England in the 1800s. Galton collected tickets and indexed everyone's votes in a guessing game regarding the weight of an ox. It turned out that the group independently, diversely, and collectively, had a closer guesstimate, than all but a few people.

He repeated this experiment several times and each time, only a handful of people were able to guess more accurately than the collectively average of the group.

So what's the lesson? Well, to expose the greatest diversity and variability in thinking (which will probably yield the most accurate results/thinking), invite participants, to express what they think independently first and before anchoring the group through a vote or discussion.

There are a few ways to put that principle into action:

1. **Conduct anonymous blind electronic polling** on issues that people have been thinking about.
2. **Ask probabilistic questions instead of binary questions.** So instead of saying, "Is it safe?" or "Will it work?" ask "How safe is it or how likely is it, based on what we know today, to work."
3. **Use “Probability Cards”** in group discussions/collaborations

4. For issues involving more options than one or two possibilities use **“Multiple Voting”** where each person has more than one vote but fewer than the number of choices.

**The idea in all of these options is to invite thinking that considers future actions/processes/events as a range of possibility, and not as will-happen-or-won't-happen binary choices.**

This often means stating the question with the word “How”.

How much did you like the movie?

How well do you speak Spanish?

How many people and resources will you most likely need?

How often should we review progress?”

Again, it's not binary.

Probability cards are helpful tools to facilitate this in meetings.

This is a set of cards that display the following percentages: 1, 5, 20, 50, 80, 95, and 99.

And as we use them, we want to focus on the outliers, the team members with the strongest positive and negative feelings.

Imagine, for example, you're in a meeting and it's time to decide whether to launch the software product, or to delay to do more testing. If it's sales, you may be deciding when to implement or test a new approach"/script." In marketing, you're testing and planning on rolling out a new process. In operations, you're deciding whether or not to release a new platform.

You have good knowledge of your piece of the project, but maybe you have limited knowledge about the project as a whole and what other teams are doing, and how that information fits into the business strategy.

You, along with the other 20 people in the room, are asked to vote how strongly do you believe it should launch on time. A vote of 1 means you totally disagree, it's vitally important to delay launch, and 99 means you totally agree, it's vitally important to launch on schedule.

You all have the same seven cards.

Each person picks a card and slides it to the middle of the table.

Once the votes are in, flip the cards and invite outliers, the people who chose 1s and 99s to speak, sharing their ideas with the group. The outliers are probably seeing data, or have knowledge that others don't, or, they're missing data or critical information that's giving them pause.

So how do we get more from the outliers who might be reticent to speak?

Questions I like to ask the outliers are:

**"What do you see that we don't and what is behind that vote?"**

**"What factors are causing the worry about this?"**

There's a real nuance here. And it's worth thinking about.

Captain Marquet discusses attending a meeting (and I've had a similar experience) where people were asked to vote up or down on whether they supported a course of action. When the vote was over, each of the downvoters (there were only a couple) was asked "What would make you turn your down into a yes?"

This did not have, however, the intended result because it put the dissidents on the spot and placed them in the position of being blockers with the implication that everyone was expected to get on board.

The message was "We are going this way. How can we overcome your objections?" rather than an honest "Is this the direction we should go, and why or why not?"

When perceived psychological safety is middle to low, it is, therefore, sometimes better to ask the group to rationalize each outlier's position.

This has the benefit of not putting outliers on the spot and exercises our ability to view things from another's perspective. If outliers know they'll be put on the spot, it will reduce the tendency of people to take outlier positions and, therefore, deprive you of vital data and perspective.

Use “multiple voting,” which requires good psychological safety.

When the group is trying to select from among several options, the probability cards won't work and you need to narrow the options.

In this case, people could vote on their preferred options. Giving people about one-third as many votes as there are options, for example, ten options, three votes, and then see what options collect the most votes.

This could be done openly by hand, with called out votes and diagrams on a wall, or electronically.

Using fist-to-five voting: With fist-to-five, we use our hands to vote zero to five fingers. It is a public simultaneous vote but it's fast and we use the tools we have, our hands.

Marquet much prefers fist-to-five over one-to-five because in a large group, distinguishing the one finger from two is hard, but the first votes really stand out, so do the full-hand votes. This simple tool could be used when two factors are clear: The decision we try to come up with is not binary needing lengthy discussion, and the people involved feel psychologically safe enough to express their opinions, ideas, and thoughts openly in front of the others.

If those conditions are present, a team could use this as a quick check at a construction site meeting or at a morning huddle, at a medical operating room pre-meeting or prior to equipment startup.

Questions, again, should probably be probabilistic: “How safe is it?” or “How ready are we?” as opposed to binary: “Is it safe?” or “Are we ready?”

Again, it's really important to embrace the outliers here and to model for everyone that it is safe to be in that position.

## **2) BE CURIOUS, NOT COMPELLING**

In this strategy, it's important to remember that leaders should speak last.

Part of the behavior behind being curious, not compelling, is withholding your own opinion until later.

The higher you are, or are perceived to be, within the organization, the more important this is because the more likely it is that people will want to align to your position.

There is good science on this and, again, we'll discuss it.

You speak less, not to prove you're the leader, but because speaking less allows others to freely voice their opinions first and you get more information. Some specific tactics include the idea swap or, what some thinkers (Charley Munger) have called, inversion thinking.

In this case, you have people argue for the opposite position of their own position.

In groups, break up the meeting into small discussion groups and invite people to talk to someone who voted the opposite way that they did in order to learn what was behind that vote. This will allow them to practice being curious instead of compelling and they could practice asking questions and open-ended questions.

This is a mechanism for getting people to listen more carefully, nonjudgmentally, and nondefensively to another point of view. It is also part of developing new leaders and leadership skills at all levels.

Using this exercise, we often see groups come to an agreement or compromise without needing a "boss as a decision maker." This is because it trains their brains to think considerably about ideas other than their own and opens their perspective on what the situation might actually be.

Additionally, and as noted earlier, it allows the outliers to feel heard - which could be very powerful in the long run.

So questions (especially nonbinary questions and how questions) work. But, in Marquet's strategies for being a better leader - triggering curiosity and openness, rather than compulsion and coercion, there are seven sins of bad questions and avoiding these can make you even better:

## Sin No. 1. **Question stacking.**

Example, "So how much testing has been done? I mean do we really have all the bugs identified? Yeah, I just really think it's important to know that. Are we go to go?"

Question stacking is asking the same (or a slightly modified) question repeatedly in different ways or drilling down a logic tree you think defines the problem. Just ask one question at a time then pause and go into true listening mode. That's a better strategy for getting more information. In essence, put a question mark on it and then go silent.

This takes practice because you have to think of the question before you start talking and then you have to resist the urge to step in with more questions. Rest comfortably in the quiet and you could become a more powerful leader. Wait until the answers have ended before thinking about the next one (which can often simply be "And?").

## Sin No. 2. **Leading questions.**

These aren't allowed in court for a reason. They poison the well.

Example, "Have you thought about the needs of the client?" A leading question comes from the place of thinking that the person is wrong, or that you have the answer. Instead, have a learning moment for yourself.

**Ask the questions that assumes the other person might be right rather than you.**

An easy start is to be neutral, **"Tell me more about that."**

Temporarily set aside your judgement or be curious about what you see and don't see, and what they think that you don't think. Since it's temporary, you can immerse yourself in that belief and when it's over, you do not need to agree with them or approve the action, but during your initial response, try that.

Another approach is to start with the question "How."



Ask, "How would that work?" "How does that align with our objectives?" This is the inquisitive how. The inquisitive how sounds like "How does X affect Y?" or "How do you see that?"

### Sin No. 3. **Why questions.**

"Why would you want to do that?" is a good example. This type of question puts people on the defensive and reveals that you think that it's a bad idea.

In such cases, it best to reserve judgement and simply say, "Tell me more about that." Another option is to ask, "What is behind your decision?" "How do you see or understand the issue?"

### Sin No. 4 Sin. **Dirty questions.**

A dirty question is like a leading question but it does not overtly carry the message that the other person's wrong but it does carry subtle, and often unconscious biases, and anticipates a particular answer.

The phrase, "dirty question," comes from the concept of "Clean Language," the way of speaking and asking questions in psychological counseling that attempts to eliminate the counselor's bias from the question and allows the patient to develop his or her response.

Clean language was devised by David Grove in the 1980s and has been expanded since. A good book on the subject is "Clean Language, Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds" by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees, published in 2008.

Here's an example: Let's say a colleague has expressed frustration with another colleague and said that they're at a dead end when it comes to getting the other person to complete work that a project depends upon.

You ask, "Do you have the courage to stand up to them"? That is a dirty question.

It's dirty because the question presumes your friend should confront them by speaking up but the metaphor is "stand up to" instead of "partner with," and finally, that the needed resource for your friend is courage.

It also implies that your friend's responsibility is to get the person to do their job.

A clean question version of this would eliminate more biases and would sound more like this, "What do you mean by dead end?" or "What do you want to have happen?" The structure of the clean question is designed to remove your bias and preconceptions.

Clean questions are a technique specifically designed for therapy when there's a lot of time and dedicated listening resources. We rarely have the luxury of this at work but paying attention to biases that might be present in your questions will make your everyday questions more collaborative.

#### Sin No. 5. **Binary questions.**

Examples include "Are we good to launch?" or "Will it work?" Binary questions narrow the available responses to a yes or no. They're convenient for asking in a short period of time but the one answering is in a bind, in a sense is getting the receiver to take responsibility for a successful launch by answering "Yes." We hear these binary questions at work all the time.

Instead, start your questions with "What" or "How."

This makes it impossible to ask a binary question, for example, "How safe is it?" or "How ready are we to launch?" "What" versions of the same questions sound like, "What might go wrong?" or "What do we need before we're ready to launch?"

The simple rule of starting a question with "What" or "How" significantly improves the questions and the quality of the information coming from the team.

#### Sin No. 6. **Self-Affirming Questions.**

Self-affirming questions are also often binary questions with a special motivation to coerce agreement and make the questioner feel good about the decision that they've already made. An example would be "We're good to launch, right?" As I've already discussed, others might include, "You

know what I'm saying?" "It's going to be between these two, right?" "Does that make sense?" or "Everything good as far as x goes?"

Self-affirming questions seek to prove what we **want** the case to be. The purpose is to make the asker feel good rather than to reveal the truth about the situation.

The cure for this sin is to seek enlightenment by asking questions and making it easier rather than harder to bring up challenging information.

Marquet calls this self-educating, not self-affirming, and examples of this would be: "What am I missing?" "What would you like to hear more about?" "What could go wrong?" "What could we do better?"

### Sin No. 7. **Aggressive Questions.**

Example, "What should we do?" This might be too aggressive for some people because it provokes them to make assessments about the future before they're ready to do it or before they have all the information that they need.

One way to make this less aggressive is to do this technique Marquet calls a pause, rewind fast forward (and that I call time shifting perspectives).

In this technique, you start with a pause. PAUSE =DESCRIBE

This invites simple observation of the situation. You simply ask "What do you see?" or "How do you see it?" This simply requires **Description** not analysis and feels safe because the part of our brain used for description is not connected as directly to our emotions. It also feels quite knowable and controllable.

Once you've gotten them to talk about what they see, the next phase is to rewind.

AFTER THE PAUSE THEN REWIND

Rewinding is about reviewing how we got here.

Questions such as “How did we get here?” “What happened to bring us to this point?” or “What happened before this?” are all good triggers for the rewind. And, the past has more uncertainty, but it is still available to them and so still feels safe.

## MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

Finally, fast forward to the future means asking about what will happen next, or whatever you want to do.

This requires assessments about what's least knowable and so therefore most likely to be wrong. As such it triggers the most vulnerability, but jumping straight to “what should we do” might get an “I don't know” response.

That's why we use the Pause...Rewind...Fast Forward Process. It gets them used to the feeling of moving from safe to a bit more vulnerable but also allows them to prepare and to adapt.

## **3) INVITE DISSENT RATHER THAN DRIVE CONSENSUS**

As we've previously observed, there is a real benefit to encouraging dissent and finding out the true wisdom of the crowd rather than trying to drive consensus or anchoring your own opinion. So the wisdom of the crowd can be determined in one of two ways.

For example, some of the science shows that the first number tossed out by the first person (and this is even emphasized further if that person is a leader) often tends to be an anchor, and others may argue with just the number up and down, but it always seems to be clustered around the initial anchor point, so essentially, once a majority starts to form an opinion, it becomes much harder for those in the minority to voice their dissent.

To prepare for this, I went and watched videos of a famous landmark study by psychologist Solomon Asch who invited college students to come in for a vision test. Videos of this are fascinating, and show that the last person who was the subject, all the others were conspirators in the study would often take an absurd position that made no sense.

When later asked, the participants said things like I thought I was wrong, and I thought that the group knew something that I did not. The same rationalizations will happen at your business meetings if you are not careful, and if you don't create an environment of encouraging dissent.

The lesson is essentially to make it safe and relatively easy for people to dissent, not in a disruptive way, but in an informative way. Some studies have said that this could be done as simply as asking someone in the group to state an opposing opinion and to share with the whole group why they might be wrong just to prime them to disagree, once it seems that the group is coalescing around an answer.

In Captain Marquet's organization, they use black and red cards to formalize this.

They call them dissent cards, and used them in a ratio of five to one. Five black for every red. They shuffle a deck, and people take a card. Here's the rule. If they have a red card, they have to dissent, and the card makes it safe and necessary to do so. Essentially, the rules are that you're not a jerk if you do it. You have to do it. If you have a black card, you can still dissent if you want to, but you don't have to. Black cards have reminders on them for how we should respond to the dissenter by being curious and not compelling.

Captain Marquet discusses his observation of the amazing power of dissent in an exercise he was running with a group of executives in China. Four of the executives, all men, were sitting at four tables of ten. After watching a short video, their task was determined as a table, how many sails an old-fashioned ship in the video had up. They had 2 minutes to achieve this.

Marquet says that he personally observed all the tables.

Not knowing the language, he focused on who spoke and in what order. Essentially, the body language. The tables were close together, but he did not observe any cross talk between the tables. When it was time to share their answers, an executive from the first table stood up and gave a nice speech about having a harmonious conversation during which everyone's voice was heard, and asserted that there were five sails.

At each of the three tables following the discussion, an executive stood up, gave a variation of the same speech, and said the exact same number of five.

The correct answer was actually eight, and essentially every table had it wrong.

They then passed out the dissent cards.

Two red, and eight black cards to every table, and had them repeat the exercise. People with the red cards had to dissent from the group, and here's the key. He did not show them the video again so they could not revise their answers by looking more closely.

The only new information they had was that their previous answer of five was wrong. They did not know the exact number. Again, after 2 minutes, it was time to show the results. This time, there was no speech, but the answers were seven, eight, seven, and eight. Essentially, by introducing nothing but a dissenter, they got the groups much closer to the truth and to the observable reality.

**Of course, as a leader, your fear is that a dissent equals disharmony, and is to be avoided (often at all cost).**

But organizations that practice dissent where people are dissenting with the best interest of the organization in mind, and where people respond to dissenters with curiosity, dissent does not feel disharmonious.

This takes a little bit of work obviously. The behavior of the group toward the dissenter is important in sustaining the practice of dissent, or what I would call a valuable dissent. It is essential, therefore, that people practice with questions like what's behind what you're saying, can you tell us more about that, what do you see that leads you to believe that?

## 4) GIVE INFORMATION NOT INSTRUCTIONS

In America, and in most western nations, we are barraged by signs and headlines telling us what to do or to think:

“Wash your hands”  
“Employees Must Wash Hands”  
“Shut the door”  
“Staff/Employees only”  
“Hard Hat Area”  
“No Admission”  
“Stop”  
“Orange Man Bad”  
“Biden has dementia”  
“No smoking”  
“No visitors”

Again, these signs/headlines are part of the industrial playbook of societal and behavioral coercion. They're part of a top down system that tries to gain conformity and control and to limit diversity of individual and collective thinking. It's a system that is based on authority and growing/maintaining power over the best results for the most people.

But it's not merely signs and headlines.

We are, as individuals (think parents), as business leaders (think of yourself under deadline or Mark Zuckerberg under pressure from the government) and as political leaders (think all of the power crazed maniacs of both parties who voted almost unanimously to tax any IRAs you inherit at vastly higher rates to fuel what they think is best for you), constantly telling people what to do.

“Park over there.”  
“I've reviewed it so go ahead and submit the proposal.”  
“Add these user stories to the web site/brochure.”  
“Double check your numbers.”  
“ANTIFA is bad/dangerous, and destructive to society.”

“ANTIFA is good/safe and seeking a better society.”

**My favorite from his book is “Be back here at 10:00 A.M.”**

Why is that my favorite? Well it struck home.

Captain Marquet relates a story that when he was speaking, he told people to “be back from the break at 10:00 A.M.” I also do it all the time when I speak. We think it’s essential to keep things on time and on schedule.

At least one person who was paying attention came up and said to him “You're a big, fat hypocrite.”

Marquet's first reaction was to be defensive, but then he asked “What do you mean?” in the most neutral tone he claimed he could muster.

“Well, you just gave us all a direct instruction – “Be back by 10:00.” Try following your advice.”

So what did he learn and what did he do?

Well, he now says “I will start at 10:00 A.M.”, and he does.

Note the difference. He is not giving an instruction. He is giving information that people are free to do with what they will. However, after a few breaks where he promptly started, just as he said he would, people came back on time...based on information NOT based on an order or an instruction.

He also relates that at another time when he was giving a workshop in Medellin, Columbia, the seminar host warned him about being “too militaristic and too Americano” with his schedule.

“This group likes to be late.” He tried his trick – no instructions or orders...just information. All he said was I’ll start at 10 am.”

It worked.



The first time, there were a few people milling about the coffee pots, but he started at exactly 10:00. No lectures, no admonitions, no demands, no instructions.

After that, they were locked on schedule. The organizer was astounded. He'd never seen it before. And I can confirm that while I still sometimes forget, when I do it right, there's a very high level of compliance.

### **So how do you improve at giving information but not instructions?**

Here are a few examples from the book that might be worth trying/practicing or just reading to get a better understanding:

- Instead of "Park there", try "I see a parking spot there."
- Instead of "Go ahead and submit the proposal," try "I can't see anything I would change."
- Instead of "Add these user stories," try "Customer service has some new user stories for our products."
- Instead of "Double check these numbers," try "It's important that these numbers' correct, and I see something that doesn't quite add up for me."

**Just to review, it's time, as a growing and developing leader, to move from coercion to collaboration.**

## **Conclusion And Review**

**So you've studied five techniques:**

- 1. Use the blue work red work framework**
- 2. Learn, model and encourage the PAUSE**
- 3. Use better language patterns and questions to go deeper**
- 4. Collaboration rather than segregation**
- 5. Collaboration with healthy dissent**

**And you've been exposed to four high level strategies that will help you to move from coercion to collaboration informed by healthy, safe and productive dissent:**

- 1. Vote first, then discuss.**
- 2. Be curious, not compelling.**
- 3. Invite and encourage appropriate dissent rather than driving for consensus.**
- 4. Give information, not instructions**

**It's time to start noticing when you're already doing these things, schedule them, practice and implement them. And start noting what works and how you're improving.**

**Be well...**

**Dave Frees**