

CHAPTER 4.6



SEE THE BIG C—COMMITMENT

Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.

—Voltaire

Stage Characteristic: The father encourages the right habits however small they are.

The Father Manager never fails to appreciate any help however small. But the contrarian Father Manager stresses on commitment rather than results. How?

All the sixteen managers from different teams gathered in an eager expectation on a bright Tuesday morning in the oval-shaped conference room. Freddie had gathered them after two weeks of trying to find their time. After welcoming them, he clicked his presentation. The screen was still blank. Freddie was perplexed. He apologized thrice after the presentation showed no signs of starting up. The presentation file in the location was corrupt! When Freddie tried another time, “Excuse me” came a polite and familiar voice from behind. It was Martha! She nudged her laptop to the cable. Freddie didn’t know that Martha had a copy.

The presentation was done amid cheers from the managers.

Then, Freddie called Martha to his cabin, pulled out a copy of *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg from his drawer, and gifted it to Martha. Martha was thrilled and said, “I didn’t work with you on this presentation. That was Vishy and Arnold. I don’t think I deserve anything beyond a simple “Thank you.””

Initial Realization Stage

Freddie told her how Saint Thiruvalluvar, had composed two-line couplets on various aspects of life in the global ethics guide. He added that in one couplet, Thiruvalluvar says “an act of timely help, however small, is truly larger than the world itself.”

Listening intently, Martha told him, “I learned that encouraging small things in a big way is important.”

On another day came an announcement from Valerie, the HR head, that department heads were free to come up with their own metric for identifying staff for monthly rewards.

This threw everyone into a spin. The department heads swung into action, preparing macros. Some identified five parameters and few others were weighing 15 parameters. A few more were searching for analysts from other teams.

Arnold, Martha, and Henry were intrigued when Freddie told them what he had in mind. That kickstarted a conversation.

“There are no metrics,” said Henry.

“How do we correctly identify the people? How do we convince those who don’t qualify?” queried Martha.

“This doesn’t seem result-oriented,” felt Arnold.

The criteria to identify the staff wasn’t conventional. Further, Freddie didn’t show them any Excel sheet.

After a pause, Martha said, “This proposal will be difficult to implement.” Freddie challenged, “Why do you say so?”

“You’re asking us to reward people based on commitment displayed at work. What about the results?” queried Martha.

Freddie asked, “Do you think any result is an outcome of commitment displayed?”

Martha said “Hmm.”

“Then, why don’t we reward people based on commitment?” asked Freddie nonchalantly.

Father Of Your Team

Henry pitched in. “But Freddie, how do we measure commitment?”

“You needn’t measure,” Freddie said, asking “How easy is it to identify people who deliver the assignments with commitment?”

Henry answered. “It’s easy. We know who is putting in their best. It’s easy to tell you who displayed spirit to rise to the occasion despite their own constraints.”

“Very good! Our proposal will work. You needn’t measure what you can distinguish,” declared Freddie.

Arnold asked, “Yet, Freddie, isn’t it important to measure results?”

Freddie folded an A4 sheet. He placed another A4 sheet beside it and questioned, “Can you tell me which one is higher in width?”

“Obviously the sheet on your right?” Henry promptly said.

“Very good, why didn’t you measure?” Freddie further asked.

“It’s not necessary to measure. It’s easy to see,” Henry replied.

”That’s my boy! You needn’t measure commitment. Please continue to notice incidents where people demonstrate commitment. Once you notice, send a justification on the importance and background. We’ll honor them through this recognition program,” promised Freddie.

Henry and Martha seemed to understand.

Arnold persisted. “Don’t we want to reward them for results, Freddie?”

Freddie clarified. “Of course. Accomplishment is important, but an attitude toward accomplishment is more important. Would you like to reward someone who was indifferent and achieved few metrics due to your supervision?”

“No,” Arnold shook his head.

Initial Realization Stage

Freddie reasoned. “By merely changing the weights and restructuring a metrics-based system, a top performer can become an average performer and a bottom performer can become a top performer. Isn’t that right?”

Arnold said, “Of course. When metrics and weights are the basis, it’ll happen.”

Freddie finally said, “It’ll be right to recognize people for their commitment. They may not have accomplished results yet. When you recognize at the commitment stage, a lot of other team members realize that helping each other is valued. They’ll realize that metric is not everything. They’ll display commitment. Imagine how easy it is to achieve results as a team when everyone in the team works with total commitment.”

“That will work wonders!” said Martha excitedly.

Freddie called it GOAL—Greater Objectives Aimed Lovingly, adding, “When someone is aiming lovingly, recognize them. Results can be reported by macros. Behavior can be reported by the right leaders. Let’s not delegate our discretion to macros when it comes to recognizing our people.”

“I’m very much with you, Freddie, on this,” said Martha and added, “Results can be faked or can be wrongly reported with a formula error. Commitment is bullet-proofed.”

Stat Corner

71% of heads of HR are spending more time on business issues not related to HR or talent. Source- Gartner

To summarize, the Father Manager’s approach in the Initial Realization Stage is characterized by

- Building relationship across the organization and leveraging that relationship for staff’s benefit.
- Understanding that staff assesses the manager frequently, for taking responsibility of being a role model.

Father Of Your Team

- Not being predictable at all times.
- Respecting the team's priorities.
- Creating an environment of openness in the team where each can question the other to achieve greater levels of improvement.
- Encouraging right behavior at every level of the organization without being bogged down by implications.
- Developing and assessing the ownership quotient of the team (a team that owns the goals also delivers the well).
- Assessing ownership of their team and not limiting to compliance.
- Displaying willingness to transform the organization from a new employee's perspective.
- Valuing potential in the new staff.
- Establishing role model behavior with the team regardless of what is generally practiced.
- Helping team foresee a positive outcome.
- Educating leaders on the importance of relationships to inspire people.
- Mentoring staff on career even if they do not share a reporting relationship.
- Communicating the importance of work-life balance for holistic performance.
- Valuing staff's ability to understand the Big Picture, regardless of tenure or background.
- Breaking limiting belief of the staff that they cannot challenge the leader's skill.
- Encouraging right behaviour, regardless of the significance.
- Intention to reward commitment than results.

With the fourth natural stage of leadership—Entitlement Stage—you will see how the team member graduates to providing the unconditional right to the Father Manager.