

Chapter 1

Clear the Fog

*If confusion is the first step to knowledge,
I must be a genius.*

—Larry Leissner

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A few Novembers ago, I was experiencing a lot of internal drama over one particular dilemma: Who should I invite to Thanksgiving dinner? My opposing influences came from all areas of the family. One relative called to tell me that if I invited another particular person, then his wife would not come because she was offended by something that person had said during the previous Thanksgiving. Another called to tell me that if I didn't invite this same person, it would make Thanksgiving the most miserable one ever.

It was becoming so difficult that I considered not having Thanksgiving at all. I was struggling and frustrated.

It doesn't matter if you are under pressure in your personal life or simply can't get your team to follow your lead. The same truth remains in both cases: When you struggle, you also experience frustration.

Here is how the cycle usually goes: You may try to figure out who or what is standing in your way professionally. At first glance, it may seem like it's your trouble-making employee. You tell yourself that if this person would just straighten up, all would be well with the world.

If your small business is struggling, you may think you don't have the knowledge, skills, or resources to make it a success. Maybe you don't understand marketing, aren't skilled at managing others, or have a staff of two and really need four to get where you need to go.

Eventually, you come to the conclusion that the reason you are stuck is because there is someone who does not support,

agree with, or understand your decisions. It could be your boss or your colleagues. It could be your employees. It also might be that your personal life has so much drama that you can't focus.

There are a million and one potential excuses as to why you are frustrated, stuck, and not getting what you want, but there is only one real reason: You are unclear. You have fog that is clouding your vision.

The premise of the first Stop Workplace Drama principle, *Clear the Fog*, is as follows:

1. The one with clarity navigates the ship.
2. Clarity can change any situation.

Once you are clear in your business, you are in charge. You attract the right people to your team. They are working toward the same goal. They are motivated. You become excited. You make decisions that are in agreement with who you are and the values that you hold dear. Your choices support and work in harmony with other parts of your life.

The author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, Patrick Lencioni, states that "A friend of mine best expressed the power of teamwork when he once told me, 'If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time'" (Lencioni 2002, viii).

The really cool thing about this first principle—*Clear the Fog*—is that it works as easily in your personal life as it does in your business. Once you become clear in both of these areas, you won't always feel the need to make sure that everyone understands your decisions. You won't spend as much time worrying about what other people say you should do, or beating yourself up for what you should have done. You will make your decisions based on who you are and what values you hold dear, instead of trying to please, manipulate, or rescue others from their own drama.

Let me get back to my Thanksgiving dinner story so you can see how this works. After the initial dread and frustration I experienced over my inability to meet everyone's needs in regard to whom I should invite to the meal, I finally got silent and did a little meditation and journaling—something I often do when I experience a lack of clarity. Suddenly, it came to me: It is my house. I will invite everyone. I did not have to get permission or agreement.

However, this did mean that I had to be okay with the fact that some people would simply not show up. Instead of taking this personally, I decided I would act on my clarity. I remained neutral, and let everyone make decisions about their attendance based on their values instead of my wishes or manipulation. I made it perfectly clear that I intended to have a very peaceful and harmonious Thanksgiving. I told my family and friends that everyone was invited, and if that didn't work for them, I would honor their decision not to attend. I also said that since it was my house, I had the freedom to ask anyone who was not in alignment with my vision to please leave if I sensed any trouble.

The result? It turned out to be the best Thanksgiving I have ever had. My clarity eliminated the drama. I got what I wanted: a peaceful Thanksgiving. The icing on the cake is that everyone attended—and *they all got along*.

The Fog

Let's define what the fog is and what it does.

Everyone knows how exciting it is when you start working toward a new goal. However, somewhere between the first steps and the end result the process becomes difficult. The reason for this is usually because someone on your team is unhappy, and, instead of focusing on the island you are trying to reach, you're now concentrating on pleasing the one person who is upset. Your focus has shifted because you became confused about your number one priority. This is an example of how losing clarity forced you off course because of a

conflicting desire or unexpected reaction from someone who has the power to influence you. Or you lose momentum because you start focusing on all the hard work it takes to move forward. Negativity sets in, and now you and your team are no longer motivated.

The fog here is your inability to focus and your lack of willingness to see the bigger picture. Occasionally, you might have two desires that do not align. For example, your desire for free time is competing with your desire to finish a project, so you procrastinate and start drifting aimlessly.

The fog is any distraction or division that clouds your vision and threatens your commitment. When you are in the fog, you feel confused instead of motivated.

In short: Any time you lose focus and your level of commitment diminishes, you are in the fog—and you are splintered. You become what I refer to as *double-minded*.

Though visions and goals are often the first steps toward achieving clarity, there must be something more to sustain it. To keep yourself clear, you must have a strong “why” that supports your goals. This will come from developing your set of core values because, in the difficult times, these are what will lead you out of any fog that threatens your success.

If you aren’t sure what your core values are, you may need to work on defining them. You might need to do a bit of soul searching to discern what most matters to you and/or your organization. What principles do you want to live by, no matter what happens around you? What values will you never sacrifice? Once you are aware of your core values, you can set more satisfying goals—goals that support these values. We talk more about this later when we discuss in detail how you can begin to gain clarity.

When I observe people, I often notice that conflict exists because their lives are splintered. They are not quite clear in some area of their life or business.

In the entrepreneurial world, I have had the pleasure of meeting and networking with a lot of “solopreneurs” who just

can't seem to make it because they keep changing directions. They put the cart before the horse; they worry about "how" before figuring out the "what"; or they keep waiting for someone else to encourage them instead of believing in themselves and their vision. They seem to be seeking some kind of guru to answer questions that only they can be responsible for. They too lack clarity on what they need, and they are operating in a fog.

I also have had the advantage of working with leaders in the corporate world who are frustrated because they try to lead without having any kind of vision. It's hard to motivate a team when all the work is focused on the drudgery of the everyday grind instead of the success of arriving together at a worthy goal—one that is supported by solidly defined core values. Because of the fog, these leaders are only able to see what is right in front of them, instead of the island in the distance that would beckon them to row more effectively and energetically.

Of course, none of us is perfect, and most goals are not achieved in a linear fashion. There are other factors that challenge us and throw us off track—things like our personality traits, habits, or wiring. Have you ever noticed that some of the things that come naturally to you—such as your particular gifts and hidden talents—can also be the cause of the drama that holds you back? The following are some potential gifts and personality types/traits that have the potential to deter your success.

The Idealist

The highly idealistic leader is often crystal clear in the beginning and good at motivating others. However, she finds it difficult to keep the momentum when the going gets tough. If the journey turns out to be more difficult than first imagined, procrastination will set in—and then come the justifications as to why it's not a good time to move forward. She starts out with one oar and a rowboat with no map, when what she really needs is a yacht and crew to achieve her goals. Her idealism initiates unrealistic expectations for her team, which ultimately leads to disappointment. The challenge for the idealistic person is to

see the bigger picture and know what is really required before expending energy convincing others to move forward without enough resources or commitment.

The Creative Genius

Maybe you are a creative genius who—like so many other creative geniuses—is easily distracted. The sparkling island calls to you, and as a result, you have 50 irons in the fire and your energy is all over the place. You want everyone to catch your vision, yesterday—and you want your employees to anticipate what you are thinking before you let them know, even though your vision changes along with your moods and the weather. Ask yourself if your creativity is contributing to the prosperity of your company—or is your creativity the cloud that fogs your vision?

A colleague of mine, Angela B., worked for a creative boss, the owner of an international travel and tour group. According to Angela, her boss's creativity almost drove her crazy before she finally threw in the towel.

"His mind-set changed daily with at least 10 new ideas. He was extremely indecisive, and therefore, the team lacked direction," Angela recalled to me.

Often, entrepreneurial and creative types do not understand how to balance their genius with the need for structure and clear communication. Angela explained:

"We were organizing an athletic event in Europe for 200-plus athletes and he needed to sign the contracts with different hotels. These contracts were very long, and he never took the time to sit down and read all of the pages (and he didn't trust me or his other assistant to do this properly). It took more than three months to finally get his signature, and I had to save his reputation over and over again so we wouldn't lose the reservations. His excuses for not signing were:

Let's wait and see what the Euro (exchange rate) does.

I don't know if the sizes of their beds are comparable to U.S. beds. We should check into that first. I have to do two million other things; signing these contracts is not important."

Angela always felt that her work was never good enough. She felt incompetent because no matter what project she was working on, another project would take priority at the drop of a hat. She said, "It was also difficult to accomplish administrative work such as organizing files and filing taxes because that was last on his list of priorities. It felt like we often had our heads in the clouds instead of getting real work done."

If you are a creative genius, your gift could cloud your vision when you hire a team. Look at it from your employees' point of view. You may be more committed to being creative than to achieving your stated goals. This will cause a division, and may tempt you to blame the team instead of clearing the fog by adjusting your patterns to accommodate your goal. Imagine working for someone on a big project into which you have poured your heart and soul; then one day, your boss comes in and says, "Scrap that project. I have a new and better one for you to work on."

While this kind of creativity can potentially be something very positive, it can drive your team members crazy because they never feel a sense of completion. This kills their motivation and leads to turnover. Not only do they not get to complete the tasks they begin, they also miss out on getting any recognition for their skills and accomplishments. They will never know if what they were doing would have made the difference. They bought into the vision you introduced, only to have their horizon shifted 180 degrees midsail.

This kind of leader often forgets that people want to work from a larger purpose—not just for a paycheck or to complete each willy-nilly (if sparkly) task that crosses his mind. The creative genius's challenge is to consider the entire team's feelings, instead of being addicted to the adrenalin of her own creativity and getting lost in the fog of self-absorption.

The Peacemaker

If you are a peacemaker, you simply love people. You don't want to upset anyone or make anyone unhappy. However, without knowing it, your need to please others or benefit others keeps you confused about your own mission. You may be unaware of your unconscious needs and motives. You keep the peace, hold your tongue, and rescue others—often at your company's expense.

The outcome is that, as the peacemaker, you often end up feeling a sense of resentment because others never appreciate your sacrifices. Though you were unaware of this expectation, you come to anticipate something in return for your benevolence. When you don't receive anything, you tend to feel hurt and insecure about your leadership capabilities.

An extreme case of this might be when an executive assistant is sentenced to prison for tax evasion, along with her boss, because she knowingly assisted him in hiding his malpractice. In many cases, you don't hear about the peacemaker in the news because she doesn't make a ripple. However, she still facilitates drama by not being clear on her responsibility to speak up regarding necessary change.

Clarity means having the courage to speak up—even when it is challenging—and ridding yourself of the justifications that keep you in your comfort zone.

The Analytical

A friend of mine recently told me about a mountain biking adventure she had hoped to take, which never came to fruition. She had accompanied two of her friends to the mountains to camp out, with the intention of riding up and down a peak in the North Cascades of Washington the next day. During that afternoon, however, one of the friends decided he should overhaul the gears on his bike. He tinkered with them, analyzing to make sure they were running optimally, rearranging pieces over and over again, until one key element of the bike broke. The trip was aborted because his bike no longer worked—and my friend was extremely frustrated.

Perhaps you are one of these analytical types of people who tend to think things through. The problem is that you often overthink and get stuck on the rock called “how.” You drive everyone crazy twisting everything over and over in your mind, playing out various scenarios, without ever taking action.

If the above description sounds like you, then you must train yourself to understand that “what” always comes first, “who” always comes second, and “how” always shows up after you know what and who. If you get too stuck on “how,” the fog will eventually roll in again—thereby confusing everything.

The challenge for the analytical is to gain clarity by inviting others’ viewpoints and implementing key ideas while discarding what doesn’t work—instead of getting consumed with how it’s going to get done.

So—Which One Are You?

You probably see yourself in one or more of these examples. Whether you tend to get overwhelmed by unrealistic expectations, become easily distracted, or get stuck on the rock, it all boils down to a need to gain clarity so that you can move forward.

The Power of the Leader

If you are a sales director, practice administrator, or supervisor, then you are in a position of leadership. The same is true if you are a business owner with a staff of employees, a department head, or even a parent. Therefore, as a designated leader, you have a lot of power and influence in the workplace. Here’s something that may be difficult to hear, so take a deep breath: If you have drama in your office, you are the person who is responsible for navigating in the fog.

If you were clear, you wouldn’t:

- ◆ Hide information.
- ◆ Avoid facing the problems.

- ◆ Feel one thing but do another.
- ◆ Give up your values to gain others' approval.
- ◆ Make excuses about your performance.
- ◆ Blame the situation for your drama.
- ◆ Shift direction without considering how it will affect your staff.

Do you see yourself in any of these examples? If so, then do you recognize that you are responsible for part—or even most—of the current drama?

The good news is this: To increase your power, all you have to do is eliminate the fog. Your vision has to be so clear and inspiring that no doubt exists as to who is in charge and in which direction you are going.

Confusion will inevitably lead to drama. A leader who lacks clarity will drive his or her team crazy and eventually create more drama than you can imagine.

Do you feel, for instance, that your team lacks motivation? If so, figure out if you are guilty of changing your mind in the middle of what you once deemed an important assignment—complete with deadlines and priorities attached to it. Your people gave up their lunch to get it done. They faced their fears of impending change. They spent overtime trying to figure out how to come up with the resources to complete the job, and they listened to your analysis paralysis. Then one day, you saw another sparkling island and told everyone to drop what they had been sweating bullets over for the last three months because you had decided it no longer mattered. Not very inspiring, and not a great way to develop trust, either. One of every human being's underlying needs is a feeling of certainty. When you keep changing your mind with no advance warning, you elicit a threat reaction from your employees and colleagues.

As a creative person myself, I too have been guilty of too much excitement, changing my mind, and starting new projects—until one new assistant quit and called me unstable.

As much as it hurt—and even though she was not necessarily a gifted communicator—I got it, and used it as a lesson.

When you are the one in charge, changing the rules feels okay because you still have some control and a sense of certainty. However, those in support roles can lose motivation when you're constantly changing your mind—unless you communicate and keep them in the loop, and take their feedback into account.

If your group endures petty arguments, disagreements, backstabbing, and power struggles, ask yourself if you are guilty of avoiding team meetings that would serve to update everyone on the new decisions and direction of the company, and consider their input.

I'm sure you could find very good reasons for avoiding meetings. Let's look at a few of them:

- ◆ I don't have time.
- ◆ Meetings just turn into gripe sessions.
- ◆ Not everyone can be there at the same time.
- ◆ They always take longer than expected.
- ◆ I'm not good at holding a meeting.

We will talk more about why to have team meetings in Chapter 2, but for now, let me just tie this wisdom in with some familiar connections. In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, author and management expert Stephen R. Covey would say you need to “sharpen the saw” (Covey 1989, 287). There's also an old proverb dating from before 1732 when it was originally recorded that says, “A stitch in time saves nine.” This proverb initially meant that a little effort made now may prevent further chaos later, and was later used by English astronomer Francis Baily in his journal as a means of explaining how he kept his boat on course in the middle of the stream. Everyone may have a different way of explaining the need to invest the time now in order to prevent chaos later—as you would do in a meeting. My saying is that you need to plug the leak.

These reasons why you don't have weekly meetings are really just excuses. While excuses tell you what is happening and why, they never serve to plug the leak. In fact, if you ignore the leak, it will often grow until it sinks the boat.

A leak occurs when we are stuck in the fog so long that we hit a rock or can't see our own mechanical problems. The drama then becomes more than just confusing; it essentially destroys any forward progress we try to make.

You have probably already figured this out, but I'm still going to drive the idea home. All drama has one thing in common: a lack of clarity. So how do you identify this?

- ◆ Constantly changing directions
- ◆ Conflicting desires that hamper productivity
- ◆ Confusion
- ◆ Not knowing who the boss is
- ◆ Failing to enforce the rules
- ◆ Instability
- ◆ Insubordination
- ◆ Incongruent behavior
- ◆ Constant misunderstandings
- ◆ Lack of boundaries
- ◆ Resentment
- ◆ People pleasing and manipulation
- ◆ Analysis paralysis
- ◆ Waiting for everyone to understand and agree

Any type of discord, abuse, confusion, or game-playing always boils down to a lack of clarity. You will know that wherever drama is, clarity is not. When you are clear, life is good and you are on the top deck; you're motivated by the vision, instead of down in the boiler room shoveling coal.

Who Is on the Top Deck?

If you are a business owner who is constantly covering for some incompetent employee, your employee is the one who is on the

top deck. If you are a leader who is allowing your boss to manipulate you or treat you like a doormat, you have lost your insight on who you are and how you want to be treated.

If there is a drama queen in your office who stirs the pot, then I think we both know who is navigating the ship—and it's not you.

Are you beginning to see a pattern here?

There have been so many times when I've witnessed business owners making decisions out of a need to please a prima-donna employee or pot-stirring staff member, rather than addressing the issue and risking upsetting the employee. The owner often stays silent at the expense of the team—or even at the expense of profits.

For example, I once worked with a business owner who was continuing to keep and pay an employee who was lazy, failed to show up to work, and not contributing in any way to the bottom line. The owner's excuse for keeping her was all about the employee's problems, rather than about the business's vision and mission. There were always excuses: "Well, she's had some rough times lately" and "I don't think she could find employment anywhere else." Now, there's really no problem here if the business owner is happy with this arrangement.

If this is the case, I would say to this business owner, "Rescue at your heart's content, if this is your vision for your life. Though you may have lots of peace, I can guarantee that running your company in this way will impact your productivity."

Remember: Drama is any obstacle to your peace and productivity. As a leader and a business owner, you must always be on the lookout for anything that threatens to impede this peace and prosperity.

I have to admit that I was shocked at this particular owner's lack of awareness and clarity about her vision for her own business.

Who was navigating here? Who was on the top deck? Obviously, it was the employee. The business owner had all kinds of reasons for keeping her on board, mostly in the name of

maintaining a sense of peace or rescuing someone she considered incapable. However, this owner was not even considering how this rescuing behavior was creating a leak in the boat and impacting her organization's productivity and prosperity.

The simple fact here is that there is a justification going on. The owner would rather go to the island called "pleasing everyone else" than to grow in her leadership skills and risk losing her employee's approval. Once again, we see the fog of distraction or ulterior motives at play.

There are many benefits of gaining clarity. Doing so will bring you peace, save you time and energy, and can change any negative dynamic in your personal or professional life.

CLARITY GIVES YOU PEACE

Remember that I said wherever drama is, clarity is not? All drama involves a lack of clarity, which in turn always brings you peace. When you are at peace, your directives are clear.

Even if you are faced with some dirty work or interpersonal conflict, you can endure it gracefully. Even if there are disagreements and misunderstandings, your door is open when your employees are ready to come around. You have no need to make excuses or please the wrong people. You are clear.

GETTING CLEAR SAVES TIME AND ENERGY

Once again, understanding this principle will help you speed up your decision and keep you from wasting time trying to figure out why someone else is doing what they are doing. You also won't expend valuable energy on blame and resentment and get sucked into more relationship drama. It is extremely important that you get crystal clear on your intentions, objectives, and personal values.

HOW CLARITY CAN CHANGE ANYTHING

It doesn't matter what kind of drama you have; clarity can clean it up. As I said before, drama in your personal life will eventually

spill over professionally—even if it seems at first like they are separate issues. Let me share with you a more personal example to help you to see that cleaning up drama personally will impact your career advancement, your productivity, and your sense of well-being, and how the three core components comprise drama.

I had the recent opportunity to be a guest expert on a local radio show where people call in with their questions. I was answering most questions on the air, but one fellow got me on a private line and told me about his issue.

Joe lived in Illinois, and was recently divorced from Patty, his wife for more than 10 years. According to Joe, the divorce was pretty messy. Several months after the divorce, Joe got another job that required him to move 400 miles away from Patty and their two boys. Patty let Joe take the kids out of Illinois once, but then decided she wasn't going to do it anymore. As a result, Joe was divided because he really loved his kids and wanted to be present in their lives, yet he also wanted to excel in his new position 400 miles away. In his way of thinking, it was his ex-wife holding him back. She became the obstacle to his peace.

Out of anger, Joe ended up reducing his child support, and then Patty bucked up even more. Now you are starting to see an example of how the relationship component comes into play in this particular situation. Patty would not meet Joe halfway and was not going to let him see his kids at all because, according to Joe, Patty thought it was way too far.

As I listened to Joe, I could sense his frustration and his worry. I asked Joe, "What do you really want?"

Joe said without any hesitation, "I want to be a good dad to my kids."

Then Joe got distracted by the island called "Why is she doing this to me?" (Can you see the wasted energy and time?)

"Why is she doing this to me?" Joe asked.

"I don't know, because I am not her," I responded.

"But . . . why do you think she is doing this to me?" he continued.

When you look at this dialogue, you can see how easy it is to become locked into drama and storytelling. The fact is that even if I had a good idea about why this was happening, I am not Patty. Even Patty herself might not even know why she's doing what she's doing. When there is underlying hurt, hidden resentment, and unresolved fear, all kinds of drama is bound to surface—and Joe was getting his fair share of it. You can probably imagine how this kind of stress would eventually impact Joe on his new job if he didn't find a way to peacefully resolve his situation. Can you see how Joe might be tempted to talk about his problems with his clients, or how Joe might use this problem as an excuse for poor performance? Personal drama negatively impacts personal performance and spills over into the workplace.

In order to clear Joe's distraction, I asked again, "What do you want?"

Remember how I said before that the reason we don't get what we want is we either don't know what we want or we become distracted? Distraction that impacts personal performance or stands in the way of your highest intention is always an issue of clarity. Joe was consistently distracted by his attempts to figure out his wife. In reality, the best person to ask about this was Patty herself. If Joe wasn't willing or able to have this dialogue, he could still get clear about his values and long-term goals about being a good father to his kids, and gaining a sense of clarity on these values would drive him to different—and likely, more constructive—behaviors and interactions with his ex-wife. This clarity could prevent him from acting on impulsive behaviors and mind-drama with his ex-wife, which could impact his kids in the long run. To make sure Joe understood his own goals, I asked him a big question: "What do you want? In other words, what is the outcome you desire?"

"To be a good father to my kids, which means seeing them on a regular basis," he replied.

I asked, "Will your ex-wife let you see your kids if you make the trip to Illinois?"

Joe said, “Yes, but . . .”

I could tell that Joe was getting ready to tell me why he shouldn’t have to make the extra effort and why it was unfair to him, and so on. In other words, Joe immediately got stuck on the rock called “but.”

The word “but” is almost always a sign of resistance, one of the three core components always present in drama. In one of my favorite books, *Do It! Let’s Get Off Our Buts*, the authors, John Rogers and Peter McWilliams say “but” means, “Behold the Underlying Truth” (Rogers and McWilliams 1991, 17).

I was correct about my perception. Joe continued, “But . . . I’m paying child support. I should not have to drive all the way to Illinois to see my kids.”

By the way, “should” is also a word indicating resistance. Many people get stuck in the drama of what should or shouldn’t be. Yes, you can fight that battle, if winning a battle is what you want. But again, in order to clear the fog and help Joe get clarity, I asked, “If there are two islands you can go to, and one means winning a battle with your wife and the other island is getting to see your kids and be a father to them—then which island would you choose?”

He said, “Seeing my kids, but . . .”

I said, “No buts. Are you willing to drive to Illinois several times a year and spend quality time with your kids, even if Patty does nothing more to cooperate?”

Joe said, “Yes.”

(If I had an “Easy Button” this would be the time to press it!)

It’s never as difficult as we make it when we get clear on what we can control and what we are committed to. I told Joe to keep this clarity and I could almost guarantee that his ex-wife would come around. However, even if she doesn’t, he will still have been able to accomplish his goal of being in touch with his kids and maintaining that relationship, while advancing professionally in a career and location of his choosing.

The point here is that clarity may or may not change Joe’s ex-wife. Joe will struggle if that is his motive or intention.

However, Joe's clarity will give him the essence of what he really wants, if he is able to let go of distractions and not get stuck on the rocks that lie between him and his final goal: being a good dad to his kids and advancing himself professionally in his new career. Do you see that while this kind of clarity may not change all the drama, it will give you peace and free up your energy for more productive endeavors?

Now I hope you see how personal drama spills over into your professional life and how clarity can change any situation. My question to you is this: As a leader, is there something you need to clear up in your personal life that is impacting your decision making, your ability to communicate, or your leadership style?

HOW CLARITY CAN CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS

Several years ago I was working with Jane, a savvy business owner of a window-washing company. After a coaching session, we determined that she needed to increase her revenue by \$5,000 per week, and that in order to do so, she needed her crew to complete \$800 to \$1,000 worth of work in eight hours and sell more services for the following week. The challenge was to have the work done without adding overtime and to keep selling more services with each completed job.

At first, Jane thought this was impossible and kept asking me how we could do this. I asked, "Why don't we trust that the 'how' will show up if we first make the commitment?"

Jane got her clarity, and then scheduled a meeting with her staff to talk about the new plan. At first, her team balked. "How is that possible?" they asked. They almost got stuck on the rock called *how*—but Jane reminded them that if they focused on the goal, the how would start revealing itself to them.

After just one meeting and within 24 hours, Jane was excited. The team booked \$1,000 for the following two days and \$700 more on the next day. Jane laid out a trial incentive plan, which further motivated the team. Once the leader got completely clear and communicated the expectations to her

team, it was relatively easy to increase the revenues to \$5,000 more per week.

HOW TO GAIN CLARITY

Earlier, we talked about how being stuck in the fog can cause a lot of confusion and a lack of alignment. The first step to clearing that fog is to gain clarity on your values and goals, as we discussed. Here are three questions you must answer in order to become clear on your objectives:

- 1.** Who am I?
- 2.** What do I want?
- 3.** What am I committed to?

Spend time thinking about this, and put pen to paper. How you define yourself, what you say you want, and what you claim to be committed to will not only help clear the fog, it will also give you your “true north,” so to speak. If you aren’t sure about what you want, you now know what your next step is—to define it. Answering the “what am I committed to” question will clear a lot of fog. If you meditate on these three questions and think deeply about your life and business, you will come to know what behaviors to eliminate, where you are wasting time, and what exactly is draining your energy.

Your actions and words either align with what you have just said, or they point to significant problems. Either way, you have now gained awareness and cleared the fog.

I once held a position where I used to see myself as nothing more than a factory worker. My only commitments were to receive a paycheck and do the things in life that I enjoyed. The point of change came for me when—while still operating as a line worker in a factory—I decided that one day I would be a professional speaker, author, and trainer. This became my island.

By deciding to row in that direction, I cleared the fog. I wasn’t there yet, but I knew where I was headed. Making

that commitment allowed me to begin to change and become more efficient in my journey.

I have found that journaling can be a helpful way to get clear. In my journaling in those early years, I made a commitment to what I call “ICARE.” ICARE stands for Improving Communication and Relationships Everywhere. That commitment prompted everything else to change. Because I was now dedicated to communication and relationships, I could no longer engage in petty disagreements and game-playing at work. I could no longer use sarcasm to make a point or roll my eyes when I disagreed. I had to change my behaviors—and these alterations came easily to me, because they were motivated by spiritual ideas and values-based principles, rather than a rule book.

If you don’t know who you are and what principles you are committed to, then any wind will sway you. As I stated earlier, values matter. They shape your life and business.

Every business has a mission statement, and many have a vision statement as well. I would venture to guess, however, that most of these could not be repeated by most employees, because they get stuffed in a binder somewhere, rather than put on display as a means of inspiring people to move ahead. Zappos employees, however, can recite their core values. Let me give you a couple of examples: Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh says in his book, *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose*, that money is not enough to bring happiness. People want to work for passion, profits, and purpose. According to Hsieh, happiness consists of four things: “perceived progress, connectedness, perceived control, and being part of something bigger than self” (Hsieh 2010, 232). Two of Zappos’s 10 core values are intriguing: *Create fun and a little weirdness*, and *pursue growth and learning*. To quote the Zappos web site, “We don’t want to become one of those big companies that feels corporate and boring. We want to be able to laugh at ourselves. We look for both fun and humor in our daily work.”

The Zappos finance department reportedly has a weekly parade called “random acts of kindness,” where they select three

employees at random, present them with a gift, put a hat on them, and take their picture.

The company's commitment to the core value of pursuing growth and learning led them to start a company library with books available to all staff and visitors.

These ideas and principles can be implemented on some level in even small businesses or private practices. The challenge is to build a mission for your life and your business that propels you forward and challenges you to stay the course—because you are either rowing to your island or you are not. You can either recite your mission or you can't. If you have to look it up, it's no good.

If you say that you are committed to teamwork but allow one team member to bully the others, then you are not really living your commitment. When you claim to be committed to open communication but keep skipping meetings with staff because you are too busy, you're not only stuck in the fog—you are also out of alignment. This occurs when you know what you want but aren't implementing actions to make it happen. You will eventually experience drama and endure something that I call the “integrity gap”—a concept that we'll discuss in detail in Chapter 2.

In a nutshell: If you want to be clear, you must know who you are, clearly state what you want, and define the values and principles to which you are committed. If you need a little help going deeper, spend quiet time considering the following questions. Your answers will tell you a lot.

Questions to Answer

1. What are my top 10 principle-based values?
2. What areas of my life or business are in the fog?
3. What are some of the distractions that take me off course?
4. Where do I get stuck?
5. Where can I improve as a leader?
6. What drama do I see on a daily basis in the workplace?
7. What drama do I see in my personal life?
8. Where am I avoiding or procrastinating?

Key Points

- ◆ One reason you don't have what you want is because you don't know what you want.
- ◆ Defining exactly what you want will increase clarity and lead you in the right direction.
- ◆ Drama is always due in part to a lack of clarity.
- ◆ The one with clarity navigates the ship.
- ◆ The words "but" and "should" are signs of resistance.
- ◆ The order of achieving your goals is figuring out "what," "who," and then "how."
- ◆ As a leader, your lack of clarity is creating more drama.
- ◆ Clarity can change any situation.
- ◆ Both peace and prosperity are equally important in eliminating drama from your life.