

Transcription - Dalmo Cirne Part 1

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today, we are joined by Dalmo Cirne from Colorado where it's a balmy of 37 degrees apparently, and we're freezing, what we consider freezing because where I am in the Hunter Valley, it's five degrees, and we might get to double figures, we might not, and Fulyana, of course, is in Sydney, and she thinks that's cold, having spent some considerable time in Cairns lately, so I think it'd be comparison, that's worrying her more than anything. But we welcome Dalmo. Let me tell you a little bit about Dalmo, he's going to talk to us about management streams and his new book.

Dalmo works with technology, writes books and articles ranging from management and leadership to software and mathematics. Colorado, as I said, is where he calls home. What is different about his work is that it presents explanatory knowledge for what, why, when, and how, to go about the topics he explores. In addition to content, whenever possible, he complements with real life examples to illustrate them in practice. With a degree in mathematics and over three decades working in technology, he uses his experience to build product, teams, and teach what he has learned. So welcome to our listening audience, which is worldwide, even though we're based in Australia. Hello.

Hello, thank you for the introduction and I'm glad to be here.

We sent Dalmo some questions, first of all, that revolve around the idea of management streams. The first one was, what led you to focus on management streams?

Absolutely. Management streams is focused on an audience that is usually not really addressed by many or most of the books on leadership and management that are out there. Imagine that you are an individual contributor or you are a new graduate in business or other areas and you want to get into management. As an individual contributor, you would not know what to manage or how to manage, why to manage. Those are a different set of skills from what you know, right? You may know how to operate a piece of machinery, how to program a computer, how to run processing and supermarkets or a factory, but you may not know what management is. Many people are promoted into management and start failing even though they are excellent individual contributors and don't know why. There is even what it is known as the Peter Principle where it is said that people get promoted up to their level of incompetence.

But it may not be lack of competence from the person, but it could be exactly they don't know what they're doing. If they know what is expected from them, they would do a lot more. This book is an introduction, an explanation of what it is, how you do, when you do management. On top of that is also an evolutionary project in management itself, because we have been managing a certain way, and like everything else in life, management has to evolve. We no longer manage by interruptions or KPIs or OPRs, there is more to that. There is a constant stream of management tasks you have to address and they come from several different directions. How do you expect them, how do you work with them, and how do you define the directions you're going to be working?

That's where the analogy to streams fits so perfectly in this book because we are talking about four different streams over here. The first one and is the most well known is downstream. You're managing your team, you're managing your project, and you're managing operations in general. Then there's upstream. We think we don't need to manage the people above us, but we do. We're not going to manage them because they're actually managing us, but we have to manage their expectations. What is expected from them, what are they expecting from you, what are tasks that you have to work with them, rather than waiting for them to come and solicit those from you, how do you anticipate and work with them? The third one is managing side stream. There are many peers that work with you that you need to know, product managers, other teams that work in collaboration with yours, and other activities that you're going to be managing. The last one and perhaps the most important, is managing yourself. That's the reservoir of energy and knowledge that you need to manage. You need to know what are your limitations. You need to know setting core values and recruiting a team and whatnot. There are all those things you need to work and worry about. All of them put together fits well in how water flows. The building, the growing that knowledge and the way it flows can come from upstream. It flows downstream, side stream and so on.

Just in terms of that understanding then, we've gone through, obviously globally, a complete change in the way we work. Does this approach help the new way that we work and how we manage people in terms of not always being physically in the same place, not always working within the same geographic area?

Absolutely. The phenomenon of remote work is not anything new, it just became mainstream during COVID-19. It went to a really large scale where everyone had to work remotely. Everyone who could, not everyone could, but most people, in that way, were a great number of people who had to work remotely. We had to learn very quickly how to scale and do that. But the needs from work, they didn't change. The principles that are approached in management streams is not something that only works for in person, or only works for remote or hybrid. Those are first principles that they work regardless of the situation that you are applying to them. For example, when you're selecting a team, we're going to talk a little bit, some of the ideas we explore in a book. When you're selecting a team, imagine that we were just talking about the soccer, European Cup. I don't really follow that, but it was spoken a lot about that over here and is somewhat on the radar. If you assemble a team that is all goalies or all forwards, it's not going to work. You need a composition of a team that has all the right players in the right positions. The same applies when you're building your team.

I identified three fundamental positions that you have to have on your team. One is of a visionary. You don't need many visionaries. If everyone is a visionary, you're not going to build anything, but you need some people who can identify, "Oh, this could be a product," or "This idea, this need from a customer, we can't transform into a product, we can automate a process," or what not. The second one is an implementer, and we're going to need lots of those. Most people are going to be implementers. They're going to know, "I know the vision, I know what language you're going to be using, what database, or what tools, or if it's a car." Whatever the product is, they know how to implement it. They know how to build and create a product. There's a third role that is often overlooked, which is the closer. Implementers, they're really great at building things, but sometimes when a product is getting very close to the finish line, they get distracted by the next idea, and they look, "Oh, this product is great, I

did my part, I saw this other idea over here, I'm going to start working on that." That could be the worst thing you do, because imagine running a marathon, and you can see the finish line. But then, near you, there's an ice cream truck, and you say, "You know what, I ran most of the marathon, I want that ice cream." And you stop. Can you claim that you finished the marathon? No, right? You didn't cross the finish line, even though you were so close.

So, the closers are those people who really take the product across the finish line, without being distracted by new ideas, new products, new prototypes that are being built. You need a few of those as well. So, when you're assembling a team, irrespective of being a remote team, or being in person team or a hybrid team, you do need those roles. We make those principles that are applied irrespective of the mode you are operating.

I can see Fulyana struggling with the idea of sport in general, running a marathon, but ice creams will strike a chord, she'll be right with the ice cream.

Yeah, we put the ice cream truck after the finish line. (Yeah, that's true.) After the finish line, I'll remember that.

Dalmo, a question, when you're talking about the upstream, downstream, side stream, and reservoir, where would you put stakeholders in those streams?

I would put upstream, right? Because the natural stakeholders are going to be people who are sponsoring the project, in terms of budget, in terms of personnel, in terms of capital investment from the company.

Stakeholders are going to be customers as well, right?

They're outside of the company. They're going to join focus groups. They're going to come and contribute their own opinions, or with their experience of using the product, giving feedback, and so on. They're going to have to report to them what improvements you've made, how you address their feedbacks, and so on. That management of expectations, I would put all of those into the upstream category, because you work with them, you expect something from them, but without them, there's no point of your existing, right? You, without a customer, you're going to be the product used by no one. No team can maintain motivation without a product being used. And without your manager and superiors, who will give you the budget, the personnel you need to run the project, and so on. You can have brilliant ideas, yet you're not going to have the resources to build.

In terms of those essential roles that you see in a team, if you, as an individual, can identify what you are in those roles, so I know for me that I'm not the visionary, I'm the finisher, do you focus on that and look at what work teams you're in and say, well, look, there's too many visionaries, there's too many finishers, there's whatever else it is, and do you put your hand up and say, I'm not right for this team because there's too many of these other people in the same category as I am, or do you try and take on something else?

I'm going to answer your question in two parts. The first one from the perspective of the manager, the leader of the team, the second one from the perspective of the individual

contributor of that team, I think part of your question was related to the individual contributor. That's where you start over there. As an individual contributor, you're playing to your strengths. If you are a visionary and you join a team with too many visionaries, let's say, it may not be your role to self-select yourself outside of that team. Maybe it can be an implementer for a time because none of us is a pure visionary, pure implementer, a pure closer, right? We're all going to have elements of those, but one of those three elements, they're going to be more prominent in the way that you were. But we all have to do a little bit of the three roles. I would not self-select and step out of a team because that could be a great opportunity over there. You can speak with the leader of the team, the manager of that team, and say, "How do you see myself in this team, in this role, who would I be?" And have that honest discussion and say, "I would be working on this project for six months or a year, or however long, if I'm not playing to my strengths, would I accept playing this role, or a second best?"

For example, primarily a visionary, let's say, would I be okay working six months, 12 months, as an implementer because I have some real passion about this project that I want to make contributions? Then it becomes a personal decision and a leadership decision on how to play to the strengths of that person, and if the person wants to play that role for that scheduled period of time. You can also change roles depending on the project.

So if we're talking projects within an organization, as you said earlier, you select the right, you need the visionary, you need the implementer, the completer, a finisher, etc. So if you're talking about that, then sometimes I could be playing one part in one project, and a different title in another project, because that project is more suitable for me to be the implementer, while this one a complete a finisher. And the other one, a visionary.

I agree 100%, you make an excellent point over there, because let's say a middle-level engineer, always aspiring to become a visionary, is growing in the career. The person may be a great implementer, but over time, over the years with more experience, the person may become a great visionary. How are you going to become that if you don't have opportunity to work, for example, in small projects as a visionary, where you put those skills into practice, you'll really see if that's what you want to do, or if you have these skills to do that, right? And later perhaps in a more complex, a bigger project, you fall back into implementer, but all of those experiences, the cumulative effect is, over time, you may be growing into different roles. So what you said makes absolute perfect sense.

You're probably not going to like me saying this, but when she said, Kim, when you said you're not a visionary, well, I'm sorry, guess who's vision it was to do this podcast? It was Kim's, not mine. So there you go.

I just had this vision of making Fulyana work with technology. It wasn't hard. On that note, we'll take a break in our discussion with Dalmo Cirne. Join us for part two, but for now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.