



SIMON MCGRATH
MOVING FROM MANAGING TO LEADING

LEADERSHIP MOMENTS PODCAST TRANSCRIPT



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EPISODE 3



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MURRAY: Welcome to my podcast. I'm Murray and this is Leadership Moments, real people stories about the people and the moments that have influenced and shaped their leadership.

I recently caught up with Simon McGrath, Chief Operating Officer AccorHotels in the Pacific Region.

What's the story, what's the moment that you think or one of the moments that was the most significant thing in defining your approach to leadership.

SIMON: Early on it was my father telling me and probably showing me that I had to work hard.

MURRAY: Yeah.

SIMON: He then rewarded and encouraged me when I was good with people and the final thing to that is he's incredibly unselfish. So that was early on foundation stuff.

I didn't enjoy doing things really well. I had a very competitive streak and I ended up linking. I mean I was competitive which meant I was very forced. I was a manager not a leader. I was driven. Managers do tasks... Managers manage tasks, leaders manage people and I was capped out. You get to a point when you're a great manager, where you are capped out. You just can't do anymore and you actually get to a tipping point. The tipping point is largely around... you become a bit more aggressive and impatient and machine-like.

MURRAY: And probably less... and more and more less effective.

SIMON: Yes. Yes, because you've used up all your collateral. And then you realize that... You probably plateau for a year or two or you struggle or you make mistakes for a year or two... and I did. And then I stopped and I started to manage people. And I thought I'd managed people by being polite to them when I gave them a task, but I was largely managing the task. Then I managed people and managing people mend. Then I started to lead people not manage them. And then when I led people I didn't treat a group of ten executives working with me the same way for the first time.

I looked... when Murray... I shut my eyes and looked at when he was most happy and most dynamic and that was when he was working with me or traveling with me and we were talking about food and beverage. That's when he was really on fire. He wasn't

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on fire when I yelled at him at a month end review. So why don't I try and put Murray in that place as often as possible and when he's in that place I can then give him those same tasks that I was doing when I was yelling at him, but he's responsive and he's excited.

John on the other hand doesn't like, doesn't need to be next to me. He likes a really clear environment with good tasks and he likes it communicated in a PowerPoint presentation. That's when he's on fire. So let me do that as often as I can with John.

And then Susie on the other hand, she likes being in a collaborative tech environment. So let me try and get her in that space. Instead of forcing everybody individually to be the same, leading meant deciding to look at people individually and look at them from their point of view not from my point of view.

MURRAY: So really adjusting your behaviour...

SIMON: Completely. Completely.

MURRAY: To those present.

SIMON: Yeah. Completely.

MURRAY: And this is a bit... but I have noticed... Is there one failure that you had that really helped to shape you?

SIMON: There was one... Hamilton Island... It was on Hamilton Island. We were doing a takeover. We were about to run this massive event on the whole weekend. That wasn't particularly a highlight of my career, but it shaped me. It shaped me to realize I don't have to be the only bearer of bad news. I needed to work in the team so we had the right to restructure, but I was honorable and out front and that was a bit naïve and I didn't listen. I assumed everyone was an idiot because I had no listening skills. As a pivotal moment, that was my failure. My ongoing failure that continues to flow today is I don't listen. My insight. That's the wrong way to represent that. My passion and enthusiasm, desire to help and competitiveness override my ability to genuinely listen and on a daily basis I fail. But on a daily basis that's one thing I work on is my listening.

MURRAY: So if you do your mindfulness. See what happens...

SIMON: Yeah.

MURRAY: To your listening.

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SIMON: Yeah. I don't and I don't is not a bad... it doesn't come from a bad place. It's not good and I'm obsessed about trying to work that out.

MURRAY: Thanks for listening. It was really interesting to hear how Simon evolved from simply doing things to leading people and recognizing that you can't do it all on your own. Some great stuff to help us reflect on our own leadership.

For more information, resources and past episodes, just head to murraywright.com. Until the next time.

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An obligation free 30 minute chat to help you focus on what you want to achieve and why it is important.

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