



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## The Excellent Trap: The Danger Of Not Letting Go

**Shannon Waller:** Are you feeling trapped by activities that you've been doing for a long time, you're really good at, people say nice things, but frankly, you're getting a little bit bored? Stay tuned for the single thing to pay attention to, to know when to pass it off to someone who has even more ideas and creativity than you do.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. Today, I want to share with you kind of a clue that I finally figured out to when I delegate or when I elevate my excellent activities. And I was thinking about this because, you know, when you've been doing what you've been doing for a little while, if you bring your intelligence and your commitment and your spirit to something, you get pretty good. Our definition of excellent activities at Strategic Coach is where you have superior skill, great teamwork, great reputation, but no passion. However, these activities are still rewarding. Oftentimes, they're money-making. Oftentimes, I mean, they're okay to use another one of our models, but they're not necessarily fascinating and motivating. I was thinking the other day, when do I let go of the baton? 'Cause that's my metaphor for great teamwork is passing the baton. When am I actually willing to let go of what I am in fact excellent at so that I can spend more time doing what I'm unique at. And I realized it's happened in a bunch of different examples. I'm like, ooh, I have to share this with you. And what happened was that a couple of situations, people were like, oh, I have this idea and that idea. And we could do this and we could do that. And I'm like, whoa, this person has more creativity about this project, this task, this circumstance than I do. They really are the ones that should run with it. And then I pass the baton and I feel great about it because they're so engaged.

And what's interesting is, and I think to be able to do this well, you have to not have your ego in the way. You have to not have your identity wrapped up in all of the things that you do. And just because you are good at it, you may have even started it. This is my case, probably because I'm a non-Quick Start. I like to start things, but I also like to stop things occasionally. And so I just have to realize, when am I running out of energy for things? And that can happen well before someone else shows up with the ideas and creativity for me to pass it to. But when someone does, I realize I am more than willing to let it go. Partly because I trust that there are more Unique Ability activities for me, there are new audiences for my Unique Ability, there are new ideas to be generated and pursued and expanded so I can get back to starting things rather than maintaining things.

So, I really want to share this thought with you because I think if you're listening to this, there's something that you're doing that you've probably done for a long time. Again, you've got great teamwork, great reputation, you have superior skill, you are better at it than most people. But somewhere along the line, you may have lost the passion for it. And this is really, really important to be attuned to because we can end up going on sheer momentum for years, dare I say it, even decades of things. And we can kind of not pay attention to where it was Unique



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Ability. At one point, we loved it. We had passion for it. It was brand new. It was exciting. It was challenging. But at some point, our skill level increased and our mastery increased. And frankly, there's just no challenge there anymore. And if you are at risk of getting bored, that is when to start paying attention to the Who's around you and starting to create opportunities for people to get good at the stuff that you're already good at and make sure that you include people and invite them in so that you don't get isolated with those activities.

So, first of all, you have to know when something either stays at excellent and you never get really passionate about it or you used to be passionate and now you're like, hmm, been there, done there, got 18 million t-shirts. And then you're looking for someone else who not only has the skill, but also has the passion. And for me, that always shows up with new creativity, new ideas, new excitement, new energy that I just don't have anymore. And it's been kind of surprising, the things that I've been willing to let go, coaching certain audiences, programs that I created that I was very, very invested in, like very invested in, certain types of speaking engagements, certain types of design activities, certain types of writing activities. And it's been interesting to watch my evolution. Now I've been a coach for 32 years. I've been in the business marketplace for longer than that. And just realize that, oh, when someone else shows up who's clearly better, I am actually really happy to let them have it and have that be an opportunity for them as to something that I've got a death grip on. And I think there's a mindset that goes with this. And that is that A, abundance, there's always new things to explore and to do. And I don't need to come from a scarcity mindset that, oh, if I'm giving this up, then that means there's less for me. That's never been the case. The more I've created more space, the more creativity has entered my system for things that I'm interested in pursuing. So it's a little bit of trust. Again, that abundance mindset. Also, frankly, a willingness to share with other people, a willingness to create opportunity for others.

I was watching a great Simon Sinek reel, just a short, short clip that talked about leadership is when you grow others, when you are about other people and helping them succeed. And so sometimes most effective leaders in your organization are not at the top. They can be anywhere, midway, bottom of your organization, but the ones who people trust and gravitate to and who they'll follow are actually the ones that are not just about the bottom line, but also about them and how they're going to improve their lot in life, how they're going to grow. When you actually have the perspective like, oh, let's share this opportunity, let's see who else is interested, let's see who's got some creative ideas, and you're open to that, oh my gosh, first of all, you'll grow, you'll expand, so will your company and so will your team. So again, there's abundance and trust and positivity and leadership looking out for others that is kind of embedded in this process of letting go of things that you are excellent at, and really passing it off to someone who is going to carry that baton further down the path, further in the race, than you would. And you don't have to expend that energy anymore.



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One of the things that Julia and I and Catherine wrote about in the Unique Ability books is really something called the excellent trap. And it's dangerous, you know, when you have all of these external rewards, all of these kudos, people saying great things about you, great teamwork, hey, could you help me with this speaking opportunity, this spreadsheet, this teamwork process, whatever it is, because you're so great at it, they're talking about your superior skill. And you're like, oh, okay. Internally, you're like, no, not again. Just because you're bored. You've been there, done that. It's not challenging. One of the other things I find about people, intelligent people, is that we can kind of get bored easily. Complex problems are fun for a while when it's something new, but once you've solved it a bunch of times, you may not want to do that anymore. You're interested in a new, different complex problem, not the same one. Again, starting versus maintaining, very different energy. So paying attention to it with yourself and then paying attention to the opportunity with other people I think is absolutely key.

So, here's my question for you to put this into action. And you can do a little bit of an Activity Inventory. And again, I don't want you to focus on what you're bad at. First of all, if you're doing something you're not good at, that takes you a lot of time and effort and longer than other people, it's what we call incompetent. Please get that off your plate yesterday. You are costing yourself and your company money. This is a bad investment. Please do not do that. If there's something you're adequate or okay at, we call that competent. But a lot of other people are just as good or most likely better. Why are you doing that? Why is anyone in your company doing what they're competent at? I want everyone in an entrepreneurial company, especially anyone connected with Coach, to be doing what they're excellent and unique at. I also aim to have not more than 50% of someone's time doing what they're excellent at. I want the bias to be towards Unique Ability. And if it's more than 50%, you've got a highly capable, but frankly, bored person. And I actually think these are the people who are leaving companies. People that are like, oh my gosh, you know, Joanne's so amazing, or Tim is just incredible, and you just count on them because they're such steady players. Are they bored? Are they challenged? Do they have new things to grow to? These are questions you want to be asking because they're frankly ripe for being poached, for a new opportunity, for a new challenge.

So I think it's very key to pay attention to this for yourself and very key to pay attention to this for your top performers, people who are excellent. So, back to my questions. I want you to kind of make a list of what are you excellent at, where do you have superior skill, great teamwork, great reputation, but frankly, no passion. Been there, done that. And then also, where do you have superior skill and passion? What do you find endlessly fascinating and motivating? What can you be doing for a long time? Sometimes we even say 25 years. Those are your Unique Abilities. And I want you to think about for your excellent activities, you know, is there anyone else who seems to be showing an interest? Is there anyone else who is highly capable in the same area? Would they actually like you to pass the baton over to them? Could they do things



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that you haven't thought of yet? Are you open to that? Or do you have that death grip on the baton because you are afraid to let it go? And I think this exercise is tough to do if you don't write down what you're unique at. That can make it a little challenging and scary. So make sure you do your Unique Ability list, your activity list, as well as your excellent. And then just see, is there one, maybe two things that you could let go of? Is there someone you could talk to and say, hey, I noticed that you have a lot of energy for this type of activity. Would you like to do more of it? And if their eyes light up, oh my gosh, figure out your transition as soon as possible. And then again, trust a little bit, a little bit more time in your calendar, a little bit more space in your calendar that you will unerringly put to really, really good use. Sometimes we need more sleep. Sometimes we need more thinking time. EOS calls this a clarity break.

I love The Road Less Stupid, how Keith Cunningham just talks about going and taking yourself to a chair with a pen and a yellow pad of legal paper and just thinking, right? So where's your thinking break? And it's kind of amazing. I mean, I noticed now that my time has opened up a little bit and new ideas that frankly have not been available to me for the last 12 to 15 months are starting to bubble up to the surface. I'm like, oh, thank goodness. I wasn't sure what happened to my creativity, but it's there. It was just squished. So really freeing yourself up, it's kind of amazing. Now you still have to discern which ideas make sense and are practical and useful and all that, but just trust that you do have new applications of your Unique Ability. But sometimes you can't get at them until you offload some of those things that are excellent. So I don't normally leave you with homework, but I do suggest that if this hits a nerve, if you're like, I think Shannon has hit on something here, then please take 10-15 minutes for yourself just to write down what am I excellent at, what am I unique at, and is there someone who's kind of showing up if I were to open my eyes and pay attention, keep your peripheral vision open here, that could be a Who, could be someone who could actually take this and run with it more than I have. So that's my invitation to you.

I'm all about creating Unique Ability organization and Unique Ability teams. And I think we rarely talk about letting go of something that's excellent. Incompetent and competent, that's a low-hanging fruit. But letting go of excellent is much, much more challenging. People get trapped in this all the time because it pays well, because we get a great reputation. But that can get wrapped up in our identity and ego rather than truly our Unique Ability and our unique contribution, our unique impact, and our unique purpose. And so that's what we are looking at freeing up. I hope this has been a useful conversation. I'm excited. It's really fun. It's such a simple thing to be alert to. Whose eyes light up? And where do they have creativity and ideas that you don't? That's it. That's all you need to pay attention to. And then consider, oh, could this person take this over? You might be surprised. As always, thank you so much for listening. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know at [questions@strategiccoach.com](mailto:questions@strategiccoach.com). Love hearing your comments. And as always, here's to your team's success.