

Episode 65: What is the paradox of leadership?

I attended a session a few weeks ago that talked about the paradox of leadership. It's a subject I have talked to colleagues about often.

At this session, they gave us a key "missing piece" to understand this management puzzle. So what is the paradox of leadership, its issues and what was that missing piece?

1. What is the paradox of leadership?

A paradox is a statement that leads to a contradiction that defies logic but is true.

Example: The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow but do it anyway.

In business, the paradoxes are often around resources and sound like this:

- We need more budget to complete the project but there is no more money
- We need more people but there is no more resource available
- We need more time but deadlines can't move

2. What are the issues with these paradoxes?

Every leader needs to accept that paradoxes will exist.

Some on your team can be paralyzed by paradoxes and will look to blame others.

Finger pointing starts and the reasons become what others do or don't do.

If you fail to manage the paradox, in the end, it will halt a team and therefore the work of the team.

As a leader you need to understand and accept this and work out how to move on.

3. The missing piece

First, let's accept that you can never get rid of all resource constraints.

Secondly, we need to accept that we should always push ourselves to do more with less.

Given that, it's fair to say that there will always be these sorts of paradoxes.

The lesson we need to learn is that paradoxes cannot be fixed, they can only be managed.

Bottom Line: As leaders we are expected to see beyond the restrictions that hold us down and while we can't always fix them, we need to help manage the team through them.

