

# CATCH

The Leadership Game

Everyone Can Play

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## Chapter 2

### The Fundamentals

When Jack walked into Susan's office he noticed that it didn't have a lot of frills. Her desk and décor were neat and orderly. There were some pictures on the wall and on the shelves next to her desk and a few live plants placed around the room. Her desk was not large but seemed to fit the space. In fact, the size of the desk appeared to be intentional because it left room for a fairly large amount of space in front for two comfortable chairs and a small coffee table between. As far as office spaces go, Jack could sense that Susan had taken some time to try to make it a warm and inviting space.

Jack gave a soft knock on the open door and was immediately greeted with a smile. "Come on in," Susan said enthusiastically. She got up from behind the desk and met Jack at the chairs giving him a warm handshake. Motioning to the chairs Susan said, "Please have a seat. I'm sure you have lots of questions, and I'm glad we have this opportunity to talk."

As Jack sat down, he thought to himself, *Boy do I have questions. This place is so different than the last place I worked.*

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Susan smiled and asked, “So how are you doing? I know you’ve only been here for a few days, but what are your overall impressions?”

“Well,” Jack said, “it appears you and the members of our team have the most unusual team chemistry of any team I have ever been a part of.” Jack second-guessed himself and quickly added, “I mean that in a good way,” and smiled.

Susan threw up her hand and said with a smile, “No need to explain yourself. I asked you your impressions, and I appreciate a straight answer. However, the clarification is nice to know. We do things a little differently than most. That’s for sure. People in other divisions and teams look at us a little strange sometimes because of the way we operate. But they really don’t say anything because our productivity numbers are some of the best in the company.”

Jack replied. “That’s impressive. So, can I ask my first question?”

“Certainly.”

“What’s with the ball in the shape of a heart? I mean, I enjoy a good game, but this heart thing has to have some significance.”

“Well I’m glad you asked because that little reminder tool really is the heart of the matter, pun intended. You see, our team operates on the basis that everyone on the team is a human being. Now that may sound a little funny. But you would be surprised how many teams and businesses operate on the basis of being machines rather than human beings.”

Puzzled, Jack asked, “What do you mean?”

“Think about it for a minute. How many times have you felt that those around you and especially your direct reports didn’t really see you as an important part of the system? Rather, you probably felt like you were a cog in a machine and they just wanted you to do your

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job. The idea is, don't think. Don't suggest. And by all means don't try to add anything to the group. They just want you to do your work and get the job done. And, by the way, when you wear down or get a little slower with the work, they will replace you with another person who will be your replacement cog."

Jack nodded, "I never really thought about it like that. But now that you mention it, I've had a few job scenarios that looked and felt very much like that. In fact, I'm glad to hear this particular work team has a different philosophy."

"That's right, Jack. And 'philosophy' is the right word. If you don't think correctly about the world and those around you, you will never correctly respond to the world and those around you. Our team, beginning with me, is committed to treating each other as human beings. As such, there are some fundamentals upon which we all agree."

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Susan continued, "First, as human beings, we will treat each other with respect. That means we will give each other a hearing. We won't interrupt. We won't condescend. When we disagree, and we often do, we will do so respectfully without name-calling or categorizing people. If we have a disagreement or get offended, we will go to that person first and try to work it out with them before we talk about the situation with another person. If the matter cannot be resolved privately, I am the next go-to person. I can serve as mediator, and we can get things resolved."

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Jack replied enthusiastically. “That sounds like a plan I can live with. I remember at my last job we could hardly get anything done because so many people had created hard feelings for one another. There was almost no communication, and what communication there was, was only surface. No one really wanted to be real. I suppose that’s why there was very little trust in the group.”

Susan nodded. “That makes sense. We have a large amount of trust on our team. But trust is earned, and you will have to show the other team members that you can trust and be trusted. Don’t worry; if you are honest and authentic, you’ll have no problem. And speaking of authenticity, that leads me to the second fundamental philosophy of our team.”

She continued. “You see, right next to understanding everyone on the team as a human being is the idea that, now hold on to your hat, everyone on the team is a follower.”

Jack’s eyes opened wide, and he must have had an astonished expression on his face because Susan commented, “Shocking isn’t it?”

Jack replied, “Wow! I didn’t see that one coming. I thought that since you guys are one of the highest productive teams in the company that everyone would be a real ‘go-getter.’”

“Oh, we are. Every person on our team is a high functioning, idealistic, energized follower. That’s why we can operate at such high efficiency. But overtime you may see that we are not so much ‘go-getters’ as we are a team of ‘go-givers.’”

Jack’s puzzled look obviously gave him away as his brain was trying to catch up to these new ideas. He was certain he was missing something. He thought to himself, *Everyone is a follower? In previous teams and companies that would have been the LAST thing you would have wanted to call yourself. All the leadership seminars talk about how everyone needs to be a leader. Followers never get anything done. People don’t follow followers*

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*do they? They follow leader's right? How can anything be done if everyone is a follower?* Finally Jack blurted out, "I don't understand that at all. It goes against everything I've ever heard about getting ahead in business and life."

Susan sat back in her chair and grinned. "I told you to hold on to your hat. It comes as quite a shock to everyone who hears it for the first time because so much of the 'leadership world' doesn't understand the beginning point for human beings."

Jack inserted, "The beginning point for human beings? What is that?"

"That," Susan said with a smile and a slight chuckle, "is the place where we will pick up tomorrow. Rest assured, every person on our team, including me, experienced the brain cramp you are experiencing at some point. Just think about these two concepts. Number 1, everyone one on our team is a human being, and number 2, everyone on our team understands they are followers."

"Ok," Jack said. "I'll think about it for sure. Can we meet about the same time tomorrow?"

"Sure. We'll talk more about the fundamentals tomorrow. Welcome to the team, Jack."

As Jack walked back to his cubicle his mind was full and conflicted. He passed by the door of Jim's cubicle and stuck his head in. Jim was sitting at his desk working on a project, but when Jack popped in the doorway, he lifted his head and smiled. "Hey Jack!" he exclaimed.

Jack looked at Jim with a furrowed brow and said, "Hey Jim, can I ask you a question?"

"Sure."

Jack continued, "Do you see yourself as a leader or a follower?"

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Jim immediately responded with a broad smile and leaned back in his chair putting his hands behind his head as if taking a stretch, “Oh, that’s easy. I’m a true blue follower to the max!”

Jack’s eyes opened and his jaw dropped.

Jim smiled and consoled, “You’ve had your first meeting with Susan haven’t you?”

Jack shook his head up and down in the affirmative.

“Well, hold on partner. You are in for one super ride in how to think about this job and your life. It’s gonna change both.”

Jack just stared, put his hand to his aching forehead and shook it in disbelief. He thought, *What have I gotten myself into?*