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Scheduling Is A Creative Act

Shannon Waller: Do you find scheduling a hassle, boring, and kind of think almost anyone could do it? Well, what I've learned is that scheduling is actually an art, and a creative event. Stay tuned to learn more.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. I want to talk about something that I think is a very underappreciated, under-loved, misunderstood capability on a team, and that is scheduling. Now, if you're at all like me, this might have to do with how I'm personally put together. Scheduling, for me, is not fun. It is one of those activities at which I have very little patience, very little time, very little mental energy as measured by our fabulous Kolbe profile. K-O-L-B-E, if you're not familiar. It's not something that I personally enjoy doing at all, and nor am I very good at it at all. Truth be told. In fact, I'm kind of actively bad at it. So, when we're not good at things, this is kind of part of our Unique Ability conversation.

When we're not good at things, we tend to minimize them, we tend to put them in the box of things we don't want to do. And, it can mean that also we think that, "Oh well, anyone could do that. It's just not any fun, it's boring." It's one of those discardable activities that we tend to give short shrift, if that makes sense. And here's what I have discovered, because I have had the absolute pleasure and gift of having people in my life who have a Unique Ability at scheduling. And what I've learned is that scheduling is in fact a creative act. When someone is really unique at scheduling, they look at your calendar, at my calendar, in a completely different way than I do. They have insight into it, they have depths, they have knowledge, they have ways of moving things around the chess board. It's like playing three dimensional chess. And I'm looking at it like a really basic checkers game.

But, in fact, it's like 3D chess, especially for someone who's really busy, a lot of different conflicting priorities, not enough time in the day. Scheduling is a thing. Who knew? And I've just really had the pleasure of working with two incredibly gifted schedulers who, it's really funny—when we had some automated software come in, which a number of our team members use, our Membership Advisors and our Program Advisors, they use Calendly. People can click on your calendar and book themselves in. So, I asked my brilliant Strategic Support Partner at the time, Nicole, I'm like, "Do you want to do this? Would this make your job easier?" And she said, "Absolutely not." And I was kind of taken aback. I was like, "What? Why not?" She goes, "Oh, no, no. I need to have complete dominion over your calendar. If I need to move something, that's going to actually get in my way." Which I found really interesting.

And so, this was her jam, not mine. I did not try and impose my lack of Unique Ability on her, which was one of my better moves. And my calendar was crafted. So now Katrina has taken over that, and she initiates in Kolbe Follow Thru, which is a dream. She's very specific. And she has nuances to my calendar that I don't. And I said, "Oh, do you mind seeing if you can find



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room for this?" And, by the way, I'm always adding. I'm very, very, very rarely subtracting to my calendar. And I also have a whole new massive project I just took on, for which there's absolutely no room. Just so we're clear. So it's like, if you think about that beaker jar that they talk about in science class, where you put in the rocks first, and then the stones, then the pebbles, then the sand, then the water... We're at water, when it comes to my calendar.

But, she goes, "Oh no, no, this doesn't stress me at all. I think it's like a game of Tetris." I was like, "Damn. That's pretty cool, because I have none of those thoughts when it comes to my calendar." My patience level is to do—here's what I have available, and if they say, "Yes," hopefully I remember to send them the invite. Or, if it doesn't work, I'm kind of done. There's just no more back and forth exchange. I have no patience with doing that. Rearranging things, zero mental energy for that. I'm done. I arranged it once. I'm good. If it has to change, nothing would happen. And so, really appreciating that scheduling is in fact a creative act, it takes sophistication, it takes nuance, it takes striving, it takes skill, it's something to appreciate. I mean, we tend to think something can be automated. And if your life is simple, for you, an automated calendaring system might be brilliant.

In fact, it might take some less stress for you. But if there's a lot of other people and a lot of high level projects, and you're trying to really protect your freedom, protect your focus—in Strategic Coach we call it Free, Focus, and Buffer— if you're trying to protect your thinking time, having a Strategic Support Partner, or even just a support partner, or a Strategic Assistant, whatever term you want to use, to help actually craft this with you? Best idea ever. One of my favorite expressions, you probably heard me say it before, is if you don't have a Strategic Assistant, you are one, and you're probably way too highly paid for the quality of work that you're doing, with your old calendar especially. So, when we give value to this activity that for us is really hard, challenging, and not fun, but we see that someone else actually could really enjoy it, and use it to craft your calendar, it's kind of amazing.

And I've actually measured the difference that it makes. So, why am I expounding on this? Because, when I handed over control, and by the way, this is one of those things that people have a death grip on, this is the delegation death grip. It's the baton I did not want to let go of, because our calendars are very personal to us. Our time is one of the freedoms we're not willing to give up, and we are not willing to share the control of it very easily. It was hard. I trust people with a lot of things. My calendar? How I spend my time? That took a while. But I've been very well trained now for over 10 years. So yay me, yay my coaches, Nicole and Katrina. And it's been powerful. So the amount that I can now accomplish is minimum three and often four times what I could have done without someone else paying this much attention to my calendar.



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So they handle the request, someone's throwing the ball to them, and they run with it. I don't have to. And I can actually just be in the conversation, in the meeting, doing what I do best, which is more creative, it's brainstorming, it's Quick Start (I'm 2 in Follow Thru), so I actually get to do what I do best, without the rub, the friction, the stress of setting it up in between. And it's amazing. It's so cool to think that there are people who love to do the setup. I love to do the event. Other people love to do the follow up. That's not me. And so, it works in this beautiful dance. It's like having a really great dance partner, is what it's like. So you can dramatically improve your productivity just by having a partner that will actually take care of you and look after you.

And here's some of the nuances that they pay attention to that you might not. It's the flow, it's how much energy you have, and at what time of day. Are you a morning person? Are you an evening person? What kind of breaks do you need? I'm someone who likes to keep a pretty high energy level, and I'd like to go fast paced, fast paced, fast paced. Don't have a call, and then 45 minutes later another call, and then 45 minutes later another call. I'm like, I'm a frog jumping across the lily pads. Don't give me time to land in the water. Put another lily pad there. I'm better hop, hop, hop. Right? That's how I'm going to be the most effective. Keep my energy high, keep my attention focused. I'm distractable. If you give me time to wander off, I will. So don't do that. That would be very inefficient, because it's really hard to come back.

It's hard to get my energy level back up. So let me get going, let me keep going, and then when I'm done, I'm done. That's really how I look at it. You might be different, but when your calendar's crafted around you, it feels very nourishing. You feel really well taken care of. And then, how much time for breaks do you need? How much preparation do you need? How much thinking time do you need? I've just figured out, after doing this for a very long time, that if I put an idea in my brain, and then I go for a walk, because I was stuck on something, I couldn't figure it out, went for a walk, it was literally a five minute walk, because I timed it, because I was trying to get my exercise steps on my Apple watch, and I came back, and I had the solution.

I was kind of talking out loud to myself. I was really happy nobody was watching my neighborhood in the alleyway. But I figured it out. It's like, "Oh, this is a new thing." When I get stuck with an idea, because it was a design problem situation I was working on, then that was great. So I needed that break so I could go and do that. So, to me, it's so energizing knowing that I don't have to do it, and I've got someone else who loves to do it. I don't think just because I don't love it that someone else doesn't. Truth is, she's brilliant at it, and it's fun. It's a game for her. It's not a game for me. It's painful. It was fun. It's a quote that Nicole, she said, "Oh yeah, no, I schedule to calm down." I'm like, "Oh dear. If I want to stress myself out, I start scheduling."



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That will stress me. And this goes personally and professionally, by the way. I need a personal schedule. That's the next step. So, really, really important. This is why you want it. So how do you get this in place? Well, you hire a Strategic Assistant. You find someone who loves to do all the setup, and the follow up that you don't love to do. We've discovered in our world, from a Kolbe standpoint, that well... not we've discovered, other people know this too, is that Follow Thru, Initiating Follow Thru, are people who really love to craft time. It's how you arrange and design. And they love to arrange and design time. Some of them do. So this is really powerful. There are companies that can do this for you. Delegate Solutions is one of our really great clients. Superpowers is another great client that does it. CISPro is another one.

We have a lot of amazing clients who really appreciate the need that entrepreneurs have for this type of organization applied to them. So please reach out, make sure you have someone, please use Kolbe in your hiring process. They have a brilliant process called Right Fit. Kolbe Right Fit. Which means that you actually identify what you will reward in the job. And it may be similar to you, they might be completely opposite. You will not know until you do the Kolbe Right Fit. So all of this is just so useful, but I kind of want to free you up, so you don't do it yourself anymore. Or if you have someone working for you who you know has trouble organizing their time, please stop trying to make them do it. It's not factory installed. The amount of mental energy it takes that person to do it is a lot.

By the time they've scheduled themselves, they're tired. They don't have the creative mental energy for the tasks that you actually do want them to do. So when you are able to provide this kind of scheduling support for yourself or other people, you will see massive productivity jumps. You'll see people freed up from the things that tax them, that drain their mental energy, and you'll see them come alive and be much, much more effective. And ultimately, that's what leads to productivity and profitability. So, this kind of teamwork is critical. Teamwork and profitability, my two favorite business words. So take advantage of this by really appreciating that scheduling is not factory installed for everyone. In fact, few. And, when you can get someone who has a Unique Ability at it, they love it, they see it as a game, they have a different kind of brain, they have a puzzle brain, they can put it all together.

And that's really exciting to be in teamwork with this type of person. So I hope I've inspired you to go and find your own scheduling goddess, one of the terms that I used to use. The term ninja is one I learned when I went to visit Zappos, which was super cool. I think Tony Hsieh, at that point, had, I think it might have been scheduling ninja. It was something ninja. I was like, "Oh, that's cool." And then I tried that on Nicole. She goes, "I don't really see myself as a ninja." And I'm like, "How about goddess?" She goes, "Yeah, I can go with that." So whatever term is fun, but it's so critical. So I just wanted to put an appreciation for something that might not be in your brain. And it takes intelligence, it takes creativity, it takes care. And all of those things is what a



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really great person scheduling can do to help leverage you, to free you up, to give you more of that freedom of time, and to again, bottom line, improve your productivity.

So I hope you have a new appreciation for scheduling you didn't have before. Just as a little bit of a postscript here, a little bit of a bonus. One of the things I've just learned is that people who do scheduling for a living, who are really, really good at it, love it when other people have Calendly, when they have those automatic calendaring systems, because it makes their lives so much easier. So at the very, very, very least, automate your scheduling. And if you want to, take it a step further, and get one of those phenomenal ninjas, goddesses, for yourself, and all of that will elevate your scheduling game.

All right. That's my thought for the day. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, observation. Do you agree? Do you disagree? Do you like scheduling? Do you not like scheduling? Please let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. Thank you so much for listening, and as always, here's to your team success.