Shannon Waller: Are your team members career focused or company focused? Keep listening if you'd like to learn more.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. I had a really interesting conversation with one of my long-term beloved clients named Tony. And he made a really interesting observation. What he noticed is that his most successful team members, and managers, you know, especially, are all children of entrepreneurs. And he made a comment that stuck in my mind, which is why this is the title of today's conversation.

He said they are company focused versus career focused. And I think there really is an entrepreneurial mindset that is focused on not what I can personally gain as being part of a company, but what contribution can I make to the bigger whole? And that's what obviously these entrepreneurial parents had established in terms of the mindset with their kids, they're now working with my friend, who has a very successful global company. I keep teasing him about world domination. Tony, you know who you are. Which is really kind of fun.

So let's talk about this for a moment, the difference between being company focused versus career focused. Because I think he really nailed it, especially when he put it in that kind of a phrase. So I wanted to break that down a little bit because it really does tie into the focus on status versus contribution, which is what I wrote about in *Multiplication By Subtraction*. So, actually, I'm going to read to you what I had written down there in terms of my chart of the symptoms and resulting cost of having wrong-fit team members on board. So, "When somebody is focused on status, they'll do what they need to do to get ahead so they can forward their own career, often at the company's expense. So what's the result in cost of being focused on status? Well, it's politics in silos. Instead of working as part of a team, they'll put their energy toward building their own power base and reputation. This is energy that needs to be focused on growing the company, not advancing their place in the pecking order."

Yes, yes, and yes. And, actually, it's status-based leaders, was really the main impetus for writing *Multiplication By Subtraction*. Because I saw it not once, not twice, not three times, but multiple times, and it frustrated the heck out of me because I'm like, "Oh, these people are

here for their reasons, not yours," as I was saying to my clients. So why is this important? What is it that we can do about this? So, first of all, and I think there are a couple of different lenses that you could think about. I have a little bit of a bias. Please correct me if I'm wrong. But my experience is that someone can start off very company focused, and kind of get a little bit status oriented, and end up being career focused. That can happen. I haven't seen it too often where people start off as being career focused and grow to becoming company focused, because I actually think that's a higher level of functioning. I have not seen that. Maybe it's happened. Maybe I just haven't been aware of it in my experience. But if someone is super focused on status, they tend to stay in that lane, again, is my experience.

And someone who is company focused has just been waiting for the right company where they could devote themselves—they could devote their talents and their experience and their expertise to help building something bigger than them. It's that willingness a little bit to put something else ahead of you—something that was bigger, some bigger future—that's really the crux of it for me, not just focused on you. You're not just focused on yourself; you're focused on what you're contributing to. Now, again, I'm completely open to a conversation about this if you have a different opinion. So let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. Love to talk this through, and maybe someone else has had a different experience. But again, I'm just saying this for a long time. This is what I have seen.

So there is a real cost when you've got someone who is career focused rather than company focused. You know, if you've listened to my previous podcast about expanding Unique Ability impact, Unique Ability is kind of, it's really the inverse of status. What happens is, if someone's focused on expanding and growing the impact of their Unique Ability, their ego is less and less worried about status. Now, here's the part I absolutely love about this. When you are making a really big Unique Ability impact or an impact with your Unique Ability, your status is a byproduct. Problem is if you go after status, you tend to compromise your Unique Ability because you have to squish it or it's not quite a right fit. If you go after Unique Ability, you get status as well. That's kind of cool. But you have to have the right thing in priority. If you have the wrong thing in priority, something's gonna get compromised. And frankly, you won't get the same status that you're really looking for.

So I find that a very interesting dynamic. And there's a huge cost to entrepreneurial companies. I actually think big companies, corporate companies, do incredibly well with very career focused individuals, and they're set up for it. They've got career tracks, they've got past, they've got training, they've got coaching, they've got benefits, they've got all the things that make it very attractive to be on that ladder. But for some people, it's not enough. They want to work for something bigger than themselves. They want to really work for a purpose-driven company, and, and for an audience that they're passionate about. Just moving dollars around or paper around isn't their jam.

So what happens with an entrepreneurial company when you do have one of these more career-focused individuals or status-focused individuals? There are some pretty high costs, in addition to the ones I just read out loud. So they're not looking at their bigger picture; they're looking at the next move on the chessboard to see how they can move ahead. You know, they're not looking at how can we make the game bigger. They're looking at how can they win a particular move because the game is very static for them. They also build kingdoms, they consolidate power, they try and get people on their side, at least to politics, you know, politics and silos, as I mentioned. So that's time consuming. As I said before, that's energy that actually gets subsumed, subverted from going the overall big company into getting themselves ahead. It's not actually moving the company ahead. And that's the problem.

And the other thing it really creates is for those people who are very company focused, creates a lot of friction and a lot of drag. Yeah, I have my own experience of this in the past, which is really interesting. And it was really weird, because I didn't see it, because I am, I'm naturally a company-focused person, I haven't worried too much about status, probably due to my upbringing, who knows? Just wasn't that much part of my makeup. By the way, I'm very independent minded, so I always wanted to be in leadership roles so that no one told me what to do. That's actually my, my impetus for, for being successful and having a certain level of authority and freedom in a company. But it wasn't so much from a career standpoint, in terms of having a status or a title, I could care less. I've made up most of my titles throughout my career. And I change them regularly just for fun. But for me, I just set it and forget it. You know,

I am for the company, I am for where we're going, I'm completely in alignment with our values and who our clients are. I think we have the very best clients on the planet. And I love our team. So for me, it's not a big deal. And I'm just trusting that I will be taken care of in that process.

And that, you know, I will get the status rewards and stuff commensurate with my contribution. And I work with people where that's actually true. So for me, it's not an issue, which is kind of funny. But I've had conversations with people who were very, turns out envious, of me, of other people because the other people perceived that the others around them had greater status that they wanted, but they couldn't figure out how to get there. And the irony was that I didn't care about the status, but I was there. So it's just, there's a lot of friction, a lot of emotion, a lot of just not being focused on the result, frankly. So it's just time consuming for everyone involved.

I don't want to make anyone wrong necessarily in this. I just know that companies function better, entrepreneurial companies function better, if you can have people who are company focused. Now, one of the things that they need to do is make sure they're working for the right company. This is absolutely vital. You know, they may have to kiss a few frogs before they find their their prince or princess. So it's not a slam dunk. Sometimes, the right companies are hard to find. Sometimes, you can help create the right company. Some of you have created your own companies, just so that you had the environment that was most important to you. And entrepreneurs, by definition, are company focused. You're not status oriented. You're not title oriented. You know, you probably change yours fairly frequently as well. I mean, "Founder" might be on there. "Chief Experience Architect" is one of my favorites. "Chief Enthusiasm Officer" is another one I've heard. You know, you've got some fun ways to play with corporate titles.

But what I've noticed is there can be a naivete on the part of owners, because how you think—it's like pretty much like how I think—and you don't worry about it. The status already is there for you. So it may not, you know, if you're listening to this as the owner of a company, it may not occur to you that other people don't have that same mindset. But they do. And you will not

know about this to your detriment. So it's very, very, very important that you ask questions to do with your value system, that you keep your ear really close to the ground.

By the way, especially from a leadership role, you are the last person who will find out that someone's career focused versus company focused. You are the last one because they know how to look good to you. This is what I found in my experience before I wrote *Multiplication By Subtraction* is that the entrepreneur, the owner was the last to know. You know, because people I'm talking about are smart. They work their rear ends off. They're dedicated to their career and they kind of are very good at keeping it below the waterline. You may not see it. Other people do. So you have to listen for this. You know, keep lots of different lines of communication with different levels in your organization so that you have inklings. Again, you will always be the last to know, so don't stress about that too much. But just pay attention, and do whatever you can to suss out when someone is only being career oriented.

And really encourage people and reward people and support people to be company oriented. Like, if the company is winning, the team needs to be winning. You will create career oriented people out of people who were company oriented if you don't share in the success with them. You'll see people pull themselves back, it's like, "Well, someone else is going to take care of me. I got to take care of myself." And I've seen that happen. It's a shame because it didn't have to happen. A little bit of generosity and sense of abundance would have actually kept those people focused on that bigger future for everybody. So I know how to wreck it. I don't know how to turn it around the other way. But I do know how you can take someone who was incredibly dedicated to your mission, to your purpose, and have them, you know, go to a smaller version of themselves where they're just looking out for them. So again, really staying tuned. Are your best people happy? Do they see a future for themselves? You know, are you constantly reiterating what you're up to? Where you're going? Is there a role for people? You know, do they see how they can make that bigger contribution, where they can expand their Unique Ability impact? That's your job as a leader, and if you're listening to this, and you're not in that role, feel free to share this conversation because I think that's vital.

And one of the other things, you know, as owners, sometimes they can either not see it or take it for granted, that everyone's on the same page. Not something to be taken for granted. I hate seeing people diminish their contribution because they don't feel like they're going to be rewarded or they don't feel like they're going to be acknowledged or they don't feel that they're going to be taken care of in that process. That's a shame because it didn't have to happen. Because at one point, their mindset was completely in alignment with yours. So something had to happen. It was yours to lose, to use that expression. So you really want to stay tuned in and support and reward and applaud when people are for the company. When they make those hard decisions sometimes. When they go above and beyond, celebrate that. Oh my goodness, we're all in this together. You know, you couldn't do it without them. They couldn't do it without you. But you couldn't do it without them. So why not share in that? So that's an opportunity that I think is really key.

So pay attention, support people being for the company, make sure that people are rewarded well, that if you don't, then people will start to get—grabby is not the word—but they'll going to start being more concerned about their own well being than the company's. So make sure people are fairly compensated. Make sure they've got cool titles, if that's important to them. It's not about the corner office, if that's even a thing anymore. But it is about recognizing people's Unique Ability impact. When they feel acknowledged and celebrated for that, that really supports them what they need personally and also keeps them focused on the company goals and what you want to accomplish. So again, this is a conversation that I'm not sure if you will be having with anybody else. So I really appreciate your thoughts, your experience, anything that's new or different than what I've talked about, love to hear it. But I love nothing more than figuring out how people work together in business for success. And this is a key aspect, is really understanding and appreciating when people are being company focused versus career focused and how you can keep them on the company side versus just the career side because the career side is much more self focused. The company side, if it's handled properly, can actually take care of everyone's needs and contributions in a really powerful way. And that's something that we can impact.

I hope this conversation has been interesting and useful for you. If you, again, any questions, comments, experiences, let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. Really appreciate you listening. And as always, here's to your team success.