

In the fifth century B.C. the Greek philosopher Socrates perfected a method of teaching in which he would ask disarmingly simple questions that actually forced people to admit what they didn't know. As you read this book, you'll find a number of questions that follow the Socratic tradition. The reason? Today's managers need more than the predefined answers we might think are correct, but which seldom fit the problem at hand.

“This is an outstanding book on leadership and its relationship to management, teamwork, responsibility and more. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their leadership skills.”

Dr. Ivan Misner; Founder of BNI; Author of Masters of Success

“Frank’s book, adds valuable intellectual real estate to a field that is frequently populated by pontificators. Here we finally have a book that makes you stop, ask questions about yourself, your qualifications and habits as a manager and leader. Further, it makes you enumerate these qualifications and habits, thereby providing the basis for personal growth. None of us is as good as we want to believe and we only grow when we ask the right questions about ourselves, and then act on the true answers. My recommendation is not simply to buy this book, but to read and use this book regularly.”

Mark Amtower, Partner, Amtower & Company; consultant, speaker and author of Government Marketing Best Practices

“Managing in 2005 is very different than managing in 1995. You are expected to do more with less; technology is part of managing, and people have more distractions at work (internet, cell phones, instant messaging). Frank takes a fresh look at how to manage and motivate teams.”

Derek J. Kottke; Principle, Sales Partners Group



Frank D. Kanu Stop Telling... Start Leading! The Art of Managing People by Asking Questions

STOP Telling...

START Leading!

The Art of Managing People by Asking Questions

Frank D. Kanu



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Start Leading!

The Art of Managing People
by Asking Questions

By Frank D. Kanu

Genius One, Inc.

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*To my dear and loving wife Ada, without
whom I would never have written any book.*

*To my children Harry, Hanna and Henry who missed more dad
time—every day.*

To my boys René and Christian.

To Linda Leiter—a very special friend.

And last but not least to my parents.

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Foreword

Frank D. Kanu is the personification of the American international manager. Highly intelligent and experienced in the field of international business, he is very aware of the promise business has of bringing people closer together in the process of fulfilling the business needs of peace and understanding.

With this book, Kanu shows that managers need more than the pre-defined answers in daily business dealings and demonstrates how any leader can use a logical, step-by-step process to create and implement a powerful new sense of direction in his or her own organization, based on the Socratic Tradition.

Why should managers use the Socratic Method instead of simply telling employees what to do or giving them direction? What would your reaction be if you were in a situation where you had a tough challenge, or needed a clear answer to a business problem and someone just walked

up to you and told you the answer? I am sure that you would feel that you have been deprived and would be annoyed and discouraged. Giving someone the answer to a problem or question is robbing them of valuable educational opportunities, because in each of us, learning happens much faster when we solve managerial problems ourselves; and when we figure something out for ourselves, we are enthusiastic to go make it happen. In this book, Kanu shows in a most effective manner how a versatile manager can become a more creative leader who does not deprive people of the joy and energy of discovery, but rather helps them to move forward by asking Socratic questions. Managers and leaders at all levels can use these proven techniques, including planning, communication, and motivational tools, to support their employees in effecting the positive changes that will make the difference in achieving their organizations' bottom-line goals. The definitional method of Socrates is a real contribution to the logic of philosophical inquiry. It inspired the dialectical method of Plato and exerted a considerable influence on the logic of Aristotle. Readers will find this book to be an invaluable resource to which they will often return to, to revise Frank D. Kanu's practical advice as their business grows to meet the worldwide markets of the 21st Century.

Dr. Jay-D Olivier
Professor - International Business Law
Amsterdam and London

Introduction

Flashback: a warm summer night, almost twenty years ago. My best friend—financial director of a European trust—and I were drinking coffee and philosophizing about business. At one point he makes a statement that changes the mood and makes me pause: “People are born either as managers or as worker bees.”

Wow!

Is my friend right? Do you really have to be born a manager, or leader? Is it true that some of those skills can never be learned?

“Management is nothing more than motivating other people.”

Lee Iacocca

“I can do that!” many will answer. “I can motivate others.” But how? In 2004 Henry Mintzberg famously asked for “managers, not MBAs” in his book of the same name. In May 2005 the *Harvard Business Review* published “How Business Schools Lost Their Way,” Warren Bennis’ and James O’Toole’s take on managers failing because of the theoretical-centered education provided by most top business schools.

Is there really anything new? Can any management guru teach you something that hasn’t yet been discovered and put into practice?

No.

In fact, when you encounter “experts” who claim they’ve discovered

something new, my advice is, run! The truth is that it's all about existing knowledge presented in new ways. More than that, it's about teaching knowledge in ways the student understands—and uses.

Everyone who teaches—and managers should teach their employees—ought to be able to recognize quickly how well the student is taking in the material being taught, and how to adjust the flow of information to each student's needs. Among the essential components for a successful teaching experience are high standards and expectations, ongoing feedback, and a dynamic that engages both teacher and student. The problem is that too often the *process* becomes the focus instead of the *results*. How often have you watched a film touted as an action movie and thought “Come on—where's the action they promised?”

1. In today's fast-moving world, managers have to stay on top of the game constantly if they want to remain an asset to the company. Not only that, they have to learn how to use a wider and more complex array of tools. Having so many tools is actually an improvement; remember the old adage, “If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” But it's up to the manager to choose the best tool to meet each specific situation.
2. A successful manager will offer employees the support, encouragement, and resources necessary to get the job done. No true manager wants to be a puppet master. Support and encouragement are also important elements of implementing change. The successful manager understands that change works when the employees get positive reinforcement along with the proper tools.
3. The manager's primary duty is to strike a balance between the goals of the business and the expectations of the employees. We all know managers who only live on one side of the rope—hardliners who figuratively walk over bodies when it's to their advantage, or sympathizers who listen to every side of an argument but who fail to set goals based on what they're hearing. One-dimensional managers like these almost never win the confidence or respect of their employees.

Manager or leader? There is a great difference between the ordinary manager and the leader. Managers usually live by the rules made by others. Leaders make the rules.

Leaders will build up employees and help them grow, giving them real

opportunities to one day become leaders themselves. They understand that those following them are not after their job. Leaders motivate, and they listen, so they know what their employees want and the tools they need to get the job done. Leaders also know how to balance between giving employees help and allowing them to make their own decisions.

Questions

In the fifth century B.C. the Greek philosopher Socrates perfected a method of teaching in which he would ask disarmingly simple questions that actually forced people to admit what they *didn't* know. As you read this book, you'll find a number of questions that follow the Socratic tradition. The reason? Today's managers need more than the predefined answers we might think are correct, but which seldom fit the problem at hand.

Stop Telling... Start Leading is a work book and should be used as such. It offers many open-ended questions to the manager, offering ways to determine why something has gone off-center. Because every manager is different—the result of education, cultural background, ethnicity, etc.—offering predefined “one size fits all” answers can't do it any longer. Managers need to answer tough, pointed questions that will force them to come to terms with their goals. Once they do that, they can manage more effectively and more positively—which helps them and their team.

Many management books are written with the manager as the sole reader in mind. This book will also help interested team members to better understand how and why their team works the way it does.

It will be a useful tool for all managers who see the need to implement changes in their business. Don't expect solutions or well-defined answers to every question here. Sometimes managers need to be able to refine their own solutions to find their way. Many of these questions will serve to guide managers toward that goal.

Misplaced fear. Some managers fear that implementing any new management strategy will result in a team of matching personalities—all alike, with no dynamism. There's no need to worry about that. To begin with, it shouldn't be your goal to change the people you work with; rather, you want to help them implement changes that will motivate and encourage them.

Remember that managers need to know not only that there are more tools than just one or two, but also where to find and how to use them.

More than that, they need to understand that learning and teaching is always a two-way street. If you teach without learning you do not teach. If you learn without teaching you do not learn. Managers and employees have a responsibility to each other as well as to themselves.

“The people who get on in this world are the ones who get up and look for the circumstances they want and, if they can't find them, make them.”

George Bernard Shaw

This book is divided into seven steps:

Step 1: What Is Management?

Without the proper foundation, any building will be unable to stand solidly. Different existing definitions are introduced, including the classics from Maccoby, Myers-Briggs and Keirse, as well as some lesser-known ones.

Step 2: Know the Sins

As a manager you must be well aware of the shortfalls that can break your business: starting with the 13 most deadly sins like “Demand and Encourage,” “Ignore Standards,” “Tolerate Negligence” or “Let Everything Go Uncontrolled.” You’ll learn about a manager who punished underperforming employees with a whip.

Step 3: Take Responsibility

Managers need to understand that taking responsibility means standing up for their employees. But employees need to take responsibility as well. Responsibility is more than just focusing on making money. Companies that understand the importance of customers and employees and treat them accordingly, easily outperform those that don't.¹

¹ As described from John Cotter and James Heskett, *Corporate Culture and Performance* (Free Press 1992) in their research of more than two hundred big companies over an 11-year period.

Step 4: What Do You Pay?

A bonus is worth more than a thousand words. Bonuses don't have to be cash, but they do have to be meaningful and appropriate to the job being rewarded. Think how the right bonuses could make employees more motivated and loyal.

Step 5: Make Your Team Work

Designing teams seems to be turning into a lost art. Most teams are thrown together too quickly. Just throw in a few folks with a “reputation” and the rest will work itself out—or will it? Can the underdogs outperform the stars? Shotgun teams—just like shotgun weddings, just as unhappy. Managers are proud of their accomplishments, but when things go awry do they take responsibility or blame the team?

Step 6: Change, Growth and Trust

During a speech at a Rotary Club a formerly silent member felt comfortable enough to speak up. What made him feel confident enough? Skilled managers can get the best out of their employees. Through good manners, understanding cultural differences and respecting personal space and keeping things organized (or not).

Step 7: Bring the Fun to Work

Having fun can't be a requirement, but it's a desired side effect. The fun has to be added to the work expertly or else the employees will see the fun as just more work. When managers can loosen up the staff, the workplace is more relaxed and productive. The more fun, the better employees work.

Step 7

Bring the Fun to Work

Fun?

Unfortunately, too many seem to think that fun at work is a must-do, an obligation. This of course defeats the whole purpose of fun. In fact, when fun is seen as a requirement, any motivational value is lost—because employees can actually come to dislike fun.

Teams need to understand that having fun should never be a requirement but rather a desired side effect. Often, employers simply add “having fun” to the list of things employees need to do during the day. It becomes nothing more than just another thing to get done. Result: there’s less genuine fun, but plenty more frustration.

Let’s not forget that historically, fun and work haven’t exactly been best buddies. We should always try to make employees feel more fulfilled in doing and enjoying their work. If you’re going to implement “fun,” it needs to be done with the same care as any other strategic management tool.

Remember also that for many people, “fun” isn’t clowning around and telling jokes. Sometimes just the work itself can be fun. There’s a story about a young Japanese man who opened an auto repair shop. He really got enjoyment out of working on cars—to him, it was fun. The business grew and he hired mechanics, but he drew the line at opening more shops. “Think of all the extra money you’ll make,” his friends and family said. But he modestly declined, explaining, “Once I do that, I won’t be having any fun anymore.”

A study of IT workers (yes, IT workers) revealed that 70 percent of

them see fun at work as the number one priority. And 98 percent of 700 interviewed CEOs said they prefer to hire an employee with a sense of humor. In some workplaces it seems as though the opposite is true. Someone ought to tell all those grouches that it takes fewer muscles to smile.

Many studies have shown that as many as one third of all employees consider fun to be an important part of the corporate culture. Humor is important to help people to loosen up; to become more creative. It has nothing to do with avoiding work or even working less efficiently. Can you imagine a ball game without the winning players celebrating and joking around? And there's a reason so many movie DVDs include out-takes that include all the bloopers that had to be cut from the film. Fun is—well, fun!

Think the actors had fun while working?

“Humor is when you laugh anyway.”

German proverb

Basically there are two teaching strategies that get people to retain what they learn:

Fun

Parable

When was the last time you sat through a training session and got either of those? Doesn't happen too often, now does it?

When was the last time the team had fun?

Laughed together?

Created something outstanding while having fun?

Worked out a stuck situation with a smile?

Continued to be mad with someone who smiled at them?

How can we add fun?

1. Start with yourself
2. Never force it
3. Inspire others
4. Allow fun
5. Make fun part of the job
6. Find the positive in every situation
7. Smile, smile, smile

Some years ago I hold a session for a team of engineers on the rather dry topic of assembly. My session was one in many over the course of three days. I guarantee you that every one of those engineers remembers my session. Why? Because I managed to make it funny. You can teach anyone anything—as long as you can generate interest. People who have fun at work actually work more productively. Which store do you prefer to go shopping at—the one with the grumpy employees or the one where people genuinely smile at you and make you feel good?

Think about hobbies. Did one of your hobbies ever burn you out? Did you ever consider getting out of your hobby? Many dot-com bombs succeeded early on because they were able to motivate employees by creating a fun work environment. Now, to be fair, some of those companies might have taken fun a bit too far (or profits not far enough!)—but you rarely hear former dot-com employees complain that they didn't enjoy their jobs.

So why aren't there more companies requiring the work environment to be more of a joy? Look around you—are those managers just too inflexible or are they not willing to go the extra mile to try something new and fail at times?

Burn-Outs

Burned out employees tend to be depressed—and they're usually make those around them depressed, too. They can easily change the mood of everyone around them. A dangerous chain-reaction starts that can destroy even the best team.

The typical burn-out runs through six different phases:

1. increased engagement in work, tendency to make themselves irreplaceable
2. decreased engagement in work, negative attitude toward work and co-workers
3. playing the blame game, depression, aggression
4. loss of creativity, motivation, and efficiency
5. becoming mentally, socially, and emotionally withdrawn
6. insomnia, deep depression, stomach problems

Do you live to work or work to live?

Appendix

The Fun Standard⁹

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Date effective: Today

Owner: Everyone

1. Purpose

There are standards to describe all sorts of processes in all kinds of organizations all over the world. These processes preserve best practices and prevent the wasteful reinvention of excellence, but they can't create success by themselves. People must also enjoy their work to be productive.

Maximum productivity is obtained by having fun. This standard collects activities that help organizations have fun. Addition of the final ingredient, the actual "fun" itself, can only be done by you.

2. Definition

Fun: Consisting of animation, bliss, buoyancy, cheer, chuckles, delight, gladness, happiness, jests, jokes, joviality, joy, laughter, light-heartedness, merriment, mirth, play, pleasantries, quips, rapture, sport, tranquility, and witticism.

⁹ Unrestricted permission granted to copy, distribute, modify, improve, or reuse in any form. V20050405

The latest version can always be found at <http://LivingInternet.com/fun/>

3. Process

The organization shall be predisposed to mutual cooperation, trust, communication, and goodwill.

3.1 Management will:

- View themselves as employees of their organization, and focus on removing roadblocks and providing the resources their staff needs to perform their work.
- Improve the plan, manage the schedule, put the right people in the right place, and ensure that everyone knows how they can help the team.
- Have at least one meeting a week, mandate attendance at no more than 2 hours of regular meetings a week, hold regular meetings in the afternoon, and start every meeting with a statement of its purpose.
- Practice management by walking around (MBWA) to obtain unfiltered information about how the organization functions.
- Make promotions on merit, plus demonstration that at least one member of their staff can do their job as well as they can.
- Assign responsibility, authority, and accountability as a single package.
- Praise in public, criticize in private.
- Schedule based on bottom-up estimates prepared by people who perform the work, and plan to minimize overtime.
- Ensure that no staff member needs more than 15 minutes a week to prepare regular reports.
- Provide a feedback mechanism for employees to communicate with top management, and visibly action and reward useful suggestions.
- Share profits with everyone in the organization.
- Share credit for all successes, and take responsibility for all failures.

3.2 Employees will:

- Place first priority on fulfillment of the goals of the whole orga-

nization, and refrain from construction of disconnected empires unrelated to business goals.

- Never ask for something they don't need, never promise results they know can't be delivered, do anything they say they'll do, and provide notification as far in advance as possible when circumstances prevent fulfillment of a commitment.
- Share information with everyone, never use technical double-talk, and say they don't know when they don't know.
- Maintain a good working relationship with all departments, and respect all personnel independent of their area of expertise.
- Decrease the complexity and shorten the cycle times of all processes under their control.
- Write documents to be read; use brevity to maximize clarity.
- Double-check anything they give to others for accuracy, completeness, and consistency.
- Relate to their boss the way they would like employees to relate to them if they were the boss.

3.3 Human Resources will:

- Ensure that all personnel receive at least three weeks of vacation a year, and that at least three weeks of unused vacation can be carried over from one year to the next.
- Facilitate flexible working hours, and allow overtime hours worked to be taken in time off.
- Provide all personnel with medical, dental, and disability insurance, and repay out-of-pocket expenses within two weeks.
- Ensure that all personnel receive at least one week of training a year, and enable employees to choose their own training if not chosen by their management.
- Ensure that jerks and meanies are counseled, and, if unresponsive, allocated to a peripheral group where they can't damage the rest of the organization and have to work exclusively with each other until reformed.

3.4 Facilities will:

- Ensure that at least three live plants and one outside window are

visible from every working area.

- Reduce, absorb, and deflect noise wherever possible.
- Use only full spectrum lighting.
- Ensure that bathroom stalls are at least three feet wide, toilet paper has a roughness level less than plywood, water taps stay open for at least five seconds, and at least one shower is available.
- Make printable whiteboards and markers in at least three colors available to all staff.
- Provide all personnel with a computer no more than three years old, with word processing, spreadsheet, database, and graphics applications, and email, newsgroup, and web access.

3.5 All Personnel will:

- Strive for excellence through continuous improvement in all aspects of their job.
- Actively listen to everyone, never interrupt, and change their mind when they hear a better idea.
- Be gender, disability, religion, and color blind, respect all personnel as human beings of equal value, and never try to increase their sense of self-esteem by decreasing someone else's.
- Never spread harmful gossip about others, and congratulate others whenever possible with specifics.
- Turn complaints into constructive suggestions for improvement.
- Protect the environment and save costs at the same time.
- Never come to work with a contagious or infectious illness.
- Erase the whiteboard at the end of the meeting.
- Take coffee from the second pot, and make a new pot when the second pot is empty.
- Never raise their voice, keep a sense of humor, and smile at least twice a day for at least five seconds each time.

4. Exit Criteria

This process ends when all personnel look forward to coming to work at

the start of each day, and leave at the end of each day with a genuine sense of joy, self-worth, and achievement.

Failure to have fun will not be tolerated.

This version supersedes previous issues and takes precedence over constitutions.

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About The Author

Frank Kanu started out in sales before he decided to study computer science and later economics. As former CEO of three European corporations, Frank has gathered, refined, and implemented his management strategy—a strategy that has met with success.

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An award-winning speaker who enjoys sharing his insights with business leaders, Frank has lectured frequently and written articles for publications in the United States and Europe.

Besides spending his time with his lovely wife Ada and their three beautiful children, Frank enjoys skydiving, cycling and watching sports. He and Ada also love to cook and delight in surprising friends and acquaintances with their culinary skills.