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CHAPTER 4: THE MENTOR-MANAGER

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”
~Winston Churchill

What does it mean to love your job? This is a hot topic, as the idea of loving your job isn't something that can be packaged in a box—it's very subjective—and everybody has an opinion about it. Some would argue that loving your job means to be “on fire” each day, to wake up each morning excited to go to work. Some would argue that instead, we need to learn to love what we do instead of finding the perfect job that we love. At least in some cases, we should learn to find worth and purpose in the work that we “have” to do because of our circumstances. Still others would say that the financial reward from your job correlates with the level of enjoyment you get while at work. Tim Grover, author of *Relentless: From Good to Great to Unstoppable*, says: “You don't have to love the hard work. You just have to crave the end result so much that the hard work becomes irrelevant.”

I love that Tim puts the emphasis on the end result. Every job out there will have aspects that are not enjoyable. A teacher may love their work with students and the chance to educate and shape young minds for the better, but that doesn't mean they have to love dealing with unhappy parents. A surgeon may love the chance to alleviate pain for their patients or improve their quality of life, but that doesn't mean they love the mounds of paperwork, charting, and dictation that come with it. A sales rep might enjoy the thrill of making the sale, but doesn't enjoy the follow-ups or the clients who ignore them time and time again. The point is that if you are doing something that makes you crave a certain result, all of those “negative aspects” of work become tolerable.

For me, aviation was the field that made me disregard (and fairly easily) any negative aspect of it. Since I was a kid, I have wanted to fly planes, helicopters, just about anything that could fly and even some things that shouldn't. It's no coincidence that *Top Gun* is one of my all time favorite movies. When I imagined myself grown up, it was me sporting a leather aviator's jacket and gold-framed Ray-Bans model 3025 (Aviator Classic) sunglasses with green lenses. So when I got the job at the local regional airport, I loved it. The rumbling vibrations of rotors overhead as aircraft landed and took off, the

thrill of seeing them thunder by mere feet off the ground, and the smell—a mixture of fuel, sweat, and grease. It was heaven for a young high school kid like me.

I was passionate about aviation, and because of that personal passion, I worked very hard day in and day out. I would arrive home exhausted from a long day of work. My official title was Airport Line Man. I was in charge of fueling airplanes, pulling them in and out of hangars, polishing and cleaning specific aircrafts while making sure the airport was safe and in order. Working that job was not easy while trying to balance homework, dating, social activities, chores at home, and other extra curricular activities. But every day I pushed myself to show my boss that I deserved to be there. Just as Tim Grover stated, I didn't mind the hard work and long hours because my craving for the end result overshadowed everything. In my off time, I took flying lessons. I was determined to be the youngest pilot in the state, a goal I eventually accomplished. Because of my enthusiasm and hard work, I was entrusted with more and more responsibility.

One day I was asked to back a plane out of a hangar, something I routinely did. No big deal. But as I backed the plane out, I heard a gut-wrenching sound of metal banging against metal. BAM! I didn't need to look, I knew what had happened. My heart sank.

Jumping down, I ran to the side of the plane to assess the damage. The plane had hit the hangar doorway and bent the wingtip. I was mortified because I had been around long enough to know that this was an *expensive* mistake. Frantic, I quickly scanned through every option I had to make everything better. I thought I could find a way to make up for it—to assure my boss that this would *never* happen again. It was no use. Hesitantly, I went to my boss to inform him of the accident.

My manager at the time was very disconnected, and didn't really care about anything else as long as I was on time in the morning and got my work done. He never noticed the care I took in my job. He didn't see the long hours and hard work I invested, or that I would show up early for my 12 hour shift before 6:00 am to get a head start. He only saw numbers on a spreadsheet registering "clocked-in, clocked-out". Maybe if he knew the passion I had for the job, his response would have been different. But to him, management philosophy was encapsulated in the phrase "my way or the highway," which translated to high expectations, but low engagement with me, his employee. His zero-tolerance attitude left no room for mistakes—and therefore no room for learning. I was let go immediately. Because of one incalculable mistake and the intolerance of a boss, it felt like lifetime of passion was squelched in a day.

Oprah Winfrey said, “Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives*.” *During my work as the undercover millennial, I found two components in managers and leaders that displayed this type of connection and engagement that Oprah refers to: the **manager’s ability to relate and connect to their employees**, and the other being the **manager’s level of expectations**.* These two components were a common thread in the four types of managers we found, and we have since begun using these two factors—their level of connection to their employees, and their level of expectations of their employees—as basic measuring tools for managers.

Employees respond to managers they have a connection with, as do clients with their salespeople, and students with their teachers, etc—the list could go on. Throughout this book, you will find tools that will help you connect better to your people. As you do so, you should notice higher retention and a better relationship with your them. In the rest of this chapter, we will use the example of an employee and their manager, but keep in mind that these principles can apply to almost any type of relationship. Connection will be one of the most valuable tools you have as a manager to shape the experience of employees in the workplace. They will truly value that connection you provide.

But what is “connection?” By definition, connection is a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else. Connection is creating that “link” between each other, often comprised with levels of trust, love, empathy, kindness, and care. It’s important to note that this link looks different for everybody, and a connection with one employee or client will not be identical to that of another, as there are always boundaries and personal preferences to be considered. The spectrum of connection is truly limitless, and always unique.

In addition to connection within leadership, people value clear expectations. It’s safe to say that most employees are familiar with their job descriptions when they enter an organization. Unfortunately, many employees don’t know the details or logistics of what’s expected of them. Yes, their job title might be clear, but the logistics of why, when, and how they’re supposed to take care of the listed duties might be a mystery. Your expectations can be as high or as low as you want them to be, but if they are not clear expectations, or your ship will sail nowhere.

THE FOUR TYPES OF MANAGERS

In our undercover work and conversations with employees, four types of managers were repeatedly mentioned. Each type of management brings its own unique results, whether intentional or not. We'll discuss each type in turn, but we'll start with this chart, which shows the typical results of both high and low connection and high and low expectations for performance—whether you manage (or aspire to manage) a group of employees, a classroom of students, or a team of salesmen/clients, this can apply to you.

Type of Management	Standards & Expectations	Connection	Result
The Removed Manager	Low	Low	Disengagement
The Buddy Manager	Low	High	Entitlement
The Controlling Manager	High	Low	Rebellion & Pushback
The Mentor Manager	High	High	Respect & Loyalty

The Removed Manager—Low Expectations, Low Connection

Just like the name implies, the Removed Manager is completely removed—emotionally and often physically—from the organization. For whatever reason, this manager struggles to connect with their employees and therefore deals with a substantial amount of disengagement. This type of manager will often say things like “I can’t get my employees to engage at work” or “They just run through the motions to get a paycheck” or “They wouldn’t change even if I told them to.” This is an example of a manager who is simply in the organization, and not into the organization. Often times, they are burnt out, and feel their position in leadership is a burden. Nobody is really sure why they’re still managing or why they haven’t left—maybe it’s the benefits, or maybe they don’t know what else they’d like to do. Either way, they do the status quo—nothing more, and nothing less.

As a result of absentee management, employees feel rejected and massively undervalued. Consequently, employees are actively searching for a new place of employment.

The Buddy Manager—Low Expectations, High Connection

This manager can also be called the Rescuing Manager. The combination of low expectations and high connection means that the employees end up doing more managing than the actual manager. The employees feel cared for, but sense a lack of leadership and authority. They feel they can do whatever they want, while also knowing they could be doing a better job than the manager.

The Buddy Manager is just that—a buddy. They care more about approval and friendship from their team than leading and empowering each of their employees to be better. You can often hear the Buddy Manager say things like: “I want to be here for you. Anything you need, you let me know.” Or “Sure, take the rest of the week off.” But when it comes to standards, consequently, this laxness creates entitlement. Perhaps you’ve been a part of a conversation that sounds like this: “Those *beep* millennials are so whiny. All they want is more. They’re so entitled. They don’t know how to work.” You might be right. But being their Buddy or their Rescuer without expecting a certain standard of performance will be a disservice to them (and you) in the long run.

The Buddy Manager might treat some people differently than others, sometimes making exceptions when performance standards aren’t met. However, making exceptions for one individual will soon lead to exceptions for all individuals, and where will that get you? Nowhere.

One of the worst things that can happen to your authority as a manager is for an employee to become a “great friend” and begin to take advantage of the relationship. It begins innocently enough, but soon they start showing up late for work, not completing their work efficiently, and seeing how far they can stretch the standard that you probably didn’t set strongly enough in the first place. And they’ll expect you to tolerate it because you are their *friend*, and *that’s what friends do*.

This doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t have great relationships with your employees—you absolutely should! But when your relationship with an employee takes precedence over the good of the company, that is when problems arise. The Buddy Manager will allow friendship or fear of disapproval to get in the way of making the tough decisions that come with working in a business.

The Controlling Manager—High Expectations, Low Connection

This manager has the mentality of “my way or the highway.” They are strict, rigid, and forceful in their management style, which results in their employees’ rebellion, outward defiance, and variations of deliberate rule breaking. Employees would be written up, put on probation, not given breaks, paychecks would be threatened or dropped, and most of the time the punishment resulted in being fired or let go. Punishment is high, and collaboration is low.

The Controlling Manager operates without giving much care for their employees as individuals, and they feel that they adequately show their appreciation by simply allowing their workers to receive a paycheck. Employees might hear “Be glad you have a job” or “Put your head down, and go to work—do that, and we won’t have any issues.”

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, Gallup polls show that the manager of a company accounts for at least 70 percent of why employees stop engaging.¹⁷ This disengagement, caused by a bad manager, costs the company in many ways. It results in loss of productivity from disgruntled employees, in theft or purposeful mistakes because of employee retaliation, or the replacement costs of a new hire when an employee can no longer handle the difficulties of working for a bad manager. You cannot afford to have managers like this—or to be one of these managers yourself.

The Mentor Manager—High Connection, High Expectations

This is where the magic happens! As a result of working for a Mentor Manager, employees give respect and loyalty, and they engage with their work and those they work with on the highest level. Mentor Managers are able to communicate a person’s worth and potential so well that the person begins to see it within themselves (if they didn’t already).

A Mentor Manager is somebody who is constantly striving to be with their people, asking the questions and making *deposits of trust*. As with a bank account, if you deposit a lot—connection, leadership, inspiration—you can ask a lot in return. It’s a basic rule of finance: the more you deposit, the more you can withdraw. These deposits of trust create respect and understanding, allowing your workplace to flourish in the way it needs to.

It’s important to remember that as a leader in your organization, you are being watched. People are waiting to see what you’ll do and how you’ll handle certain

situations. Being a Mentor Manager is about connection and the ability to really relate to your people, especially in difficult situations. Many corporations are great at developing people, but connecting to people has to be equally developed. It's not so much about connecting to the employee, as it is about being somebody that your employees want to connect to. It's up to them how much they want to connect, but connection can't happen unless the door is open and safe. This is why becoming a Mentor Manager is the most valuable skillset to acquire.

TRADITIONAL LEADERS VS. MENTOR-MANAGERS

If you've ever associated with another human being, you know firsthand that you cannot *change* another person. Nobody can. People can only change themselves. But as a leader, you *can* influence, motivate, and inspire someone in such a positive way that it moves them to change their own life.

In our years running the Undercover Millennial program, we've interviewed thousands of millennials and younger workers about their jobs—what they loved, why they loved it, what they didn't love, why they didn't love it, etc. The most prominent answer among the satisfied answers was that they "loved their boss." We rarely heard employees compliment a manager's ability to organize, make a solid meeting agenda, or increase productivity. Instead, they praised their leader's ability to mentor, guide, connect, advocate, and empathize. These intangible skills were the core foundation behind everything that was good and right. They hated the 'manager'—but loved the 'mentor.' But what are the qualities of a mentor? We can throw around the words "guide, connect, advocate, and empathize" all we want, but how does this translate into actionable ideas?

Caution—It's crucial to note that there is a very clear distinction between mentorship and traditional leadership. Both have characteristics that are valuable and needed, but it's important to create a clear distinction between the two, as our research has been very clear on these two traits.

The attributes of a traditional leader look like this:

- A traditional leader is the visionary—they set the tone, pace, attitude, and direction for a business. Typically, their employees are following their agenda, goals, parameters, and values. Traditional leaders prefer employees who fit the

dynamics of what they are trying to accomplish. The leader's job is to focus on where the ship is going.

- A traditional leader has to focus on the big picture. Because of this, a leader needs to have accountability from others to meet production and marketing goals—employees must honor the vision of the company.
- A traditional leader is the financial decision maker. They have hard decisions, and often have to shed the dead weight of employees, products, and programs that aren't working so their ship can move faster and more effectively.
- A traditional leader stands in the front and leads, while everyone else follows.

The attributes of a Mentor Manager look like this:

- A mentor is someone who takes the time for one-on-one coaching, focusing on professional and personal growth. A mentor helps a person move forward and overcome obstacles.
- A mentor is someone who shifts the focus to the employee and the employee's professional and personal goals. A mentor helps others establish their paths, values and purposes—both within the company and outside of it—instead of just focusing on the company's needs or goals.
- A mentor has the ability to focus on the people within the ship, instead of just where the ship is headed. A mentor's focus is people-driven instead of entity-driven.
- A mentor stands next to others and walks the path with them.

I want to make it clear that I am not saying that mentorship is better than leadership, or vice versa. In my experience, having both sets of attributes (and being able to switch between them) as a person of influence is crucial. What I *am* saying is that when it came to higher engagement and increased loyalty, the characteristics of a mentor-manager are what people were influenced by the most.

Take a moment to recall some of the greatest stories you can think of—films, screenplays, books—the format doesn't matter. They are great stories for several reasons, but there is usually one thing that they have in common: a mentor. Luke had Obi Wan Kenobi, Katniss had Haymitch, Frodo had Gandalf, Rocky had Mick. Why were they mentors? Because they sparked the possibility of what could be. They were the

keystone that connected their students to their dreams. Their *credibility, competence, confidence, candor, and ability to care* were the qualifying factors that allowed them to be the mentors they were. These five characteristics of mentorship are essential for you to recognize and adopt in your own life because they are what will ultimately qualify you to be a mentor to your own people, regardless of who they are or what line of work you are in. We will dive deeper into these five characteristics of mentorship (and how to apply them) in Chapter Ten.

As important as it is to connect to your people, it's equally important to give them reasons to want to connect with you. Take the time to understand the desires and goals of your people, and help them understand that you are the person who can get them there. This two-way connection is what completes the mentorship formula.

The greatest leaders are the ones who are able to create a culture of mentoring for their employees. They practice mentorship as well as teach the power of mentorship, which allows it to trickle down through the organization. Don't burn yourself out because you feel burdened to mentor everybody who walks through your door. Teach your people how to mentor and a culture of mentorship, and your people/company will thrive.

HOW DO I CONNECT? HOW DO I LEAD?

Take a moment to evaluate how you lead and connect to your people. What are your strengths? Oftentimes, we are really good at the development side of our industry and at the development of those who work for us, but how good are we at the connection side of things?

Stephen R. Covey said, "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves."

As much as I love Stephen R. Covey, I want to offer a slightly different perspective. While I believe the theory behind this saying is nearly spot on, I don't believe it is just about leadership as much as I believe that it is more about mentorship. A leader is someone who can get others to follow them. There are many good leaders who can get people to follow—but still fall short in their ability to get people to believe in themselves. That is the difference between a traditional leader and a leader who has developed the qualities of a mentor. Traditional leaders mostly focus on the destination—mentors focus on the people and the journey to the destination. Both traditional leaders and mentors are necessary, and both create the greatest opportunity for significance and success.

So this is how I'd like you to apply this: "Great **mentors** can communicate a person's potential and worth so clearly that the person begins to see those things in themselves."

Take a moment to evaluate where you land as a Mentor Manager. Honestly ask yourself the following questions. Refer to the Management Styles chart as needed.

1. If I have been operating as a Removed Manager (low expectations and low connection), why do I feel like I cannot engage with my employees? Why might I be keeping my distance? Why am I reluctant to express high expectations?
2. If I have been operating as a Buddy Manager (low expectations, high connection), why do I feel like I have to be everyone's friend before I'm seen as their boss? What am I telling myself that prevents me from holding boundaries? What am I afraid I will lose if I show up in what I perceive to be a managerial capacity?
3. If I have been operating as a Controlling Manager (high expectations, low connection), where did this come from? Where did I learn that it was "my way or the highway" in my life experiences? Where have I experienced this before in my professional life?
4. If I have been operating as a Mentor Manager (high expectations, high connection), what are the benefits of my managerial style? How can I continue to improve in being the mentor that my employees need? What is working and what can change to improve upon the mentoring process?

WE LEARN THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND EXAMPLE

After my airport experience, I turned to hospitality, working at a resort that had a beautiful warm-water, natural crater nestled into the Wasatch Mountains of Utah. It seemed like a great job when I got hired on, but my boss was an absolute tyrant who was armed with checklists up to her teeth. It mattered very little to her that I was eager to learn and do my job well. Instead, she focused on everything that was wrong, and never took the time to look for anything positive in any situation—and certainly not in her employees. Consequently, none of us worked there for very long. I still remained in hospitality after that, but at a different resort, where I had the incredible opportunity to work with an older man we called "Lee the Bell Captain."

After leaving his high-paying consultancy business, Lee had come to the Zermatt Resort, a luxury hotel, to work in management. Lee was a smart guy and loved people. When he graduated with a Masters degree in audiology and speech therapy, his goal was to become a medical doctor, and he was quickly accepted into a program that worked with the Mayo Clinic. He spent the summer before the program working with an otolaryngologist and decided to change career directions—he found he wanted to work *with* people, not on them. He went back to school to become a communicative-disorders specialist, and he worked as a speech therapist for people struggling with disabilities. He had loved that line of work, but eventually retired from it. By the time I met him, he was in his third career.

At the time, the only thing I knew about Lee was that this old guy was one of the hardest-working employees I had ever met. He arrived every morning with a huge smile on his face and an infectious energy of enthusiasm. While his main responsibility at the resort was to help hire and train the bell staff, he also took fantastic care of the conference presenters and event teams that came into town. He made them look so good! He never worried about recognition. Instead of needing to be noticed, Lee was a man who noticed things about other people and was always the first to give recognition to them.

Right away, I could tell that Lee was a different type of manager than I had ever had before. Within just one day of my working for him, he made me aware of my strengths and capitalized on them. “Clint,” he said to me, “when I saw that last car pull up, I was so happy to see how you noticed the elderly woman at the wheel. I saw you run over and open her front door so quickly. And how cautious you were with her—so kind and friendly to her as you helped her out of the car. Now, that’s the type of thing that can really make a difference in another person’s life.”

Immediate connection.

Lee made it a pleasure to come to work every day. As he worked with me and the other bellmen, he continuously reinforced our strengths. Whenever we were messing around or made a mistake, he would pull us aside individually and give us some advice on how to do our jobs better. Lee had very high expectations, which he communicated to us by his *example*, and then reinforced through his *teaching* and his *training*. Instead of an entire team focused on tips and money, we focused on our customers and the needs they had. As a byproduct, the tips poured in. We learned to love people as much as Lee did, and we concentrated on making sure their stay with us was as pleasant as possible.

I learned to memorize names and faces, and to take special care of people's belongings and their cars. When I did make a mistake, Lee never threatened to fire me or make me feel less than anyone else. He simply mentored me into a better frame of mind. Every mistake created an opportunity to learn greater things about myself and what was possible in my job.

Lee also knew 90 percent more about me than any other manager I had ever had. He cared. He asked me questions about my life, school, girls, my hopes and dreams, etc. But it wasn't just with me—he did this with everybody. He attended our various concerts and performances, and invited us to break bread together. He cared when someone was ill or struggling. He was a remarkable Mentor Manager, with clearly communicated high expectations and a high connection with each of us.

Even though we didn't know about Lee's past careers, the other bellmen and I knew that Lee was special, and he could likely do anything in the world.

"Why on earth are you doing this job?" I asked him one day. "You could be getting paid ten times more!"

The only response Lee gave was, "I love my job!"

He proved that sentiment every day by showing us we were more valuable to him than any paycheck could possibly be.

To reinforce what I believed about Lee, I called the Zermatt Resort last year and spoke with the general manager. He had the pleasure of working with Lee for nearly a decade, and was happy to share all of the remarkable things that Lee represented. He also conveyed how sad they were when Lee finally retired from Zermatt. I was mostly curious about Lee's retention rate as a Bell Captain, knowing that, according to the American Hotel and Motel Association, the hospitality industry happens to have one of the highest employee turnover rates in the world with a loss of 60-300 percent annually.¹⁸ The Zermatt general manager, however, confirmed that in the nearly ten years of Lee's management, they needed to hire only 49 bellmen—an average of roughly 5 per year, which is unheard of in that industry.

The remarkable thing about all of this is that when I interviewed Lee about the number of bellmen he had worked with over the ten-year span, he simply said, "A little less than 50." Do you know how he knew? He remembered every single person that

he'd ever worked with. He could tell you their names and an impressive bit of information about each one of them.

Lee the Bell Captain taught me to live with passion—he taught me to serve, love, and genuinely care about people. More importantly, he believed in me. He saw many things in me that I had never seen in myself. When I left Zermatt, I was more fully equipped to live my own life better. He helped me see how fun it was to love and to give to people. He helped me see my potential as a father and spouse, and he helped open up my perspective of possible career choices that utilized my strengths. I understood how to serve better, and how to work hard in order to succeed in the medical sales industry, which I entered into next. The lessons I learned from Lee (and incorporated into my everyday life) helped me to succeed very quickly.

I understand now that Lee was an anomaly in the hospitality industry. Fascinatingly enough, this man went from becoming a doctor to being an educator and then a bell captain, and now (well past retirement age) has decided to go back to work—this time, at Trader Joe's. On his very first day, management saw the genuine way that Lee handled the customers and immediately asked him to mentor the other staff members on how to do it correctly. How many people do you know who have been asked to be a Mentoring Manager on their very first day? I'm sure it's not many.

I hope that Lee the Bell Captain has helped you see that it is possible for you to be an anomaly in your very own way—a Mentoring Manager that is uniquely suited to you. You are not Lee the Bell Captain. You never will be. But you are YOU—the you that your employees have the sincere desire to engage with and learn from.

Be as equal in your connection as you are in your productivity. In business (especially sales), we have no problem setting goals, quoting numbers, or understanding the value and importance of a mission statement—we do it fairly well because those are generally seen as the biggest priority. But what suffers the most is the connection piece. That is what is missing. Connection to our people and high standards for them (and ourselves) need to be equal. In doing so, you create an empowered workforce—and empowered workforces always increase greater productivity.

Nearly every employee you will ever have will carry an innate desire to become better than who they are. And as a mentoring manager, you will have the unique opportunity to take that ember that lies in each person and carefully breathe life into it. Through your efforts, you can help each person you work with recognize the possibilities

life has to offer and what they can offer the world. You can encourage them to become not just the best *in* the world, but the best *for* the world—and the best for your business.

MASTERING YOUR MOMENTS

Question #1: Think of a recent experience you had mentoring an employee or a client. What prompted you to mentor them?

Question #2: How did that individual react to your mentoring? Was there a connection made?

Question #3: How can you better communicate expectations and create greater connection with your people so that they feel that they can trust you as a mentor?

CHALLENGE: Focus on Employee Strengths—Write down the great mentors in your life. List at least three. What values and traits did these mentors have? What made them so significant in your life? Why did you connect with them? Next, evaluate your own mentor relationship with your employees. How can you have as much of an impact as these great mentors in your life? What traits can you improve to have greater connection with your employees?