Do you manage or do you lead your team?
Question to be asked …

It is quite tempting to manage employees by chasing them down, and telling them (perhaps over and over again) what they should be doing. In fact, that is what the word "manager" implies —being on top of staff, making sure they do what they said they would do, when they said they would, and in a proper manner. But an imbalance towards hounding, telling, advising, and admonishing can be incredibly exhausting for both the manager and the employee. In the long run, it does not serve to **empower** anyone. What is needed is a **win-win situation** rooted in a *coach-approach*.

Be a coach
The coach-approach model of engagement and leadership takes into account the fact that **people** are **naturally creative, resourceful and capable**—meaning, they have the answers within them and are capable of acting on them.

When you lead from this operating assumption, you may find that you chase, nag, figure out *for* others, and impose agendas and expectations with less frequency, and instead support others to define their working parameters for themselves. You may notice that you hold people to a much higher standard of capacity and personal responsibility, and hold yourself with greater integrity, care and ease.

> In a nutshell, by being what I call a Leader as Coach you empower others and yourself at the same time. It is a win-win. You do this by helping them to:

- Be aware of **what** they are choosing/ not choosing (the decisions they are currently making that are causing them to under-perform, or feel unmotivated or uninspired)
- Be aware of **why** they make those choices (the professional or even personal reasons)
- Be aware of the **impact/consequences** of their choices (on themselves, others, the team, and organization)
- Be **responsible and accountable** for their choices and current situation/performance (take ownership for what is and is not happening)
- Expand their **range of choices** (open to more possibilities or options, new ways of doing things)
- Move towards **new choices** (create plans, clarify support structures and take clear empowered action)
- Be more **self-directed/self-sufficient** (take greater initiative in the future to reflect upon points 1-6 on their own, and learn from their challenges)

100 Questions

What is happening and Why:
What challenges are you struggling with at the moment?
What is your assessment?
What is causing you to _____?
What's in the way?
What is stopping you from _____?
What are you avoiding?
What are you afraid of?
What's holding you back?
What's blocking you here?
What caused it?
What led up to it?
What part is not clear?
What are you tolerating / putting up with?
What are you taking responsibility for that isn't your responsibility / that is beyond your control?
What are you doing that doesn't support your goals?. Where are you sabotaging yourself?
Are you procrastinating or is there a reason to delay?
How is what you are doing aligning with our agreed expectations?
How might you be overestimating what you can do?
How might you be standing in your own way?
Is this an assumption or have you checked it to be sure?
What part of what you just said could be an assumption?
What data is that claim based on?
What rules/ ideas do you have that are getting in the way?
What are you not telling me that I need to know?
How do you feel about what's going on?

Impact / Consequences / Personal responsibility:
Have you considered the impact you are having on yourself/others/the team/the organization?
What are the consequences of your actions / inaction?
What are the implications of your choices on your productivity/well-being/health/finances?
What price are you paying by not taking action / following through?
If you don't change this, what might happen down the road?

Exploring options / New choices:
Are you willing to explore some possible solutions?
Would you like to brainstorm some ideas?
What do you really want?
What do you need?
What needs to change?
What does your gut/heart/intuition tell you to do?
What do you think you should do?
What do you want to believe about this?
What are your options?
What is your desired outcome?
What does that look like to you? Say more?
What other angles can you think of?
What really matters here?
What will make the biggest difference here?

How can you make this easier / simpler?
How can you make this more enjoyable?
How else might you view this situation?
What would you do if you weren't afraid?
Have you dealt with this in the past? If so, how?
What have you tried so far?
What would be the best way for you to handle this situation?
What needs to be made a priority?
What are you making a priority that doesn't need to be prioritized?
What can wait until later?
What might work?
What is the risk you need to take?
Will this choice move you forward or keep you stuck?

Planning:
What is your plan from here?
What do you want to accomplish today/in 1 week/1 month/3 months/1 year?
What is your strategy for this?
How can you break down that goal into bite-sized pieces?
How could you make this goal more specific or measurable?
How will you know you are where you want to be?
How will you know you have reached it?
What will take you from here to there?

Support:
How able are you to follow through (on your plan)?
How can you ensure that you stay on track?
What will help you to follow through?
What will help you to focus?
What support do you need to accomplish it?
What do you need in order to succeed?
What resources are available to you?
What training / resources might you need?
How can you get the knowledge / information you need?
How can you find out?
Where do you need to ask for help / delegate?
What do you need to give up so that you can make that a priority?
What distractions may be taking you away from what you want to accomplish?
What boundaries do you need to set for yourself?
What do you need to change in your physical workspace so that you can more easily focus?
How can I best support you?
How will I know you have completed your task?

Action:
Now what?
What's next for you?
What will you do? And after that?
What are you willing to do to improve this situation?
When will you do it?
What are you committed to doing?
What is one step you can take right now?
What do you think you should do first?
What would be the most helpful thing that you could do now?
What's the best use of your time at the moment?

Reflection:
How willing are you to follow through?
How much do you really want to do this?
What is the worst thing that could happen?
How can you learn from this problem so it never happens again?
What can you learn from this?
If the same thing comes up again, what will you do?
Is there anything else that you need to consider before starting?

Extra tips and reminders:
- **Awareness and ownership:** You ask the questions first and foremost so that *they* hear the answer, not you. By answering the question out loud, they become more conscious of their situation, the choices they are making, and the consequences. In other words, you help them take ownership of their actions through greater *awareness*.

- **Don't accept ignorance:** If they say, "I don't know" to any question, tell them that you believe they in fact do know the answer. Encourage them to believe that they know more than they think. And then ask the question again. Be persistent. You can even say, "I don't believe you don't know. I actually believe you do know the answer. Try again. Don't worry about getting it right or wrong. There's no right or wrong answer. We're just exploring." Or you can simply ask, "If you did know the answer, what would it be?"

- **Share best practices:** Share with them what has worked for you, or others. Offer insight from your own personal experience, but do so only *after* you get the answers from them. You want to ensure your answers do not influence theirs.
  - **Create an Agreement:** Co-design an *Agreement* with your employee that outlines *specific* goals or targets, *detailed* ways those goals will be reached, and by when. The goals should align with the needs/objectives of the organization, as well as the capacity and desires of the employee. Also…
  - Ask how you can best support your employee to reach his goals, and make sure the answer is listed on the Agreement. It is then vital that you follow through on your commitment to support.
  - The Agreement should be revisited regularly to assess progress. If the employee is struggling to meet certain agreed upon expectations, then ask, "I'm noticing that you are not meeting this goal. What's going on there?" Again, stay in *curiosity*!

- The Agreement acts as an accountability structure to hold the employee responsible to his commitments. When goals are not being met, your job is to *point your employee back to the Agreement*, not keep your finger pointed at your employee—you make the employee accountable to *it*, not you!
- Achievements / milestones should also be acknowledged to praise the employee for work well done.
- Both parties should date and sign the Agreement, likening it to a contract.

- **Resist the temptation to fix:** After each question, *pause*. Notice the impulse to fill the space in for the employee. That may be you wanting to fix or solve the problem for them. Resist this impulse. Stay firm in curiosity. Ask, trusting they are resourceful, and wait for the answer.

- **Champion them:** Be sure to let them know that you believe in them. Find one thing that you know is true about their strengths and work ethic and acknowledge that. For instance you may say, "Bob, you are very talented. I wouldn't have hired you if you weren't. I know you can do this." Or, "Jean, I really believe you have the fortitude and intelligence to make this happen." Or you may simply say, "Ken, I know you have what it takes."