Ep #180: Chuck Blakeman - Rehumanizing the Workplace

Full Episode Transcript

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Dr. David Phelps

Dentist Freedom Blueprint with Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris

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You're listening to a special edition of The Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. This four-episode summer series is your all access pass inside the closed doors of the Freedom Founder's mastermind. You'll hear special presentations from your host, Dr. David Phelps, and some of his top trusted advisors, as they give straightforward advice to transform your practice into a self-sufficient cash machine, to compound your net worth, and to multiply your cashflow streams with hassle-free real estate. These never before released presentations were recorded live from inside The Freedom Founder's Mastermind in Dallas, Texas. More at freedomfounders.com.

David Phelps: Chuck Blakeman is a successful entrepreneur, bestselling business author, and world renowned business advisor who built 10 businesses in 7 industries on 4 continents. He now uses his experience to advise others, his company The Crankset Group, provides outcome-based mentoring and pure advisory for business leaders worldwide. Chuck sold one of his businesses to the largest consumer fulfillment company in America, and led three other 10 to 100 million dollar companies. He presently leads The Crankset Group, a for profit business based in Africa, focused on developing local economies to solve poverty. Awesome.

Mr. Blakeman is a results leader with decades of experience leading companies in marketing, import/export fulfillment, call centers, website development, printing and direct mail processing. Some of Mr. Blakeman's customers have included Microsoft and Apple, Eli Lilly, Tap Pharmaceuticals, Sun Microsystems, Tyco Healthcare, John Manville, and many other Fortune 5000s and so on businesses. He is a convention speaker, writer, nonprofit board member. Recent speaking appearances include Kenya, Canada, Ireland, New

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Zealand, Dallas, TX, across the US 100 times a year. Recent print and online appearances include INK Magazine, Success Magazine, Entrepreneur Magazine, CNN, MONEY, New York Times. He was recently cited in Dr. Steven Covey's recent book, The Third Alternative. Would you please help me give a standing Freedom Founder's welcome to Mr. Chuck Blakeman.

Chuck Blakeman: Thank you brother. Appreciate it. Thank you. It's great to be with you today. I always get nervous hearing those things. It reminds me of an obituary. You know, obituaries are usually a little bit longer than they should be and embellished, but we are focused now I have all those fancy clients in the past, and one of the things I learned from that is that I don't wanna work with those folks anymore.

So, in the last decade, we have focused ourselves on dentistry, and someone said why did you pick dentistry? I said, well, it picked me. Don't have time to get into that today, but we want to transform the way dentistry is done. We wanna start there and by doing that we believe that we can begin to transform the way work is done in other places. You get a shiny example in one place and we go from there.

I love what you guys are all about. Freedom Founders ... I say this all the time. My definition of freedom. Freedom is the ability to choose what to do with your time, with your money, and your energy. That's all it is. It's the ability to choose.

When I was in my 20s, a creepy old guy about my age now was talking to me, and he said, "Chuck. Life has a builtin problem. When you're your age in your 20s, you've

got all the energy and all the time and you got no money to do anything about it. And you get into your middle years, you got all the money and all the energy and you got no time to do anything to do about it. And you get you my age, you got all the time and all the money, and you got no energy to do anything about it." He says "You gotta figure out how to get all those three things at once. Don't wait until you're done."

And that really spurred me on, and somebody else in my early 20s, I never met this man because he died the year I was born, but I read a statement from a guy and I said that's my life quote. And the quote was, and this has driven my whole life, and you can tell I'm a serial entrepreneur just from this quote. "Why do what others can and will do when there's so much to be done that others can't or won't." Why do what other can and will do when there's so much to be done that others can't or won't. That man went for a boat ride in 1954 with about 8 or 10 other people. A woman fell out of the boat. Nobody saw her fall out. He jumped out and held her up while the boat came back around. She couldn't swim, and he held her up. He was underwater holding her up, and he died holding her up.

Why do what others can and will do when there's so much to do that others can't or want? Even his last breath he lived that out. So, that's my life statement as well. I wanna do what others can't or won't do. And I got a rough start. I started ... in high school ... I didn't know this stuff until later. I'm glad I didn't, otherwise, I would have probably got all victimology about it. I'm ADHD. I'm lefthanded. I'm right brained. I went to music school. I'm ADHD. I'm dyslexic, and I graduated at the bottom of my class in high school. They literally had me in the principal's office

the last day of school deciding whether I should graduate. And the consensus I think was that if we let him stay we're gonna have him for another year, so, let's see if we can get him outta here.

And in my 20s I began to see ... I saw that statement "Why do what others can and will do" and began to find that gripping and began to find that I could actually make a contribution to the world around me and as a result now it's actually 11 ... My obituary is out of date. It's actually 11 business in 8 industries on 4 continents, but, this is our focus now is we wanna work with dentistry and transform the way dentistry is done so that you guys get your freedom, and so that everyone who works with you gets that as well.

Alright, somebody says I'm a futurist. I don't think I am. I just think ahead. I don't know what the difference is, but I don't think that way, but we talk a lot about the emerging work world, and there's ... This is our mission statement, to re-humanize the workplace and to re-humanize dentistry by giving everyone their brain back. And the question is, well, isn't it already human? You know, aren't there people there? Well, yes and no. Mostly no. The whole thing is broken and here's the data. Just to get us started to show us why the workplace needs to be re-energized and we need to re-humanize what's going on there.

I watch this stuff every month. This is a monthly survey from Gallup. Last month, 32% of the people at work were fully engaged, almost 70% were phoning it in. Just showing up. Going through the motions so they could get outta there and get their hourly wage. But wait, there's more. Right now, today, 51% of people in America have

their resumes actively out and they're looking for a job. One out of two. And then the worst of them all, the one that makes me the saddest, 86% of people would rather be doing something else. Only 14% can say, "Man, I've found the thing. I've found that thing that makes me go."

This is fundamentally broken. If you had a machine, would you put up with this? If you have Cerec machine or any other kind of ... You know, "Well, you know, it's working at 30%, but what are you gonna do? All the other Cerec machines work that way. And all the other people are like that." No, you'd look at it. You'd study it. You'd take it apart. You'd oil it. You'd hug it. You'd do whatever you had to do to make it work because it's expensive to replace. But, if none of that worked, you'd get a different machine. What do we do? We just put up with it. And I think there's an answer to this and it's not actually replacing the people generally. But I will say employees are a bad idea. We want stakeholders instead, and we'll talk about that.

The interesting thing is we know it's broken. Every year, Global Trends does a survey ... Global Human Capital Trends does a survey of like ten thousand executives, and this year they said the organization of the future ... Well, two years ago it said that they wanted to fix the hierarchies and do something with teams. This year they got more specific. The organization of the future as companies race to replace structural hierarchies with networks of teams empowered to take action.

Dentistry is so set up for this it's not funny. To be able to have networks of teams rather than structural hierarchy, and that everyone gets their brain back as a result of that

and you guys get more freedom as a result as well. So, we know it's broken. The question is, are we gonna fix it?

Give you a little story, well, we'll play off of this for the next 50 minutes. I'd read this blog post from a guy in about 2004 or 5 in the dark ages of blogging, and he's a kid, a younger kid in a technology company. This is not a guy in a factory. This is a programmer, and the thing went basically like this: Everyday, I get in my car, I drive to work, and I park my car and I leave myself in the car, and I go into work. And at noon, I always try and come out and reunite with myself for a few minutes before I have to leave myself in the car again and go back into work. I do this everyday. And I always hope that I'll get out at night to reunite with myself before I'm gone. Before I just vaporize.

What are you hearing? Sadness? Shout it out. What else?

Audience 1:   Desperation.

Chuck Blakeman: Desperation. Despair. What have they taught him? What has he learned about his relationship with that place? What's that?

Audience 2:   Cannot be different.

Chuck Blakeman: Yeah, he cannot be himself. He, you know ... Leave yourself in the car. Can't be genuine. Yeah. They want the part of him that programs software. Don't bring that messy humanity with you because we don't have room for that crap. We're too busy making ... doing stuff. Being productive. And he's learned this. I mean, doesn't this sound like 1897? This is 2005, and I don't think it's much different today. What he identified ... what this kid

identified is the intersection of two opposing workplaces. The Industrial Age, which is still strangely dominant in pretty much every, I'd say 95% of practices and companies in America. Where guys in ties are making decisions for everybody else. And the new emerging work world, which is the Participation Age, and it's a very awkward pass off. We've gotta figure this out.

The difference between these two is simple. The Participation Age is what we're talking about here. I didn't coin that term. There were presidential candidates using that as far back as 2004 I think. And we were accepting an award at Sun Microsystems for one of my businesses was being the Branding Agency of the Year for all of Microsoft worldwide. Very nice term, and I met a futurist there and he was using this term the Participation Age, and it seems to fit really well for me. The Participation Age, as the way we describe it, is that there's two Hallmarks of the Participation Age. Number 1 is participation and number 2 is sharing. People want to participate in building a great practice, and they wanna share in the rewards of having done that. Not just financially, but all the rewards. The mental and emotional and physical rewards of doing that. And when you get people doing both, that's where the magic happens.

I know lots of people ... I don't know a lot. I know a number of people who make their lives off selling engagement. And I know there's an entire industry out there of people trying to sell engagement. We're gonna sell you a hundred thousand dollar program on how to get your people engaged. Engagement is not a program. It's a result. You don't have to worry about getting people engaged. You just have to start treating them differently than we did for 200 years in the factory system.

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You're gonna hear me say a lot of things today that for the next 45 minutes that sound fancy and sounds futuristic and all this other stuff. I want you to settle on this one fact. All I'm gonna be doing for the next 50 plus minutes is telling you that we need to go back where we came from before the Industrial Age. For thousands of years we did work differently. And now you and I, we all grew up in the shadow of or in the midst of the Industrial Age, and we just think the way we've done this, the way we've organized work and the way we've managed people and all that stuff, that's just the way it is. And the reality of it is, no, that is a pimple in the face of business, and we need some Clearasil. We need to figure this thing out.

So, we're going back where we came from. That's the message today. Let's do work like we used to because work used to be human. When I made shoes in 1795, I mean, I had to learn how to skin a cow and tan the leather and work with metal and lasts and make shoe lasts outta wood. Took me years to learn all that stuff, and then they put me in a factory and I put a nail in the left boot and I passed it to the next guy who put a nail in the right foot. We need to go back where we came from and figure out how do we re-humanize work and make it interesting for people, because the reality of it is, everyone of us, not just millennials, every one of us is built to make meaning, not money. Money is just a scorecard that comes afterwards of how much meaning you made.

How do we do this? How do we re-humanize dentistry and give everybody their brain back? I you don't remember anything else, you can all go comatose after this slide, distributed decision making. This is how it's done. I believe that there's a couple things that make us

human beyond what we are as animals. Number 1 is our awareness and number 2 is our ability to be creative.

Think about that. What is creativity? It's not David chipping the stone away until, or Michelangelo chipping stone away until David appears. Creativity is the ability to make decisions, to solve problems. How you got here today was a creative process. Should we go this way? Should we go that way? That's all David did was figure out how to answer a bunch of questions. And it's that ability to decide, to choose and solve and decide that makes us the most human in terms of activities.

Are we putting people in a place where they are able to and allowed and required to decide things. So, distributed decision making. We've gotta figure out how to stop making decisions and get everybody else making those decisions. Let's get those out there for other people to do. That's the core of this thing, and there's a lot behind it. That comes from distributive leadership. You also have to then say you're not the only person in the room who can get this stuff figured out. There are other people here.

Now, we're gonna choose to tell you today that everybody in your practice should be a leader. We have leadership conflated with management and leadership is ... We think of leadership also as this guy on the white horse out from with a bugle. Now that's one form of leadership and it's actually the rarest. There are a lot more common forms of leadership. Everybody in your business should be involved in the four ways that we should lead. We have to distribute that leadership. We have to push it out around the people and get it out to the edges of the practice.

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And the reason for that is that the more input I have in a decision the more ownership I will take in carrying it out. This is a principle of life. When you went to Kindergarten and you saw your bike in the rack, you looked at your bike. You saw there were 30 bikes and you saw yours. Cause you were invested in that one. You had input in that one. You picked it out and you painted it or you did the little thing, you know, the little tousles on the little handle bars or whatever. It's my bike. The more input I have in a decision, the more likely it is that I will own that decision.

I have one of our dentists that's working with us in Idaho, when we started, he says, "All my people have stinkin thinkin." Stinkin thinkin. And the reality of it was the reason they had stinkin thinkin is because it never dawned on him, he wanted the stuff, but he grew up in the Industrial Age too, and it never dawned on him that the way to get rid of that is actually to begin to allow and require them to make decisions. I don't have to do it all anymore.

This falls in line with what you are doing here at Freedom Founders to get your freedom. This is the key thing. Let's figure out how do we get other people to do this. So, the therefore is, the therefore is decisions should be made locally whenever possible. Why am I making decisions for the front desk when I don't work there? When you start doing distributed decision making you start finding out that people do have brains. Many of them, if not all of them, actually want to contribute. They actually want to participate and they wanna share. Please free me, release me and let me do that.

So, these are the principles we'll work with. Decisions should be made locally whenever possible, and it's almost always possible. Too often I get "Well, it's just easier for me to tell 'em. We're moving fast. We got a patient coming in." Get all that. All you do is create codependency when you do that, and we'll talk about that in a minute. The question is, could this work better? If you are not the decision maker. I have a slide later on this, but one of my heroes is a guy who built a company in Brazil. It's now an eight hundred million dollar to a billion dollar company, and they had a cake at the 10th anniversary of him not making a decision. Big celebration. That was 11 years ago. For 21 years, he owns 92% of this business, and he doesn't make decisions. I think he's the best leader I can think of in the whole world. Because he doesn't make decisions.

What is he doing instead? Vision, guidance, mentoring, asking hard questions. What should we do next? Why is the profitability down? Is this the right team member? He runs around asking questions. Wouldn't you love to be simply in a place where you're looking at the reports and the data and thinking about the next big thing you could do and say, "What should we do about that?" That's leadership.

Here's some companies that work this way. And I'll make it easy for you. There's some dental ones that we're working with and others we're working with, but that's just a few. There are hundreds of companies that are working this way and basically all these companies up here have decided we're no longer going to have managers. We'll have some leaders, but there's a very different thing to that, and it's a much reduced expense. There's some great ones on here. I've had a Twitter conversation with

Tom Peters for the last two years. Tom Peters, he wrote In Search of Excellence. And two years ago he read one of my INK articles about self management and how we need to have self-managed teams. Distribute the decision making to these people and let 'em go. Watch what happens.

And, he tweeted me and he said, "I read your INK article.", he said, "If there's ever an airplane built by self management, make sure it's labeled. I'm not getting on." And every time someone talks to me about this stuff, all of us Industrial Age curmudgeons who are over 60 like me, what happens is I get emotional responses, "This is a bad idea. That can't work. What about authority?", and I get all of these emotional responses like Tom's, and all I do is give data back. So, I gave Tom some data. "Tom. GE Aviation. GE Aviation is the one in this hugely hierarchical company, GE Aviation has no managers. It's all self-managed teams. The teams manage themselves, and they make airplane engines for most of the airplanes in the world. You're going to have to take the bus from now on."

And for two years we've been doing this. I keep asking him for data. He has none. All the data is on the side of re-humanizing the workplace and giving everybody their brain back. If you do that, you make more money in less time. You grow faster. You have higher profitability, and you get freedom. Other than that, it's a bad idea.

Alright, so why are these people doing this? Here's a reason why we have to do this or why we should do this. Again, it's about humanity. And when we make our practices more human we make more money. So, if you're just a hardcore capitalist, that's great. Do this so

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that you can make more money. Of all the reporters questions, who, what, when, where, how and why, what is the one of those that is the most human of questions? The one an animal's likely never to ask? Why. Yeah.

What's the one question we've not been allowed to ask at work for 200 years? Why? Above any of them. We're not supposed to ask any. I've actually heard dentists say this when somebody at their practice said "Why are we doing it this way?", and he said "Because I went to dental school and you didn't." That's not gonna engender a lot of participation. That person's out. But, see, what he's communicating there is any question, if you're asking questions you're rebelling against authority. You're an outcast. You're a misfit. There's something wrong with you. No. You're being human. And we're telling you you can't be. Leave yourself in the car. Just bring the part of you that sucks the spit. That's all we want. Leave the rest of that messy person at home. It's that messy, creative person that's gonna change your practice if you allow and require them to bring the whole person.

So, we want people asking questions. We want people who are asking us all kinds of questions. We wanna be bombarded with questions. We never want people who will just do what we tell them to do.

Thankfully, a lot of this is changing. A lot of the out of the ashes of the Industrial Age. Employees are emerging from stake ... Or stakeholders are emerging from employees. Stakeholders are self-managed adults who don't need to be managed, they just need to be led, and managers are being replaced with leaders. So, what's the difference between these? Let's look at employees versus stakeholders. Three simple things. Employees number 1)

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Employees do what they're told. You tell me what to do, and I'll do that. Stinkin thinkin. Stakeholders do something very different. They bring the whole messy creative person to work. And see, this is the person that will change your practice, because they bring the questions, and they also will come up with the answers. They're participating fully. Stakeholders bring everything. We want them to bring the whole person.

I interviewed the high ups in Daveda, 65 thousand people that make dialysis machines. It's a self-managed company. And the management all there, the leaders, they all basically said that our job is to make sure that everybody bring everything everyday, and if somebody has a mother who went into the hospital the day before and they don't tell me about it, I'm crushed. I've abdicated my responsibility as a leader. Cause they don't feel like that should come with them, when in fact that's right at the bullseye as part of our job.

Cause I mean, literally, think about it, that person you think they're gonna be really functioning that well that day? Wouldn't you wanna know about that? Wouldn't the team wanna know about that and say, "How can we help that person?" We do this in stand ups. We encourage that our practices every morning in stand ups the first question. How are you? And the rule is, you're not allowed to just say fine or not fine. The rule is, I'm good because I just paid off my mortgage yesterday, or I'm not so good because my mom went in the hospital yesterday. How would that change the tenner of the whole day if you knew that, and we have to lead the way. We have to be vulnerable first and talk about things that we're not experiencing well and do that as well.

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The second thing is that employees do exactly what they're told. They come to work as extensions of machines and they do exactly what they're told, and stakeholders question everything. In an Industrial Age practice, we call these people annoying. In a Participation Age practice, we find them to be a gift..

The third thing is employees need managers and stakeholders simply need to be led. So, what's the difference? One of the things that I'm on a high horse over the last couple of years. I might even end up writing a leadership book because it would only be what, 310,000th of leadership books, it'll be 310,001. But, we have messed this thing up so bad from the Industrial Age, you look at the history of this stuff, and we don't understand was leadership is anymore. We have conflated management with leadership, and they're two very different things. You can Google one of my INK articles, Blakeman INK Leaders and Managers Have Nothing in Common. Just Google Blakemen INK Leaders and Managers Have Nothing in Common.

So, what's the difference? Managers. Number one thing that a manager is built is hired to do, solve and decide and tell. Solve, decide, and tell. Lemme come up with a solution for something. Lemme come up with a process. Lemme come up with a whatever, and I'm gonna solve it, I'm gonna decide it and then I'm gonna tell you now do what I said to do. That's what managers are taught to do. That has not been around in the form that we're using it much ... in business much before the Industrial Age. Leaders do something different. Very subtle, very powerfully different. They train other people to solve and decide, and they ask. Managers tell. Leaders ask. And then they get out of the way.

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Second difference is that managers focus on process. How are you doing that? To the point where I've been in some of my companies where people were so focused on the process, they forgot what the result was supposed to be. Leaders do just the opposite. They focus ... They're maniacal about focusing on the result. Are we getting the result we want? And if we're getting that result, then I don't care how you ... the process. We need one, but you come up with one, as long as it's legal, moral, and ethical, we're gonna focus on the result. And if we're not getting a result, we'll change the process. We're not married to the process.

The third thing is that managers delegate tasks, and when you delegate tasks, suck this spit or take this phone call, people feel used. When you delegate tasks, put this nut on that bolt, people feel used. Leaders do it very differently. They delegate responsibility. Come out with a happy patient. That's the result we want. We don't want them to not have no spit in their mouth. We want for this to be a great experience for them, and when you delegate responsibility, people will take ownership, and ownership is the most powerful motivator in business and in life. I own my little bicycle. I own that responsibility to come out with a happy patient. And when people take ownership of their stuff, it works out really well for us. Wouldn't you like a dog that you know takes ownership of its messes like that? Yeah. You want people who would take ownership as well.

Well, the way we do that is we have to delegate responsibility, not just task. Quick video here from a team. This was a pediatric clinic in Washington, and we'll see if this thing actually plays. If not, I can describe it. And this was a 50 person facility, and these are the people who

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used to be the managers and now they're leaders in this place and they just gave a little quick testimony. We'll see if this thing runs. Again, it may not. Woops. You have to be smarter than the ... Oh, there we go. Let's try. Nope. That's not it. Alright. We don't need it. I didn't know if it would work.

They're basically just saying we're now all leaders. We're not just managers. We love our positions here, and then we got some great ... Here are some testimonials from the doctors who are part of this clinic. "Today was a great day even though we were down one doctor, two treatment coordinators, and three assistants, and a partridge in a pear tree. We have been cross-training our stakeholders and to make ten columns work, there was a collective playing of musical chairs. It worked almost flawlessly. I was the weak link."

"Truly it was amazing, though I hope that we don't do it again too soon. I think that what happened today was a direct reflection of our people taking the initiative and working as a team from hiring to training to implementing."

This is what you get when you turn people's brains back on is they will make things work that before you didn't know how it could work. I wanna give you just a ton of examples of practices where people have decided to give people their brains back and move this way. The spouse of this doctor was working 40+ hours a week as his office manager, but she wanted to become a dental speaker, and very quickly, within six months, she had figured out how to get this down to two hours a week. She went from 40 hours a week to two hours a week and now she just

she leads the teams on the side rather than having to manage them all through just a simple process.

Spodak is one of the largest single dental facilities in America. Craig Spodak is a good friend of mine, and they're in Delray Beach. They've got 55 some people and things were working great in some ways, but here's just one example of how things work better now. Once they put distributed decision making in place and created ownership and incentivized things through sharing, 12 months later they look back and realized they'd saved 90 thousand dollars alone on just purchases, because the people who were making purchases now owned, they didn't have the task "buy this floss", they had the responsibility, "take over this and make it work, and if you make it work better, we'll give you a piece of that." Sharing.

Same facility 15 months into distributed decision making, we got this about two weeks ago, our profitability increased by 4% last year compared to 2016, we had flat revenue, lost an oral surgeon, lost a periodontist, and had a major Hurricane stroll on through, talk about win, high-fives for everyone. Things were a mess, but no they weren't. They went up five hundred thousand dollars in profit while they were working on that stuff.

Here's a key concept for all this stuff. What does it mean to be a distributed decision making team? One of the subtle very powerful differences is we wanna move away from a boss-centered view of the world to a mission-centered view of the world. Everybody who works at the practice, they're all leaders. We don't have time to go into all this today, but they're all leaders. And then some of them might be sort of crossovers. They might be team

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leads where they are involved in the tactical stuff, as well as the strategic stuff, and then there's one or two or three people depending on the size of the practice where there would be strategic leaders who don't do a lot of the tactical stuff. And this is a false representation. This really is like cupcake batter, you should really just swirl all this all around until you get there, but you get the idea that we have leaders. We have three layers of leadership. We don't have managers. We don't have followers. We don't have employees. We got stakeholders. Everybody here is a stakeholder, and what makes them a stakeholder is that they all have a stake in the mission.

So when someone comes to the dentist and says, "Hey boss." By the way boss ... four letter word. Four letter word. When someone comes to the practice leader ... We call them practice leaders, not practice managers, and when somebody comes to the practice leader and says "Hey boss", or anything like that, manager ... Those power titles. They're taught that their first response is "I'm not your boss. Who's your boss?" "oh yeah, the mission statement." "Yeah, what is the mission statement?" Yada, yada, yada. "We all have to know that. What does it mean to you? That's your boss. Guess what? That's my boss. And if I see you not serving the boss, can I have permission to help you with that? Yeah. If you see me not serving the boss, I want you to know you have permission to help me with that."

Do you see what that does instantly to the reporting structure and to the community that builds? We're all just trying to serve this. What is the mission statement of your practice? If not every single person in your practice can instantly tell you what the mission statement is and how it impacts their lives, then that's the first assignment you

have when you get back is to beat the drum gently and relentlessly on that until everybody gets it.

Here's the old model. The people at bottom exist to serve people on top. I gotta great cartoon on this one. It's a guy sticking his head in an office with one of his followers. He's a manager, and this is his employee, and he's sticking his head in the office and it says "Don't forget I need to take credit for your report by 3:30." The people on the bottom serve the people on the top. I Tweet this about once a week. When I meet a manager, I get the feeling they're important. When I meet a leader, I get the feeling I'm important. As managers, I exist to make them look good.

We wanna do this differently. Here's what it looks like. Well, first of all, these people at the top, they're taught to ask, plan, and lead. Those are the only people asking questions, and then these people in the middle, they're gonna tell, they're gonna solve and decide and tell other people what to do, and the people at the bottom are just gonna do it. That's the contract.

This is a better way to do things. Promoting horizontal interaction where everybody just gets stuff done. What is the Mission Statement, who's the boss, and let's figure out how to get there. These SL's, these would be stakeholders leaders. Everybody's a leader, everybody's a stakeholder. They got a stake in the mission. And some of them, the SL without any team around them, it might be the practice leader or one of the dentists or whatever, and they float around saying crazy things like "How can I help you?" You know, "What do you need? What resource do you need? Do you need training? Do you need guidance? Do you need to be connected with somebody else? How

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can I help you be successful? What results should you be getting?" That's the responsibility of the floating stakeholder leaders, and then the rest of them are on teams where they work together to figure out what it is that needs to get done.

By the way, the one on the left is how the human body works. If the human body was organized like the one on the right ... I'm sorry, the one on the right is the human body. If it was organized like the one on the left, we'd all die. Doesn't work that way.

Managed teams? Here it is on a micro scale. You've got a manager, an office manager, and you got these eight people and the office manager is supposed to play God. Now, we would never say that, but worksurvey.com says 75% of the reasons that people will quit are directly related to their manager. You get rid of managers and then you get rid of 75% of the reasons people will quit. But, see, the problem here or the reason is because we've asked those managers to just be ... it's untenable what we're asking them to do. We want them to be detail-oriented, and we want them to be strategic and visionary. We want them to be highly tactical and we want them to be very relational, and we ... you know, we want them to be everything. It's a losing proposition, and all people do it get mad because we set 'em up to fail.

Let's do this differently. What's the one or two or three things a manager does that everybody should actually ... That actually matter to the people they were managing, and let's find those two or three or four things and let's have the manager go back to work and let's ask everybody to pitch in as part of the team. So the manager used to be in charge of trainer, when in reality, Jane is

actually better than the manager at training, but Jane never got a chance to. Why? Because if she did that, that devalues the presence of the manager.

So, by the way, you may not know who Scott Adams is, but you know Dilbert. Scott Adams has made millions of dollars on this premise alone. That the employees are actually smart and they're not allowed to be, and the whole game in Dilbert is how do we make the manager think it's their idea so that they come up with it, and we say, "Oh, what a great idea you had. That's wonderful." What if we did it in another way? There's talent all over the place. People are oozing desire to get involved and be involved in this thing, and if Jane's better at training than the manager, why don't we have Jane do the training? And Fred's better at the data than the next guy, let's have Fred do the data? And Sally, she's good at ... She's silver-tongued. She can go to the meetings. We'll send her to the meetings.

And you divide up the relationships or the responsibilities of the manager amongst two or three people out of the seven or eight, or three or four out of the seven or eight on the team. Management still exists, but it's us managing ourselves. Can you see how that re-humanizes the workplace and gives everybody their brain back? And we'll talk about what do you do with the manager? This is not chaos, this is not anarchy, and people aren't going to be fired.

This is a great paper. A visionary guy. You've all heard about Gore Tex. W. L. Gore started in his basement with Vivian, his wife, in 1958. It's a ten thousand person company now, 3 billion dollar company. There are no managers in all of W.L. Gore. Nobody can fire anybody.

Teams hire and teams fire and teams set productivity goals and results and processes. And these guys are involved in some incredibly technical stuff for the last almost 70 years now. It's been working great. One of the best companies in the world to work for, and he came ... He did a paper in 1967 called The Last Organization. It's about 15 pages long. It'll take you about 3 minutes to read 'cause there's like 50 words on each page. This stuff is profoundly simple. It's just not easy.

And here's the illustration from his paper. And it basically says if the guy in the upper left wants something from the guy in the lower right, he goes and talks to him. If the team in the upper right wants something from the team in the lower left, somebody from that team goes to the other team and they talk to them, and they make the right thing happen. In the traditional world, what is in the middle of every one of those lines? The manager. Inboxes, outboxes, and in many cases many inboxes and many outboxes.

So, it goes through Bob, and then Bob has to send it upstairs to his manager or the head dentist, and then they have to talk about it and see if they wanna talk about it, and then they send that back down to Bob and then he sends it across to the other team member. You know, so it's a game of telephone. By the time it's gets to the person that actually mattered, it's not what it's supposed to be. And it may never get out of the inbox because it's not politically expedient for the manager because you came up with a great idea, and I should have. And if I put that good idea out there, then I devalue my presence.

This is so much simpler and so much more profound. Let's do things this way. I have a ... I didn't bring it up on

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stage, but I've got an email from Eli Musk to all of his staff. And, it came out about ... He did it about two years ago. It just came out a couple months ago. I did an INK article on that as well. You can just Google INK Blakeman Musk and you'll get it. And he basically says ... I wish I had it on stage with me, I forgot it, but I've got it almost memorized, and he says that basically this. How we shouldn't be doing that. That it only serves the manager for that stuff to go through there, and he said to everybody at Tesla, that if you need to get something done, two people should talk until the right thing happens, and if any manager is caught requiring people to go through them to get stuff done, they will be fired. And he used this phrase, "That the concept of the hierarchal structure where we do all this stuff," he says, "this is incredibly dumb." Let's do it a different way. Let's get stuff done.

West coast Dental Practice in Oakland. I was just there last month. Objective: In five years they want 30 plus practices. And they wanna do this, they actually want 100+ practices, and they have an interesting vision for this. They want this to be this kind of thing where it basically is a non DSO. It's an DSO that's a non DSO. We're not gonna do this like the DSOs. We're gonna have local ownership in every one of these things. This is gonna be like ... You know, it's not ever gonna be seen as a giant thing. And they want three new practices this year, they've already got 'em. And the founder wants to be down to two days in the operatory and three days in business, and he's pretty close to that right now. The only way he's doing this is because he's giving everybody their brain back. He's got eight locations now, and you can't do this unless you trust in adult behavior.

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Millennium Dental, self managed teams, distributed decision making, their objective was incentives, kudos, freedom mapping of all their people. Freedom mapping is basically how do I get everyone in here in the highest and best use of their time. That's kind of what Freedom Founders is about, and we should be doing that for our people. How do we map their way to freedom as well, inside the practice? How do we get them doing the things they're really good at?

We've had so many new awesome things happen. It took a few months, however, this past week we received and email that wasn't asking permission. Just an FYI email from our practice leader on what the leadership team had decided. They're starting and understand the whole picture training for our team. They believe it is the key to unlocking the product we want. I'm thrilled. The two head doctors, Dave and I, are seeing the miracles of having a team of owners. No stinkin thinkin there.

We'll give you a ... You'll have a handout actually with this on it, that gives you a sort of a T chart on what the differences, main differences are between the old factory system model and the Participation Age. When you look at this, understand that when I use the term the factory system model, 90+% of dentistry still has the factory system model and 90+% of highly educated businesses are doing this as well. I was invited to one of the largest software companies in the world in December, and I won't name them because I'm going to pan them, but they wanted me to come and talk to their organizational design team 75 thousand employees, and the question is, how do we redesign this for the entire company worldwide in order to get back what we've lost?

Now, I came away saying it's not gonna happen. You can't do it. I'm not an optimist. But, you can't do it because you won't give up on certain things that have to do with management and you won't institute leadership instead, and so they were trying to get a new result with the same old answer, and wasn't it Einstein who said, "The mind that created the problem is not the mind that will solve it."

The stuff on the left, that company is a factory system company, and one of the most innovative companies in terms of their products and all that stuff, but it's a factory system company. So, we wanna be the practice on the right side.

Here's a law firm. This is striking. These guys ... Some of you have been in dentistry for a very long time. We're working with a dentist right now who wants this result. These guys were in for 18 years, they'd been stuck for the last 10 years at nine million dollars, couldn't get above it. And, when I talked to them, the two of these founders had only taken one to two weeks off in the entire 18 years they had been in business. Yeah. It's not a good picture. They read my first book on how to get off the treadmill and said we wanna get off the treadmill, and three years later, they're a 28 million dollar business. I don't know why that piece in the middle isn't showing up. But, they're a 28 million dollar business, and these guys both take two weeks every month. And they actually got there in about 18 months. When they couldn't figure out how to get a week off in 18 years, now they're taking two weeks every month.

And one of them took a month in the ... Well, they both take a month in the summers, and the one guy went to Malibu and rented a house in Malibu with his family and

he came back, and I said "How was it?", and he said, "Oh man, the first three or four days it was torturous. It was like how am I gonna survive an entire month of not doing law, and I'm just crawling out of my skin."

And about the second week, we got used to it, and he said with about ten days left, he was saying, "This is going so fast. Where is the time going? How is it that I have to go back?", and then I said, "What was your blinding flash of the obvious? You know, you're V8 moment?" And he said "My BFO, my blinding flash of the obvious was I could have spent the rest of my life on that treadmill, and I just spent a month with my wife and my daughter in Malibu just relating and learning how to surf and do all of that. I'm 44 years old, I get to do that the rest of my life." That is an incredible blinding flash of the obvious.

I met this woman. She was moving incidental stuff. We work in dentistry, but I met this woman moving from Washington, D.C. to Denver, where we live, and she was shutting down her little business. She had followed her husband to his job, and she had a little business doing 180 thousand dollars a year. She was shutting it down and I talked to her about self-management and re-humanizing the workplace and giving the brains back, and she said, "Well I'm already shutting it down." And I said, "Well, let's just see what happens". Seven years later, it's actually a 5 million dollar business, and she still lives in Denver, and she works three days a week running that business in Denver. And, against my council, she started two more businesses in D.C. while she lives in Denver, and one of them is the highest rated furniture store in D.C. now.

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She tells this story and she says "Every time I tell this story to other owners of companies and practice, they all say 'man you must have an incredible set of managers.'" And she just smiles and says "No. I don't have any managers. That's actually what makes it work. I got 55 people that are participating in ... We've got 55 leaders. This wouldn't work if all I had was managers. I'm just giving you this because I wanna give you hope on this stuff. We all say, "Oh, well, my life's different." I'm already sure there's someone who's saying, "Well, yeah, but my practice is unique." Yeah, no it's not.

These guys have been dentists 18 years by himself. He wants to be off the treadmill. He wants to have three months in Colorado, two months traveling and seven months at home and he wants to be there in 14 months. We just started with him. Stay tuned, but we're gonna get in there that fast. No problem. We can get him there. And it's not us. This is the fun thing about this ... What I'm doing, you don't have to be all that smart to do what I'm doing. You just have to not be the dentist. Right? That's one of the reasons we're all here is because we all just need outside eyes in our business and our lives and say, you know, what are you doing that for?

I got a guy that I talk to on a regular basis who is a CEO, coach, and a consultant and advisor like me, and you know, he says, "Hey, I got this problem.", and I say, "Well, that's easy.", and he says, "Man, I never thought of it". And then it's my turn. "Hey, I got this problem.", and he says, "Well, why don't you do this?" It like, "I never thought of that." It's just not being somebody. Being no dog in he hut you can think of this stuff for people.

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Alright, so here's a great image of what it means to be a self-managed or distributed decision making team. Who's in charge here? Here's a great example. You can use hockey. You can use field hockey, lacrosse, curling, or hurling rather, not curling, but hurling. Irish sport. Who's in charge here?

Audience 3:   The guy with the ball?

Chuck Blakeman: The guy with the ball. Who's in charge here? Hmmmmm. Whoever gets to the ball first. Leaders. Everybody's a leader. Where's the coach? He's on the sidelines. Is the coach not relevant? The coach is incredibly relevant. Very important to have a leader. Leaders give vision, guidance, training, mentoring, and then they get people involved in not the task, but the responsibility. Do you guys all agree that we should put the ball in the goal and win the game? Yeah. Great. Why don't you go do that? Imagine the coach who had gave everybody an earpiece. All the red guys have earpieces, and he's on the sidelines. "Number 7 kick the ball to number 4. Number 4 kick the ball to number 9. Number 9 kick the ball to number 11. Number 11 kick on goal." Would anybody play for that guy?

No. Why wouldn't you play for that guy? What's that?

Audience 4:   He talks too fast.

Chuck Blakeman: He talks too fast. Why wouldn't you play for that guy? Yeah, he's not letting them be themselves. He's not letting them make decisions. They got no brain. They had to leave themselves in the car, and all they could bring was their feet. This is what we do to people at work. We put earpieces in their ears and tell them to kick the ball and to number 7. And we wonder why their stinkin think

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and why they won't get engaged. We gotta get off the field. We gotta empower and engage them and get off the field.

Memorize this if you can. This is in my second book, Why Employees are Always a Bad Idea. The art of leadership is to know how few decisions the leader needs to make. We've all been taught that the power of management is to make as many decisions as possible. That's what managers do. They make decisions. Leaders figure out how to train other people to make decisions and then they get the heck out of the way. Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter and Square, "When I am making decisions, I am not leading." He says it's a failure of leadership when he has to make a decision. That is powerful sense.

I wanna make sure we understand this. There is no crossover. It's not like, well, at some point management is sort of leadership and leadership is sort of management. No it's not. They're two very different things. And we don't have time to get into that now, but we might in some of our round tables. Here's three things that you need to work with, and we're actually developing a little card with all this stuff on it. Yeah, I don't have it here. But, if you want this little card like you've got some on your desk, we've got one side that'll be this thing and the other side will be these things here. But, very simply, there's one principle that makes you a great leader. You stop making decisions whenever possible, and it's almost always possible. It's a process. It'll take you six months or a year two years, but you should be a manic obsession to figure out how do I get other people trained so that they can do this instead of me. That's how you get freedom.

And then the key practice is to stop telling and start asking. Managers tell, leaders ask.

And the third thing is the key leadership relationship. You move from this top down manager follower thing to leader-leader, we're all in the mission together. We're all subject to the boss. I work for the boss. You work for the boss, and we all lead from our seats. Whatever you're good at, you lead from it, I'll lead from other things. Here's the three responsibilities. So, if you don't make decisions anymore, what are you supposed to be doing. Well, here you go. Number 1, guard the values. This is the number 1 job of any leader of any organization is the principles, the visions, the values, the mission, pound the drum gently and relentlessly of those things. That's my number 1 job. Guard the value.

Secondly, champion the people. Make them more successful. What do you need? How can I help you? Do you need training? Do you need connecting? Do you need to move into a different position? What do you need to make you more successful.

And the third one is pilot the results. What do we do? We pilot the process, don't we? No, let them pilot the process. That helps them re-humanize the workplace and give them their brains back. We pilot the result. Do we agree together on what result we're supposed to get? Good. I'm gonna monitor that. We're gonna monitor how it gets done. You figure out how to get the process going. That gives you a brain, and we're together gonna monitor the results. So, guard the values, champion the people, pilot the results, and then beat the drum gently and relentlessly on those three things. If you do that as leader in your organization, the rest of it will take care of itself.

Ep #180: Chuck Blakeman - Rehumanizing the Workplace

Alright, so there's 11 tools of decision making that are involved in this stuff. One is the concept of leader-leader. We don't have time to get into that this morning, but I can tell you, some of you may have heard of David Marquet, the book Turn the Ship Around. It's a great little book for you to read on distributed decision making. He's a Navy Captain, and he inherited the worst rated submarine in the Navy, and in one year he turned it into the best rated submarine in the Navy, and I want you to hear this piece. This is what's really important. It doesn't get much press and he doesn't say it enough. He did it with the same 134 people that had made that ship the worst under the previous leader. What's the lesson there?

As Matt Perez says, one of my friends who owns a large software company, there's no such thing as bad apples. There's just bad barrels. They were in a bad barrel. The previous commander had decided those people couldn't make decisions. It's my job to tell. To make, solve, and decide and tell. And he ended up with the worst sub in the Navy and David got into ... Captain Marquet got 'em together on the first day and said, okay guys, here's the deal. I'm not gonna tell you how to run a kitchen. I'm not gonna tell you how to run the torpedo room. You're gonna tell me. And then my job is gonna be to ask you hard questions until we both agree that that makes sense, and then I'm gonna pull a Captain Pic on you in Start Trek and say "Make it so." Just do what you thought you should do. My job is to guard the ... or to pilot the results, and so I'm gonna ask you a lot of hard questions about whether that works with us as guarding the values, championing the people. That's my job. I'll ask you the hard questions around that.

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And in that year, on that one simple principle alone of distributed decision making, he ended up with the best rated submarine in the Navy. Why? Because he had re-humanized that sub. He gave everybody their brain back, and they were allowed and required to make decisions, when before they were not allowed to because they weren't quite smart enough to do it.

So leader-leader is a powerful piece of this. We've got a whole module on that. Distributed decision making teams. How do you build these teams? That's a whole 'nother module as well. We don't have time for that today, but that's important. How do you build a team of people who actually wanna take the ball and run, and you have the confidence they can? People listen to this sometimes and they think man this is full of chaos and anarchy. No, this is the most organized process driven thing you've ever done in your life. The roles and the responsibilities are utterly clear.

Another piece of this is kudos programs. Everything we do here we want to ... The principle behind all of this is how do we take this top down relationship and turn it on its side so that people begin to relate peer-to-peer as co-leaders in an organization like this. Kudos programs should be developed and run by the people who actually are going to be benefiting from them. Not from people who are above them. Get those people relating to each other and have a peer recognition problem.

And then freedom mapping. Mapping everybody's process. Mapping the processes at the front desk, hygiene, accounting. Mapping all your major processes and figuring out who is responsible for what steps in every single one of those processes. Got a simple little tool we

can share with you. Listenchart.com is what we used. Costs five bucks a month. That might break the bank, but, freedom mapping is a core piece of this because it organizes everything, and it gives utter clarity around roles, responsibilities, teamwork, training, simple little process of just mapping your processes. And then you tie metrics to the maps and then you do things like peer recognition surveys.

Again, rather than annual or biannual reviews, which have been proven over and over again to not work and to actually ... Did you know this? The research shows that when you do a review of someone, their productivity goes down. Reviews reduce productivity. We need to eliminate that top down stuff and lets have the peers recognizing the peers and reviewing each other. They're gonna love it. And then another piece of this would be results based incentives. See, this is the sharing part. It's not "I sat in the chair for another year so I get a bonus". Bonus is a four letter word that has five letters in it.

Commitment letters. After we get all this done, we want people to ... Everybody in the practice should sign a commitment letter and say "Here's my commitment to leader-leader, to my team, kudos to my metrics, to my process, to the teams around me. We're all gonna do a commitment letter together, and we're gonna sign the thing, have big ceremony. A ritual around this, and I'm gonna keep a copy and I'm gonna give a copy to my team, and anytime they see me not serving the boss, they're gonna have an opportunity to pull out my letter and say 'You decided you wanted to do this. How do I help you get back there?'" And so its positive thing.

And then two-step decision making. This should be happening in any business, in any practice anywhere regardless of whether you wanna distribute decision making, but, it's a simple little process for making sure that nobody ever makes a decision in a vacuum. Dirt simple.

Number 10 four step training. How do we train people? There's four simple steps to training them, and we've got a little card for that as well, and we can help you with that. How do we get people to where they are actually training each other? And then the last piece of this is hiring very differently. We call it reverse hiring. In the Industrial Age, you hire first for skills and experience and then maybe you look at their talent, and you never bother with culture and beliefs, and we say do it the other way around. When we hire, we have an 11-step hiring process that we train our practices on, and we start with what do you believe about business? We wanna see what their beliefs are. What is their culture? What's their values that way? We don't get a resume until at least step 7 or 8. We don't wanna see 'em until we've seen all this other stuff, talent, skills and all this other ... We wanna see all that stuff before we ever see a resume. Just the opposite. And it has been a hugely successful way.

When people take this on, it revolutionizes the way that they hire and the people they end up with. So, these are 11 things that we can talk about. Anything like this or anything else in our round tables.

In closing, I just wanna end with this. Here's some myths about the Participation Age. You can't measure this stuff. No, it's actually more measurable. There's more metrics. There's no leadership. No, it's full of leadership. Every

single one of us is a leader. Industry specific, you give me an industry and I'll show you a company who has done it this way. It's no better. It's way better, and all the data is on the side of distributed decision making. We're winging this. Nope, we just talked about the freedom mapping and other things make this much more process driven than a manager driven environment. It's chaos and anarchy. Nope, it's more organized. It's a fad. Nope. We were doing this before the Industrial Age. W.L. Gore's been doing it for 70 years. I can show you 100+ companies with five thousand or more people doing it and thousands of smaller ones. We really believe that sometime in the next 10-20 years, this will be the big duh. It's like, why did we every drag that factory system out into the 21st Century with us. It's the old new way.

Size specific. Nope. I have a friend who runs a mortgage company with 1 1/2 people besides himself and has revolutionized his practice. He has a part time person. Not the top half or the bottom help, it's just a part time person. And then no management. No, there is management, but it's self. Self management. It's management by teams. And then my favorite one I get sometimes, this sounds like a left-wing conspiracy. No, this is capitalism. When you invite everyone to participate and share, that's capitalism. And lets invite everybody to do that and watch what happens.

Alright, so, we'll talk about these things in our groups. I don't think there's anything we need to go through here. Yeah, so I think that's it, and you all got a sheet like this on one side. I just wanna give you some of the things you could do in order to help do this decisions making process for yourself. The stuff with stars on it are bigger things than stuff without stars, and this is just a quiver full of

arrows. You might not do any or half this stuff. You do a few things on here, and it will just change the way you do your practice.

Alright, so let me end with a reminder about the guy who is in his car. Do we want anybody leaving themselves in the car and coming into our practice? No. Yeah. Let's change that today. Let's figure out what it is we have to do. What's one thing, put it on your green sheet today. What's one thing, not 27 things, because if you get 27 things and walk out, you won't do anything. Put the other 26 in an idea box in your head and say here's one thing I will do when I get back to my practice to begin the process of re-humanizing the workplace and giving everybody their brain back. Thank you.

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