

The Lion Tamer's Delusion

Take The Shock And Stun Collars Off Your Team Members

By Kendall C. Wright, President of Entelechy Training and Development, Inc.

As a leader, if you were stripped of your authority, your title, and your power - would the people in your sphere of influence still follow you or would they turn on you like wild animals?

Jakov Pavlovic was a pioneer in training dangerous circus animals. As the legend goes, no one could boast of the type and magnitude of success Jakov experienced working with large cats. As tales of his accomplishments spread, his reputation grew worldwide.

Jakov revolutionized the animal training process when he invented the S&S collar, an electronic shock and stun collar, to control his big cats as they performed in the center ring. Most conventional trainers, however, were skeptical. Many of Jakov's peers detailed specific shortcomings in his method. First and foremost, they pointed out that the collars agitated and annoyed the loins. But Jakov was convinced that his approach was effective, safe, and fool-proof.

For six years, and more than 550 shows, Jakov and his majestic lions performed without a hitch. Until one day, in Budapest, Hungary, during the Sziget Festival, there was an incredible thunderstorm. The power failed, and so too did the loin's electronic collars.

What happened next was unimaginable. As if premeditated and well rehearsed, the lions attacked Jakov. It took 12 armed security officers to put an end to the grisly mauling.

Six magnificent animals and one misguided man died in the center ring.

On that tragic day, the deficiencies and limitations of Jakov's philosophy of intimidation were gruesomely displayed. What Jakov mistakenly considered reverence and respect, was in effect, disdain and loathing in disguise.

Jakov relied on intimidation to control and manipulate his lions into compliance. When his authority was stripped, he found himself in a terrible and terrifying fix.

Leaders must decide between one of two approaches to getting desired results from their direct reports. The first option has been outlined in Jakov's story. It's called intimidation. While it's true that intimidation works, its long-term effectiveness in the workplace is dubious and short-lived at best. It seems that, eventually, intimidation gives birth to insurrection and insurgency.

The second option, a far more effective approach, is the use of inspiration. At its Latin core, inspire has to do with breath. Leaders who chose to inspire, have chosen to breathe into their direct reports the breath of possibility. These leaders have chosen to help their direct reports take off the S&S collars of limitations, and to replace those collars with the monocle of opportunity. Inspiration allows individuals to step into a higher level of contribution and commitment to the organization.

Remember, feeble leaders find their strength in intimidation, but Actualizing Leaders increase their effectiveness through inspiration. In the end, the choice is yours.

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