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How A Strategic Support Partner Can Change Your Life, with Nicole Pitcher

Shannon Waller: Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. This is, in fact, a very special episode because I have my dear friend and former colleague, Nicole Pitcher, who is actually hugely responsible for me being a great team member, a great person with whom to work, because she trained me. So, Nicole, I am delighted to have you here. Thank you for all of your too-numerous-to-mention contributions to me personally and professionally. But I'm really excited what we're here to talk about today because you took a role, a support role that you know, was, you know, pretty standard in terms of what people normally think. You know, when we advertised for this role, it was executive assistant. And remember, it was a big deal because I used to share a support person, watching assistant with another colleague of mine. But then I was like, oh, my gosh, I have too much going on. I need my own. So we advertised for that. But I was really clear and you took it and then doubled down. I was really clear that I didn't want to hire someone that I needed to manage. I wanted to hire someone who would manage me. And then you, my friend, showed up with the perfect Kolbe, perfect everything else. And you really elevated that role into what we ultimately called a Strategic Support Partner. And then since we're no longer working together, you have elevated to do that with other entrepreneurs as well. So I am super excited to share that journey. I want you, as you're listening, for everyone to leave with this idea like, oh, I didn't know that was a thing. I want one of those. Because I have to tell you, it made all the difference. So long prelude to our conversation, Nicole, but we've had fun setting this up, fun talking about what you do, because you really have taken it from an unconscious level, from my part, into something where you are incredibly clear on the unique value that you provide for your clients. And I think, as we talked about, this would be really useful for more people to know that this is a thing, this type of role exists, this type of person exists. So thank you, thank you, thank you for being here today.

Nicole Pitcher: Well, thanks for having me, Shan. All of the kudos that you gave me, I could give back to you and then some. Definitely our relationship, the time we worked together, our friendship sense has really, really contributed to where I am at and who I am today. And you know, this world I've entered in my own entrepreneurial venture and, you know, my work as a Strategy and Planning Support Partner now, really is, you know, created from the ground up through my experience with you and my time and everything we've learned together. So I always think of it as a co-creation, you know, where I'm at today, even though I'm not, you know, working directly with you anymore, we're still even in our conversations, co-creating this, which is very cool.

Shannon Waller: Well, I think that's actually something as we get into talking about being a strategy and support partner. Let's talk about the word partner, first of all. And I know we end up being creative collaborators together. And that is a very highly valued relationship. It's not common in your life. It's not common in my life either. And when you find someone you can think with, those are precious relationships you keep some way, shape or form. But let's talk about the partner role. And again, yeah, as you're the person listening to this, you probably have an EA or you know that you need an EA, which is great. Everyone does. And we'll talk



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about the distinction between strategic and tactical support in just a minute. But I want to get to partner because there's a mindset that goes along with this, that if you don't have it, frankly, the rest of the conversation won't make a lot of sense. But both of us looked at our relationship and still do as a partner relationship, not boss, you know, person underneath them, that kind of thing. I mean, I know I have my take on it from how I was looking at it when we first started working together in 2013, right? Which is incredible. But I'd like to know your take on it as well, because you knew that you wanted to be in a support role. And I loved your self-awareness about that. That made me so happy. But the partner thing, I think, was maybe newer at that point in time. Tell me what your take is on being a partner.

Nicole Pitcher: Well, you just said the key word, Shan, self-awareness. So as much self-awareness I had coming into our work together that I wanted to support someone, you had that self-awareness that you didn't want to manage someone, you wanted to be managed. And so when you meet someone and you had such self-awareness and which immediately, you know, we were talking off audio earlier about trust, you know, self-awareness and trust. And so for you to come and say, hey, this is not my strength. I can't manage you. I'm looking to be managed, really foster trust that like, I hear that. I think I can help. And so you gave me permission immediately to step into that role. You know, I didn't have the expectation that you were going to give me direction. You were looking for direction, right? And so your clarity about what you were looking for enabled me and empowered me to really take that on and see this as a problem to solve together, not one that you're dictating from a traditional boss role. You know, how can I be there as an equal to think through problems with you and provide some strengths that may not be, you know, innate to you?

Shannon Waller: And I think that, you just said it, it really is, you know, I have strengths, you have strengths, and together we benefit from supporting one another, but we were equal in that. I didn't think I was innately better than you, still don't. If anything, you're a step above. Oh, dear. And you too. It's like you could have come in in that sort of lesser mindset because that's typically what an EA does. Right. But no, I'm like, no, I need you to stand up and take charge of your area because I don't know what the heck I'm doing, nor will I ever, nor do I want to. So yes, there was a lot of room and you stepped into it, made it your own, eventually outgrew it, which is kind of fascinating. So, but it really was that partnership. And I think there's a mindset that goes along with, if you're intrigued by this idea, there's a mindset that goes along with it, that you have your own set of strengths, you know, as a person, but the person you're looking to support you is also equally strong. Maybe more back stage than front stage, maybe not, out there as much, you know, we're going to talk about profiles because we can't not. I'm all out there. I'm all fast paced, you know, all that kind of stuff. And you're by nature more reserved, which is actually great because you didn't want to do what I wanted to do and I didn't want to do what you did. But it was really that appreciation for one another's uniqueness. I couldn't have done this or had that conversation if I didn't value my own. And



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then if I also didn't value yours. So I think that mindset of we're equal but different, as opposed to lesser greater, I think is absolutely key to making this work.

Nicole Pitcher: Absolutely, I would agree. And I think we'll dive a little deeper into like the value of profiles later when we're talking about, okay, how do I get this level of support?

Shannon Waller: So now let's dive into tactical versus strategic. And it was really fun. We're trying to find the appropriate title. And I did not want assistant that just was picky as far as it didn't convey to you or anyone else what was going to be right. So I borrowed a thing I heard from Tony Hsieh about being a ninja. And you were very gracious. You're like, well, I don't really see myself as a ninja. And then we were like, well, how about goddess? So scheduling goddess was one of them, which is very true and which was really fun. But then we also, again, to reference profiles, looked at your CliftonStrengths, which we did immediately after you started. Four out of five are strategic thinking strengths. And so really what settled was that you are my Strategic Support Partner. And that just felt like it just went click. Right? So I could count on you for strategy, for thinking, which is great. I mean, I have strategic as a strength, but that's only one of my top five. So it was so cool that you became my thinking partner. I didn't want to send an email. I wanted to get your take before I did anything crazy because I really trusted you with that. So I think a lot of people expect from their person that they're going to do the tactical stuff. But then let's talk about strategic and how that is also actually a different possibility than what people expect.

Nicole Pitcher: Absolutely, yeah. I think, you know, we have this, I like to think, when did this idea, where did this start? And I immediately go back to like 1960s Mad Men and there's the secretary outside of the president's door, you know, typing letters all the time and like how far that role has evolved, you know, as work evolved. And so before, you know, you had someone you would dictate letters to, dictate notes. And I think this is the early part of what an assistant was. But over time, and especially even over the time we work together, there's so much more potential there. Like most entrepreneurs, and I want to say this is especially in the entrepreneurial world, I don't know if like this idea of Strategic Assistant is as applicable when you're going into like a bureaucracy is if there's room for that. But in the entrepreneurial world, the people who have these assistants, these traditional assistants, they don't even know how to utilize that person. So they hire someone and they're like, and now what? Like, I know this person is supposed to do my email, but I don't know what direction to give them. Like, I need them to tell me. And you know how roles are advertised in the world. Most people are coming in as EAs going, okay, I just need to, you know, edit emails. Like there's a misunderstanding, I think, based on traditional executive assistant about what the role is. And as more entrepreneurial companies are coming about, there's this space, there's this missing space, or it's like the translation between the task that needs to be done and the person who's giving a task. And this is where there's that space for strategy. If you have the right person who's going to be able to think ahead for the entrepreneur, you know, manage the moving parts. This is a



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space executive assistants can step into, right? If they have the strengths and talents for that. So a long story short, but a little bit, there's this, the tactical doing, and then there's that higher level thinking ahead, planning ahead. And we're seeing more of a marriage in entrepreneurial companies now.

Shannon Waller: I like that. And the tactical is still super important. Like if you don't have someone who's really good at arranging meetings and making sure everything's there or that you're where you're supposed to be exactly. Following you around or pinging you or whatever it takes, or that's crappy at booking travel, you need a better tactical person, if you know what I mean. So those are incredibly valuable. But I think what we're opening up today is there's also another option.

Shannon Waller: That's right. Or an additional, let's put it that way, it's not replacing. There's an additional level where you actually get a thinking partner. You get someone who can—it's interesting because, again, profiles, and we can't not talk about them. In terms of how your mental energy plays out per Kolbe, you know, you've got acres more mental energy for Fact Finding and Following Through compared to my simplifying and adapting. And you do that in service of the bigger things that I want. There's one other thing I want to bring in here that does matter. So there's how people feel about things. There's how they take action, which is, again, is Kolbe. There's also brainpower. And we didn't talk about this in advance. But one of the things I know about you is that you're highly intelligent. I'm also no slouch. And the clue was, I said, why did you leave your previous position? And you said both times, you were bored. Right? You maxed out what was possible at the kind of tactical level, I'm going to suggest.

Nicole Pitcher: Yeah.

Shannon Waller: And so my goal was that you would never be bored.

Nicole Pitcher: No.

Shannon Waller: And this is where my 9 Quick Start was useful because we're always new stuff. And I was also felt very honored that I knew, I don't think you mind me saying this, you're a choosy person. You are very selective about with whom you will work. And I always have and will feel honored that I earned that from you, if that makes sense. And so I, in no way, took it for granted, because you have this incredible suite of talents that you would use in service of what I was up to. That felt like a huge gift. I never wanted to take it for granted. And you have a really smart brain. And I need to make sure we were both intellectually engaged in whatever it is. So I just didn't want to leave that part out. And you know, because we yeah, a very common person where my first piece of coaching him was, because he had all this scar tissue from hiring non-right-fit team members. I'm like, I won't say his name, dude. I said, you're wicked smart. You need to be surrounded by other people who are wicked smart. And then I walked away and he was like, gobsmacked, right? So entrepreneurs need to know, and team leaders



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too, need to know that if you've got a fast, smart brain, you need someone who can kind of keep pace with you, right? And because that's a huge frustration, and we don't talk about it, we don't talk about intelligence, but it is a factor. So I just don't want to leave that out, because I think that as we're looking at the components and profiles and stuff like that of what makes a really great, you know, strategy partner, it's brain cells. Just saying.

Nicole Pitcher: Right. And so there's a few realizations I think people have when they start to open up to their mindset to this strategic thinking, this world of strategic support. And you nailed one of them. Tactical is just like, we need tactical. You need doers. You know, when I'm working with people now in the role I'm in, I often use the analogy of a plane, you know, and most visionaries, entrepreneurs, Shannon, you, I know, personally that this is true. You're living in that 30,000 foot above the ground realm. You can see the vision of the future. You specifically see that strategy through. And then you have really great team members at Strategic Coach that are boots on the ground making things happen, you know, designing program materials, producing this podcast. Shout out to Willard. And then there's this gap of like 30,000 to boots on the ground that takes a little bit of intelligence, right? For someone to hang out, be able to go up to 30, you know, see it from that perspective while keeping their eyes, you know, they're hovering at about 5,000, you know, and they're there for you and they're smart and they're watching, they're keeping an eye ahead for you. But you never want to lose the tactical too. So I think what we're saying today is that there's this possibility that if you have a really great tactical doer, by all means, don't discount them. One of the first markers might be, is there the intelligence there for them to step into that strategic I need? No, and then if that's true, you can build them up. You know there's lots of resources out to build them up but you could also, there are other resources out there too that are there to solve those needs that you're seeking and strategic thinking people out there so yeah.

Shannon Waller: So let's bring this current because yes, you worked with me and frankly trained me. I am a great team member to work with because of you. But then in 2020, you were like, okay, time for a shift, time for a change. And you wanted to pursue another passion of yours, which I'll let you talk about. But you also did not want to lose this, you know, strategic thinking partner, you know, support partner that we've been talking about. So you actually now have your own business supporting it. So I wanna dive into, you know, you do some very specific things for very successful entrepreneurs, very driven entrepreneurs who have that 30,000 foot vision. And you also can see that with your intellect and strengths and everything else. But you also help translate that into communicable actions that they can then hand out to their team. You're not on their team. You're like their buddy. So I'm excited to kind of distill down your wisdom on this, because this is really the nitty gritty. And the other cool thing is you've been doing it, but you're very conscious about what you're doing. So you've laid it out. I have the benefit of notes. You'll get them in the show notes, but this is key. So let's talk about some of the key things that you do. We've alluded to some of them. I'll just list them and we'll break them down. So vision translation, the 3000. Commitment, accountability, and achieving



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work-life balance. So this is the why you might think about getting a Strategic Support Partner. So let's talk about vision translation. We talked about a little bit that 30,000 foot view, but I was just talking to a couple of entrepreneurs actually coming back from our highest level program, Free Zone, at Strategic Coach. And one of them, Chris, he's a brilliant note taker, 7 Fact Finder, super detailed, like his notes are epic. You want them after a Coach workshop and it's not even school, you just want to know. And there's so many things. He's actually a great person executing. But he's like, he gets this frustration because he has all of these things. He doesn't quite know how to translate them to the next thing. So, of course, I want to help him solve that problem. But he's not the only one. So let's talk about vision translation and why that is so important and also the emotions that go with it, because there's a lot of pent up frustration. I'll use that word when you don't get to translate their vision. It's probably one of the biggest issues I see for entrepreneurs.

Nicole Pitcher: A hundred percent, definitely. And so I think, you know, one of the things that, and I can't help but talk about strengths too, this is Shannon and I, our shared love language, but one of my strengths that I can apply to myself, but also to any, you know, strategic thinker, great strategic thinking partner, I bring the strength of context. So I find that often a lot of entrepreneurs are really clear about the vision, but the translation gets lost and that they're not able maybe to innately bring the context needed to get buy-in from their team members or potential collaborators. A lot of Strategic Support Partners lean into the Fact Finder Follow Thru Kolbe area. I don't want to blanket that and say that's across the board because there's great Strategic Support Partners who wouldn't lean into that, but typically you're getting someone who, you know, they have that innate need to know. So Shannon, let's say we're talking about a vision you have for next year. You have that clearly, but I'm going to ask those probing questions to bring out the context, to bring your picture to life. You know, be a sounding board to clarify your words before you bring them to your team. So it's really that pause that allows you to really lay out clearly your thoughts, your vision, and then deliver them in a powerful and impactful way to the people who you need that buy-in from.

Shannon Waller: Well, I think that's a key point, because most of the people who will actually be implementing your idea share the Fact Finder Follow Thru Kolbe MO, and we're talking about initiating Fact Finder Follow Thru.

Nicole Pitcher: That's right.

Shannon Waller: There's always four numbers. We're not leaving that out. People want to know those specifics. And I know for me, who prevents, in fact, finding a Follow Thru, so I simplify and adapt. I don't give all the details. This is really a really helpful step because I don't have that. I mean, if someone asks me or interviews me, sure, I got more where that came from, but it isn't my initial instinct, and instinct is the right word, to lay it out in that amount of detail. Someone has to ask me, someone has to interview me to get that. For me, it's not



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instinctual for me to just go, that ain't happening. So that's really useful because as one of our models that coaches, that's a focus manager, needs that amount of specificity. And I'm not gonna naturally provide it. So having someone who will go, oh, that's interesting, versus, are you insane? Tell me more, right? What about this? What about that? And then that fleshing out of that idea makes it much, much, much more translatable.

Nicole Pitcher: You just said the question I ask the most a week. Tell me more, right? And that's such a Shannonism. I have to say I quote Shannon probably daily in my day-to-day life. But just probing for detail that might not be innate to someone who's on the go. Taking that space to like brain dump. Well, and Shan, what I love about Coach and like I coach clients are very clear on their vision, right? Like they have done the thinking and they have tools available to them that can help them to flesh out that thinking, right? So this is, I just wanted to give that shout out to Coach. So if you're in Coach, like some of that vision translation, you have the tools there at your feet.

Shannon Waller: Is it tools like the Impact Filter? Is that what you think?

Nicole Pitcher: Yeah, the Impact Filter definitely. So awesome.

Shannon Waller: I love that. Yeah. And you remind them to use it. 100%.

Nicole Pitcher: Well, that's why I love coach because I can go, hey, you have something for that. But, you know, knowing too that there is someone out there, you can bounce an idea off of them who will ask deep questions to probe out the detail your team needs. Because you know me, I think it's important. You're a 3-2-9-5 Kolbe, Shan. I'm an 8-7-4-2. So if that is a familiar language to you out there, know that, right? So getting that 8 Fact Finder in-depth dive into your vision to bring it to life to others.

Shannon Waller: Yeah. It's interesting. I just had this thought, not so random. Sometimes without that, ideas stay stuck in you, and you need someone who will do it. You know, this is the role I play with Dan, actually. Now, he's a 2 Fact Finder, so my 3 looks like a lot compared to his. But I'll often use that with him. Tell me more, Dan. What does that mean? And then I'll share my thoughts. I'm like, what do you think about that? So having that, again, collaboration with a person is just powerful. So let's talk about commitment accountability. Commitment's key. Most entrepreneurs are fine with that. Accountability can feel a little scary sometimes. So how does this work with your clientele?

Nicole Pitcher: Yeah, absolutely. Well, even, Shannon, I wanna go back and think about, you know, I wanna bring this to life for us in our working relationship or where that might've shown up. And, you know, I know your world, the listeners here are probably, a lot of them are familiar with EOS, which Strategic Coach runs on as well. And I think back to when you would bring rocks, you know, the rocks that you would be accountable to per quarter to the bigger team,



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you know, your role in the big leadership team. And then you and I would sit down and go, okay, what does that actually mean? You've made this commitment verbally to the leadership team, to the company. And I want to sit down with you as your Strategic Support Partner and go, let's lay out the steps so that you can be accountable to what you said. I think integrity is something that all entrepreneurs, at least who I work with, are striving for. So when you can have someone who can keep you accountable to your commitments, and not only in a way that's blaming, like, this is your thing to do alone, Shannon. It's like, let's think this through together. Let's make sure that you can be who you say you are, live in integrity, show up to your word. Like, it's so gratifying, I think, for both the entrepreneur and the support partner in the right relationship when you're hitting those goals and targets.

Shannon Waller: That's awesome. Another point you brought up to me about this is, it's a very real danger for entrepreneurs is when we are isolated and alone with some of those things, we become the bottleneck.

Nicole Pitcher: Absolutely.

Shannon Waller: And this is interesting. You know, Dan talks about this, you know, because he's so committed to teamwork. And he goes, I will do anything not to let a fellow team member down.

Nicole Pitcher: Right.

Shannon Waller: He goes, I might blow off something to myself, but if I committed to get something for a team member, I'm doing it. And I have to tell you, sometimes I know we get up early anyway, but sometimes I get up extra early, like 4 a.m. to get this thing done, because he doesn't want to let someone down, which I really appreciate from him being on the receiving end of his stuff. And I need the, I need the Fast Filter, Dan. But we can end up being the bottleneck. And that's a horrible feeling that people cannot do their jobs—that we're paying them for, by the way—because we haven't quite decided. We're not 100 percent sure. We don't know how to set the context. That's horrible. So what I love about this is that your process means that people are not the bottleneck anymore.

Nicole Pitcher: 100%, you know, like most of my clients, some people I'm meeting with weekly, some biweekly, some monthly, but my role in this relationship is to keep your commitments top of mind, you know, and having someone to work through in real time, places where you have become the bottleneck, right? Because I think after a while, when you're the bottleneck for so long, you become stuck, right? And there's so many entrepreneurs, my first call with them, they've come to me out of desperation. Like they feel trapped by being the bottleneck and their to-do lists and, you know, even time. You know, one of the things that I think any great Strategic Support Partner, and it's certainly what you and I did, Shan, the first



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thing we worked on is time management and utilizing your time in a way where you can honor the commitments that you've set out to meet, right?

Nicole Pitcher: Can I share something you taught me?

Shannon Waller: Yes.

Nicole Pitcher: That if it's on the calendar, it doesn't exist.

Shannon Waller: Exactly. Yeah. So talk about that because I think I used to say and think I was getting away with something. Oh, I'll do it later. I think you were like, and exactly when is later? And it's interesting because, well, before I jump in, I'm just so well-trained at this point, it's ridiculous. But there's a thinking, there's a process and a mindset there about the calendar and time and how you do that. And you really had me be much more realistic, I guess is the word, and not hopeful, but real. So let's talk about that, because I think frankly, people take nothing else away from this and how important this is, it will be huge. It's a game changer. It is 100% a game changer. So let's talk about the calendar and how you look at it.

Nicole Pitcher: Yeah, it's so interesting. So probably we could have a whole offshoot series on time management strategies, because that's just where I live in my brain. But big picture, so many people, especially entrepreneurs, I know, and again, Kolbe, if you're a Quick Start, if you're a visionary, if these are words that resonate for you, then you are quick to say yes to every opportunity.

Shannon Waller: Yes. Right.

Nicole Pitcher: So the yes comes before the implementation strategy.

Shannon Waller: Right.

Nicole Pitcher: So time is my Unique Ability. I am a scheduling goddess, puzzler of time. And my first question is always when. You know, that's where my brain goes to. This is something I took from our strategic planning meetings, and there's a resource out there that really details about that. So my teamwork tips, Shannon and I will make sure that's available to you, that we worked on together at Coach. But at our strategic planning meetings, we take a period of time. At that point, it was six to eight weeks. And we really go through that period of time with a fine tooth comb. And I think what is missing from commitments and goals, so when you commit to something, is the time needed to create, right? That space needed to—it's your design time as a coach. It's your, you know, working back to create the space needed to make that be true and having someone to sit down with you who their Unique Ability is looking at that puzzle piece of the calendar and working with you to create customized ways to make your time more effective to meet those commitments, right? And saying, is this possible? Yes, you know, ideally in an ideal world. And I use this Danism all the time. There's no unrealistic goal, just



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unrealistic deadline, right? So your goals are possible, but let's look at time in chunks and make sure that your goals are time-specific and realistic within a certain time. Does that somewhat answer your question?

Shannon Waller: 100%. And it's interesting because the end result of that is I live, and I say die, by my calendar. If it's in my calendar, it exists. It's real. It will happen. And I am incredibly, I'm going to say, there is the word adaptable because I am striving when I'm doing my calendar. It's on free time that I don't want any schedule. But if you look at my calendar, I am the most organized in terms of time person. And pretty much any entrepreneur I know, right? Like everything is scheduled out when it's gonna happen. Katrina, who's now my support partner, she puts notes relative to that conversation. I need to go nowhere else. Everything is in the calendar, my personal, my professional. So I have complete confidence in it. I give direction, but I don't run that sucker. I'm inept at running it, but I can live it, right? And so I'm very count-on-able because of that. And so I'm like, I probably could work on slightly on timeliness. So I could be a minute earlier, or something like that. But I don't blow off meetings. I don't forget about them. I need less and less supervision. The older I get, the more mature I get. My habits are really good with regard to my calendar, and I could be counted on to deliver the result. And I show up ready, prepared, present, right? I'm not distracted. If I were having to set stuff up, my head would be completely somewhere else. So I show up really, really well because of our partnership and the training that you did with me. Like giving over control of your calendar is a thing, but you're clearly so much better at it in a very short period of time. You know, we had to negotiate like, what about this? What about that? And I know like, I like stuff kind of not back to back, but I don't like huge gaps of time. I'm one of those frogs jumping across the lily pads. Don't let me sit for too long and any of them all sink, right? So with those huge gaps, which is how other people prefer to, I'm like lost. I've lost an hour and a half between appointments because I didn't know what to do with myself, right? You know, I can keep a long, strong pace and then let me take some time off, right? So we worked on that. Your pace is different than my pace, and we're both very adaptable. But it means that the impact of that, I'm incredible. I mean, accountability, I am count-honorable. How great is that? And people really appreciate that. I get compliments and kudos all the time, like for being organized and accountable. And I'm like, yeah, it's not me, but thank you. I mean, yes, I do make sure it happens, but I'm not the one doing it. So it's a superpower, man. So, so good. So, allows you to be accountable to your commitments, which is, as you said, if you value integrity at all, you stop feeling bad about yourself because the support system is in place to make you show up as your best self and as a best leader. So, love that. So, let's talk about work-life balance. That's kind of a big deal. How do you help people with that?

Nicole Pitcher: Well, I think just coming right off of what you just said, Shan, when you have started to organize your time in a different way, you know, I can think the most common thing that I find myself doing in my weekly calls with my clients right now is we'll come up with an action for the week to move a project forward. And then the next action that we do together is I



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go, okay, so go on your calendar and put it in so you're not doing this on Sunday, remembering that it's due on Monday. Let's find some time during your set working hours. First of all, I think we have to define what does that ideal look like, right? And once that's set, how do we create boundaries with your time so that you can be fully present and that work life, business life isn't bleeding into the time with your loved ones, with your friends and family. So by paying that customized attention to your calendar and how you're using it, you start to create that space you need to decompress and enjoy life.

Shannon Waller: Yeah. The word that came to mind to me was less random. With this level of strategic support, we become a lot less random. You know, I know when I'll be done. Nothing ever gets scheduled late in the evening, which is when I was not managed. Used to happen all the time. I used to work late. I would be stuck doing emails. This is when I didn't have enough support. Stuck doing emails. I'd be doing proposals at 10:30 at night on a Friday. Now, Strategic Coach's, you know, Free Day definition is midnight to midnight. I would go to 11:59 p.m., right? More than once. So my husband, who's fortunately very adaptable as well, was like, okay, Shan, it's 7:30. Are you coming home? And I'm like, yeah, a little bit. And at 8:30 or 9, I'd show up. Bless Bruce for being who he is. But that was what our early years were like when I didn't have this kind of confidence. So then I had kids and got better at it. But still, it doesn't weigh on your mind and it doesn't weigh on your family because stuff is handled. You can be fully present. And again, I think the point about being present is that it lends itself to creativity and to confidence and to bringing out the best in other people. If we're distracted and worried and our mental energy is drained because we're doing stuff we're crappy at, it's really hard to show up as a creative entrepreneur focused on solving other people's issues. You're in your head. You don't have that ability to be your best business self or your best self in your personal life. So again, it sounds sort of subtle, but in fact, it's life changing when you've got an awesome partner like that. Okay, very cool. So vision translation and getting it into hands of other people in a way that they can take action on it and it makes sense, that's closing a very huge gap. Commitment, accountability, you will be a good person in other people's minds. And then work-life balance, you can actually be your best self. Those are huge benefits. To circle back to what we were talking about before, you know, it's possible to have this. And again, I think we're filling a gap between, you know, you get an assistant and you're like, now what do I do? You know, there's certain things and tasks that need to get done, but then I frankly don't know too many entrepreneurs who don't need someone like this, who don't need a Strategic Support Partner to help them think things through, strategically plan in a way that works for the larger team. The more we're talking about it, the more like, yeah, everyone needs a Nicole. That would be me. So how can people take action on this? And I like it because I know some of the people with whom you work and a huge part of it is people, again, to circle back to something you said earlier, they have to know themselves. That's right. I use know thyself as one of my personal mantras. Do you work with anyone who doesn't or do you just sort of like you have to do all these profiles?



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Nicole Pitcher: What does that look like? You know, we have a lot of friends in the same community. So I am very lucky and blessed and fortunate. And you know, I have nothing but love for like everything that I've come out of Strategic Coach and my relationships there. So I am lucky that I'm referral only. So working as a Strategy and Planning Support Partner right now, I've been referred by really self-aware people to really self-aware people. And the few times that I've encountered someone who doesn't have a certain level of self-awareness, I've learned to say no, right? So part of the blessing of being, you know, in the community that I am coming across. But I think it starts with the path to getting the strategic support that you might be missing starts with a level of self-awareness from the person seeking it. And this is where profiles, and again, this is Shannon and I from day one when we met, shared that we loved profiles with each other and it was a match made in heaven. And we did each one. But there's things out there, there's things we love to use, Kolbe, PRINT, StrengthsFinder. Shannon's recently really raving about Working Genius. These are all ways where if you can know yourself, your strengths, your non-strengths, and then go, oh, you know what, knowing this, this is not what I'm good at. And I'm looking for someone who can lead me or bring some direction in these areas of non-strength to my life. So once you know yourself, you can be clear on what you need to compliment you, and then really be intentional about seeking these and using these tools to help you find that right Who. You know, and I wanna say again, I wanna stress, you may have your right Who. If you're listening to this right now and you have a great assistant who wants to grow, and maybe you just haven't even thought about the strategic side yet, there's so many tools and resources to grow that person. And a first step would be, what is the profiles? What are their strengths? Do we have some data there? And if you decide, hey, this person's just in tactical, well, great, then you have that awareness and you can go and use profiles again to seek out those things that might be missing. Do you want to add anything to that, Shan?

Shannon Waller: Well, there are some things to look for in my experience. So, you know, Kolbe, there's one thing I've learned is that if you're initiating in Fact Finder, so 7, 8, 9 or 10, it is extraordinarily difficult to delegate to someone who has a shorter number, a smaller number. So if you're not working with another eight, you're going to be second-guessing and double-checking all of their work. So you probably need something like that. But Kolbe right-fit is brilliant to help find that. I know for me, I need my complement, which means I have to be really open to not hiring someone just like me. In the interviewing process, it's ridiculous because we tend to fall in love with people who are just like us. It's the number one hiring mistake is you hire a clone. Well, guess what? That clone does not want to do the work that you don't want to do. They want to do what you're doing. They want your job. It doesn't really make sense. That's not a puzzle piece. That's not a connection. So that's one thing. CliftonStrengths is fabulous because they have the four different themes, which are executing, strategic thinking, influencing, and then relationship building. Really important to kind of know



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that, which you can do after you've hired someone. PRINT, which is available through Coach. It's a kind of exclusive thing, but if you're listening to this, you actually have access to, which is amazing. That's someone's motivational identity. Really important for teamwork. I just did a whole podcast on all the profiles and why I love them so much because they build trust and they allow for fast teamwork. I'm a speed demon, so I want the quickest, fastest, easiest way to get that. And then Working Genius is really fun because, and it actually illustrates some things about you too. I only found out your Working Genius because it's only been out for like a year, you know, recently, but explains a few things. Working Genius is where in that process, where in that creative process does someone want to hang out? Are they the 30,000 foot, the middle, bottom, you know, whatever, where do they find joy? Where are they competent and where are they frustrated? And super important to know that. And just to mention yours, you are a Wonder, 30,000 foot, and Tenacity, right? You can see the big and you can see the little. You help connect all those dots with your other capabilities. And I think that's another cool way of kind of explaining what you've been talking about and the unique part that you bring to it. And neither one of those are mine. I'm Invention Discernment, right? W and T are actually my frustrations. Probably explains a lot of why our teamwork is so great, which I love. So just knowing those simple things, and I like to know, I was saying this to someone the other day, if I'm doing a quick read on a team, I want to know Kolbe first, Working Genius second, because that tells me how they strive and where in the process they hang out, what brings them joy. And then as soon as we're working together, I want to know all the kind of personality things like CliftonStrengths and DiSC. If I'm working with them closely, good lord, of course I want to know what their deepest emotional needs are in terms of their motivational identity. So that's PRINT. So yeah, I want to know all the things and I want people to want to know that about themselves. I mean, part of why we like fell for each other was, I was like, oh, we like profiles. She goes, I love profiles. This is the last one I did. Have you done this one? I was like, I just found a friend.

Nicole Pitcher: We have hearts on each other. It's like the cartoon.

Shannon Waller: All the emojis were happening.

Nicole Pitcher: All the things. You know, and Shannon, we said this a lot and then maybe we'll move on here. Cause I think we can dive deep into profiles and please listen to Shannon's podcast on all the profiles too. But knowing each other, our strengths and non-strengths and bringing a sense of humor is key to this relationship. Like just as much as it would be with your spouse, this strategic partner is going to be your work spouse.

Shannon Waller: Right? Yeah, 100%.



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Nicole Pitcher: Right? So it's, you know, knowing your differences and being able to laugh about them and have a sense of humor instead of blaming about like, you didn't show up this way or having that misalignment. It's like, oh, yeah, we're different. You know, so I think that's a key element in that self-awareness and awareness of others is the sense of humor of like, I am who I am. Not saying that you can't adjust when needed, but just that base foundation of knowing thyself and knowing the other.

Shannon Waller: One other aspect of that is, and this is again where just having language, which is what the profiles give you. I mean, we're all very complex, multi-dimensional people. Please, no one feel boxed in by a profile. It just more is it finally gives you words to talk about. And we are very different. We approach situations very different. Like Shannon, I love coming in at the beginning of a meeting. I really hate being in the brainstorming part. Can I leave? And I was like, you don't. That's the most fun part. And you're like, yeah, not for me. I'll come in at the end to track your to-doss. I'm like, okay, right. Like I didn't make you be me. And then you come at the end of a meeting. You're like, okay, what'd you decide? And we'd all look at each other and go and then we'd make a decision. It's hysterical. But we had that openness and that trust to go back to that other thing. And we could explain why. And so the other part of this is we didn't take it personally. And we did have to work through some things. Meetings were one, he'd be like, I really don't think you should be taking on this much. And I'm like, but I really want to. And you've got, I'm like, fine. You know, we would coach one another on different things. But again, because we had that partnership mindset and because I was open to what you had to say, you were open to what I had to say, we could work it out. And we had such successful teamwork for so many years. And it made us both better, I think, I can say that myself personally, that you will grow out of this and you grow in awareness. I learned so much about harmony and consistency from you. I wouldn't have known that as intimately if we weren't so close. So I think there's just some real opportunities for growth in that, which is just incredibly rewarding and super fun.

Nicole Pitcher: Well, Shan, I'll just throw in a compliment before we move on, but your relator, that strength of relator is not necessarily, you know, in my top five, I don't have relationships. They come in my five to ten, right? So I really, as now someone in the world, you know, doing multiple businesses on my own, I learned so much from that sense of relationship that you gave to people. And like that's something so when we talk about learning from each other, just as much as you learned harmony and consistency, that that deep relationship that you brought into your business relationships has really allowed me to thrive. So a moment to shout you out.

Shannon Waller: Thank you. I'm not quite sure how it shows up sometimes, so I love that. So let's talk about how people can take action. So we've covered a lot. Mindsets required, what a, you know, I've added the word thinking partner, because that's very much who you are for me. But that's, you know, Strategic Support Planning Partner. We've talked about what that is and the benefits of it. And if you're like me, you're like, I want one, which I've been lucky enough to



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have it in several people. So the profiles are huge. And then there's also seeing the aspirations of the people you already have around you. You know, if someone knows they like to support, you came in knowing you're like, I've done lots of different roles. I know I want to be in a support role. And that was like a bomb to my soul. I was like, oh, because I wanted someone—I'd had experiences where that wasn't quite the case. And I wanted someone who would look after me, who would make sure I had water. It's usually the case who would actually look out for me. I need that because I don't always do it for myself. So I was so happy that you were willing to share that part of yourself and you were self-aware to know that. So that's a huge advantage if you're listening to this as a potential support partner. If you know yourself, bam, you'll be able to put it out there, no problem. And then you wrote, I probably edited something, but you get all the credit, the Top Teamwork Tips PDF, which we'll include in the show notes, is huge. Like how you took initiative to create strategic planning meetings, which I have to say, this story is so funny to me. So I'm used to being in charge, right? You know, I'm a leader in the company, I'm a leader in what I do, I created the Strategic Coach Team Programs, all the things. So I'm just used to being in charge. It's my personality. You were like, we need to talk about all your projects, something to that effect. I'm like, okay, and you're a strategic planner by nature. And so you booked a meeting and I think we went out of the office and then I remember sitting in the restaurant and I started to take charge of the meeting and you were like, Hang on a second. I have an agenda and I think I'll run this meeting. And I was like, I think my eyes got wide and I was like, oh my God, this is awesome. And I remember sitting back and going, I'm all yours in my head. It was so funny. And you very gently said, actually, no, I'm in charge of this meeting. But it was great, and you were. Let's do Positive Focus. Let's do what worked, what didn't about last quarter. What are we going to move ahead? Let's go through all the projects we did. What are the ones—we still have to use this format, by the way. What are we working at? And it was great because it prompted my Quick Start to make decisions that otherwise I wouldn't have made until the day before something happened. As I was with you, it actually was a huge prompt to make decisions and to take action and remember stuff. Oh, my gosh. I'm like, oh, yeah, I need to connect with this person. You're like, write it down. And then kind of how to work with a Quick Start is the other part of that guide. Talk about how that came about, because that was pretty cool.

Nicole Pitcher: Shannon will get a laugh out of this because she'll remember this. The reason why I first wrote this is because Shannon spoke about me so graciously in all her workshops that all I was having assistants calling me left, right, and center saying, my entrepreneur wants me to do what you're doing. Tell me how. And as someone who, you know, Fact Finder, Follow Thru, intellection, introvert by nature, spur of the moment calls weren't my go-to if I wasn't prepared. So I started to put down thoughts about, okay, if I was going to give tips to entrepreneurial assistants, what would that look like, you know? And so capturing the strategic planning meeting, which that idea is what I've run with into my own world now as a Strategy and Planning Support Partner. But, you know, what I realized is getting us on the same page,



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listing your projects, getting that down, and then working through them step by step was the number one way I could create value for you, you know, and that became apparent very quickly. So I kind of captured that in a process. If you're in Strategic Coach, if you're listening, or you have an entrepreneur at Strategic Coach, there's so many tools that I utilize from the Coach program to make those planning meetings run smoother, too. So know those resources are there. But the PDFs available really just downloads my brain as an entrepreneurial assistant onto paper. And I'm so glad it's still living and thriving today and available. So I want to say off of that, there is like, if you have that right-fit person, you know, you have the teamwork, they're great at tactical, but they're showing that spark to wanting to do more, and they have the capacity, share this download with them. That's a great way to start. Get them to start to think about what's possible in this realm of strategy. You know, and Shan, I also wanted to say Strategic Coach has a great program if you're an entrepreneur in the Program to fast-track your assistant, to think more strategically with a strategic, is it assistant still, Shan? Is that what we're calling it?

Shannon Waller: Yeah, Strategic Assistant Program. Yeah, which is fun because I coined that term a kajillion years ago and everyone's like, oh, I want one of those, right? They want someone who is strategic, who is not, again, just tactical. So, yes, the Strategic Assistant Program, because that's where we coach people on Coach concepts like, okay, your time, Free, Focus, and Buffer Days. When are they? Who are your top 20 in your firm club in terms of your key money making relationships, short and long term? You know, what are your key to-dos? You know, what are your especially Free, Focus, and Buffer activities, and how can I support those getting scheduled. So all of a sudden it goes from just doing what you tell them, because frankly, you probably have no idea, into, oh, now they know what questions to ask you. They are trained on the tools, so they can prompt you, like, oh, do you have an Impact Filter for this? You look at them and go, not yet. Can we do one together? So we trained them on exactly how to do that. And that was pretty much the very first Strategic Coach Team Program was the assistant one. And you've taken it with your Unique Ability to an even higher level. And what's really fun, Nicole, is one of the things, you know, I've done many rants about titles and how much I hate them. I hate corporate titles, especially an entrepreneurial company. If I hear a C-suite title, I'm like, oh, just means a lot of really bad mail. And then people are status-oriented rather than contribution-oriented. But I think with your Strategic and Planning Support Partner, you have one of the very, very best Unique Ability titles ever. So kudos on that, my friend. I love that. So we've got Top Teamwork Tips. One of the other tools which is available at yourteamsuccess.com, which may be where you found the podcast, is the download of the Communication Builder. And that is something that we use from the get-go, which is how we both like to give and receive communication, information, best time of day, worst time of day, best method, email written. I'm verbal. I'm like, talk to me. Let's go on Zoom. You're like, can you write it down please? And just understanding that. So what's really cool is I learned to give information to you in the way that you best wanted it. And then you



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would grant me the same deal. So that's a simple tool, but it makes what you think is obvious, but isn't. You know, simple but not obvious. That tool, five minutes, can be really profound. So I think that is another cool resource which is available again at Your Team Success. So what if someone goes, oh my gosh, I don't have anybody? So I know that you talk to people a lot about getting really great support people. What resource do you suggest? And I think it's my friends at Superpowers.

Nicole Pitcher: Yeah, yeah. So there's so many tools out there, you know, but anything that Shannon's related to, it gives me confidence to refer. And so Superpower HQ is just one of the services out there that specialize in finding and, you know, supporting the onboarding of really smart entrepreneurial assistants, right? So there are resources out there. So don't fret if you're feeling panicked, you know, at the same time, you know, I really love to support the process, you know, I'm not a hirer, I'm not a recruiter in any way. But if it's just a matter of having a thinking partner, as you're out there searching for your own right-fit assistant, and like, what does that look like? You know, that is something that people like me or Shannon's a great resource. If you're in coach, you're a friend of Shannon utilizes your resources out there because there's many and in this world of like contracting and superpower HQ, there are resources. So don't feel stuck. Don't feel stuck. Yeah.

Shannon Waller: And it's great because actually Stephen Neuner and Ryan Cassin, who are co-founders of Superpowers HQ, we're writing a book together. So we've got a book, Collaboration: On the Power of Assistance. So this is totally in line, which I absolutely love. Now, I also know that some people, especially if they're in Coach, are kind of intrigued about where they can learn more about you and also just mention your other passion other than being a brilliant Strategy and Planning Support Partner. So talk about that, too, because you're quite the entrepreneur now. Sure.

Nicole Pitcher: Yeah. So, you know, part of this backstory that Shannon and I have, which I'll try to keep short, but, you know, as I was growing as a Strategic Support Partner to Shan at Coach, I was also developing this whole other world during, you know, my thirties of Pilates and yoga. I have this deeply spiritual side and, you know, physical movement is such an important part of who I am. So part of the reason why Shannon and I's previous working relationship transitioned was I became an entrepreneur in my own right and I now teach yoga and Pilates in the greater Toronto area, breathwork, meditation. I always joke that I'm helping people find balance in both of these worlds that I'm in. So physical balance in their body as well as work-life balance. I'm currently working, as I said, Strategy and Planning Support Partner, really focusing more on the high level these days, less of the tactical support. I work with entrepreneurs and their tactical assistants often in creating strategies and being that missing link. But I also support entrepreneurs without assistance, just in their search and really getting confident in what can an assistant give to me? What is the value? Because often it's just like the not knowing is the stopper and you are worthy of that investment. If you're out



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there and you're like just procrastinating, we are here and I hope what you got from today is you are worthy of that investment. And if you'd like to continue this conversation, the best way to reach out to me is on LinkedIn. You'll find me under Nicole Pitcher, Strategy and Planning Support Partner. I do work by referral only. I'm just one me. But anyone who's, you know, in Shannon or the Coach world is always a yes. I'm excited to have those conversations. So that is how you can reach me.

Shannon Waller: Awesome. Thank you, Nicole. I really appreciate that because you have taken something that, well, you really breathed life into it. You know, I knew I wanted a support partner. That was my, you know, beginning. And you evolved that into, you know, strategy and being my great thinking partner. And to this day, we're still really close friends. I love what you're up to. I love that you're an entrepreneur. How cool is that? And I love that, you know, some of the clients I work with also work with you. So I know that the stuff they dream up in a workshop, it's going to happen because they've got you as a partner and colleague on their side. So for me, it's fun and it's been neat to see how you've evolved, how you've grown. Fortunately, you hired Katrina for me. I love her. I love her. I love her. She's awesome. And it was interesting because we actually did a refinement of the role and just realizing just how much scheduling was involved. So you actually found someone for whom that was more joyful than you, which is great. So the role shifted. You went to do what you were unique at. I've got someone who's unique at doing it. So it actually it's all good. There's nothing not good about it. I want to go back to your point, though, because people, you so deserve having really great support. I think your point there is brilliant. And the other thing to remember, and this is not mine, but I've heard it and I've borrowed it. If you don't have an assistant, you are one. And if your talents do not lend itself in that direction, you are really expensive. Stop it. You know, Gino Wickman's new book, Shine, which is fabulous, by the way, one of his edicts is don't do, in this case, \$25 an hour work. It could be don't even do \$75 an hour work or \$100 work, especially if what we can charge for you is much more. So you're being paid too much and you're bad at it. That makes no sense from a business standpoint. So yes, you getting leverage, you getting support, you getting freed up is vital. And I think it's most important that you make that investment in yourself. And it took some courage. It was commitment and courage on my part before I developed the capability and the confidence. And I just can't stress the difference it made. I mean, I am three to four times as productive as I was before I was working with you. And that's not a small thing. So it just is a no-brainer to me. But I know some people are still in that commitment and courage phase. So just want to strongly encourage people to take action. And Nicole, again, thank you, thank you, thank you. I love our journey. I love what I've learned. I love what you've learned. I love how we keep growing. We were talking about just how much fun it is to just get together and talk because new things always come out of it. And I'm super jazzed for you. So thanks for sharing your wisdom with everybody.



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Nicole Pitcher: Well, thanks for having me on. And I adore you. And I'm just so happy that it feels like a full circle moment in many ways. And to be here together and creating value for your audience, just it's a pleasure. So thanks again, Shan.

Shannon Waller: Well, you're welcome. Thanks for your Unique Ability. Thanks for sharing with other people. And if you're really lucky, you get to work with Nicole. All right, so check you out at LinkedIn. We'll make sure all the good stuff is in the show notes. And again, have an awesome day. Thank you so much, Nicole.