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How To Transform Your Organization's Success With The Unique Ability® Model

Shannon Waller: Do you know that as an entrepreneurial company you have a unique opportunity not available to other more corporate or bureaucratic organizations? Stay tuned to find out why and how you can make this a reality. Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. Today, I want to talk about the incredible potential advantage that entrepreneurial companies have to play far more in the sandbox of Unique Ability than most organizations do. Part of why I wanted to share this with you is because I was sharing it with an audience not that long ago, a couple of weeks ago, and it really landed, and I went, hmm, I don't think I've actually talked about this before. So, let me introduce you to the Unique Ability model and its components. And then, instead of just applying it to you as an individual, I want you to think about your company. I want you to think about your entrepreneurial organization and whether or not what I'm talking about lands and makes sense for you. So here goes.

So, in our Unique Ability model, we actually get there by describing all of our unique abilities. So, if I want you to imagine four circles, a big one on the outside, then a smaller one, then a smaller one, and then a center circle, okay? And on the outside, the biggest one is actually what we call incompetent abilities. Don't worry, we don't want you spending any time here, okay? So, incompetent abilities are those things where you spend time and effort, but you don't get the result. In fact, if you do them, it detracts. I jokingly say it's like a minus 10x. So, all of us as individuals have things we're not great at. And what I also want you to think about is, in fact, companies have things that they're not good at. So, this is not just true on the micro level, the personal level, it's also true on the macro level. I'll give an example of this in just a moment. So after being incompetent, a few things that we were not put on the planet to do, whatever your belief system, then there are some things at which we are competent. We're adequate, we're okay, we reach the minimum standard, but guess what? So do a lot of other people, so there's competition. I'm hitting my hands together here. And so this is also not ideal because it's kind of a one-act strategy.

Then, fewer activities still, these are the ones who are getting in the concentric circles, getting closer to the middle. And these are the activities in which you or your organization have superior skills. You are better at it than most people, and that's just not your ego talking, that's other people saying that. And here's where people experience great teamwork, great reputation, and often great compensation. We get highly paid for doing things in a superior, skilled way, which is fantastic. So excellent is good. On an individual level, if you do them for a long time and you don't reinvigorate yourself with them, you kind of get bored. It's more brownout than burnout, but it gets a little like, hmm, been there, done that, got 14 t-shirts. Next. So that's true individually. I also think it's true on a company-wide level. And then, finally, at the very center, there are a few things at which you are unique. So you have superior skill and passion. Your eyes light up. You love it. You lean into it. You know you can always get better. It gives you energy. It's where you're a hero to other people. You are having a positive impact. Unique Ability does not exist in isolation. If you're not creating value for someone, it's hidden away. It's not useful. We want to be useful.



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So, if you take this incompetent, competent, excellent, unique model, it actually applies to companies. We'll play a little game here. So, if I ask you about this model, you get to choose two capability levels for the three different types of organizations I'm going to describe. And I did this with my audience a few weeks ago. I'm like, okay, where would you put government? And most people immediately become incompetent. Okay, but if we're going to be a little bit more generous, incompetent, and what? Well, okay, competent, like my garbage gets picked up, the streets get cleaned, snow gets cleared, all the things. So incompetent and competent is where most people would rate the government. That's what the expectations are. You can agree or disagree, but most people would lump it together there. Then, my next observation is that for corporations, where do they hang out? Where do they spend time? What's rewarded in that system? Incompetence, no. If you're not good at anything in a corporation, you will be ejected. However, I find also the same to be true with a Unique Ability. And I'll often have a conversation; it's like, if you've ever worked for a corporation and you were the person coming up with new ideas or suggesting system changes, what happens then? They tend to flick you out. You're like a burr under the saddle. So corporations, I was going to say bureaucracies, but really, let's say corporations exist really in the competent and excellent levels.

And by the way, I don't think this is bad, okay? I'm okay with competent for some things, and excellent, they want superior skill, but if you're unique, if you are really passionate about something, you just want to hone in on that, you kind of don't fit with the culture. And as I said, they will flick you off because you're an irritant to the system. You want to change things too much. Now, this is where we have an advantage because, in entrepreneurial companies, we have the opportunity to really help everyone on the team, from the entrepreneur and founder all the way to the newest hire, to really focus on both excellence and uniqueness. Again, let me say that. Entrepreneurial companies, unlike any other type of organization, have the opportunity to spend the most time on their excellent and unique abilities. This is kind of a profound statement. So, remember I said incompetence is kind of like a minus 10x. Competent is 1x. Excellent is 2x. Unique ability, that's where the 10x multiplier kicks in. So just looking at the advantage that you have if you are helping everyone in your company through creating systems and collaborations and great tech, all of the ways and personal and professional development, helping everyone do what they're both excellent and unique at. You can run circles around everybody else because very few people are doing this, and very few people have the freedom to be this flexible with their systems and with their people.

So I want to stress that this is again not just an individual deal. This is a company deal. And to my mind, the why is so that you can excel, right? You can really blow past your competition if that's where you're looking. I'd rather you just focus on your own direction, frankly, and your own value creation because that's the most exciting. Who cares what the people beside you are doing? But this is how you're going to reach your goals. And this is how you're going to have the most fun doing it and have the most Self-Managing and Self-Multiplying version of your company. This is a great opportunity. Now, how in the world do you actually do this? Well,



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first of all, it takes people. Now it goes back to the individual level of figuring out, oh, okay, what am I terrible at or what do I avoid doing? So one of the underappreciated elements of what you're incompetent at is what you technically could do because you've got a good brain, but you avoid it like the plague. In other words, you procrastinate on it so much that it turns from a task into a mess. That, my friends, is also incompetent. I actually told people, because we did a whole exercise to help them figure this out, I'm like, even if you're not doing those things anymore, just write them down so you remind yourself what never to do ever again. And I hope that people are not spending their time on it, because if anyone in your company is spending time doing what they're incompetent at, it is costing you money. You are smarter than this.

It's interesting because people have this mindset: oh, it's part of everyone's job that they're not good at or that they hate doing. I'm like, hmm, this is not a mindset I want to pursue. There might be something you, you know, because we're growing as individuals, there always will be something you want to get off your to-do list. But I don't want anyone at Strategic Coach or anywhere else doing something they're terrible at or avoiding like the plague. This makes no sense financially to me. So let's take the low-hanging fruit and free people up, whatever it is means you're gonna have some pretty unique job descriptions, fine by me, so that they can avoid doing what they're incompetent at. And if you are doing anything you're incompetent at, I love you. Stop it. Like right now, there's no justification. There's no strategic business-wise productivity or profitability justification that you can come up with for doing something you're terrible at and avoid. So that's the starting point. Then there's competent. And this is an interesting one because people hate letting go of what they're competent at. Sometimes, that's where they're comfortable. You've done it before. It's familiar. There's no risk there. You've got guaranteed results. But again, if you're a growth-oriented person, being competent is actually kind of boring. And I don't really love competition. I'd rather just win in my area. Thank you very much.

So again, people need certain skills, basic ones for sure. But as soon as you can, move people up to excellent. And again, excellent is fabulous. I mean, if I have a choice, I will keep everyone in our exercise that's on the top half of the page. I'll keep everyone in excellent and unique. Our goal is that at least 50% of our team's time is spent doing what they are unique at, and the other 50% is excellent. Now, it takes time to get to that level. It doesn't happen overnight, but that is ultimately our goal because we know that that is how we are going to win as a company. That's how we're gonna hit our goals, achieve everything we're striving for, all the things. So excellent is powerful. And again, though, people can get stuck here. In our book on Unique Ability, we call it the excellent trap because you have that great teamwork and reputation and often, you know, financial compensation. But again, you hang on even tighter to the baton. I'm thinking about the ability team relay race model that I use; you can hang even more tightly onto it because it's really comfortable, and you get people to say nice things about you, and you've done them for a long time. However, hanging onto those might be preventing



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you from spending more time, more energy and more intention on your unique abilities. So, really having the conversations frequently with your team. Okay, what are you really great at? And what are you really great at that you really love and want to do more of? How can we get rid of anything that is not either excellent or unique? And then try and help shift them even more into that Unique Ability.

So again, this is a mindset more than anything else. If you think that everyone just has to be basically competent in everything and maybe really good at a couple of things, and that's how you're going to win, fine. But that is not how you're going to be able to implement the potential 10x multiplier possibility that's available when you focus your entire team, your entire company, including yourself, on hanging out in excellent and unique abilities. So I'm excited because, to my mind, this is the advantage of working in an entrepreneurial company. This is the advantage of having an entrepreneurial company that you get to play a bigger game, a more powerful game, and one that doesn't just use mental capabilities, right, because that's where our brains start, but also engages the heart. The difference between excellent and unique, which is the finest distinction, is that in both of them, you have superior skill. Okay? Excellent and unique, superior skill. However, with Unique Ability, you add passion. You love it. As I said, you can always find room to get better, and it gives you energy. I mean, I've been doing a ton of coaching and presenting, and I am like, I'm so jazzed about it. Most of my podcasts right now come out of all the conversations I've been having. I'm so blessed to have the type of conversations I have with people. As you can tell, I get really excited, but that's fun. And I love that I have this incredible outlet. When I was doing something else a year or so ago, oh my gosh, I did not have the opportunity to spend as much time doing what I'm doing right now.

So, I really notice it in terms of my energy level, happiness, and creativity. That really is the big consequence of not being able to hone in on Unique Ability for you or your team if creativity goes down. You just don't have it. You don't have the mental and emotional energy to kind of think up new things because you're so busy, you know, trying to get all the other stuff done. One other interesting thing to note is that even if there's something on your incompetent list that doesn't take that much time, it can take up 50% of your brain. So, it might be only 10% of your time, but it can take up a ton of your mental energy. And then that's the opportunity cost because you're not able to spend or invest it on what you love to do and are best at and pursue some new cool ideas and thoughts that you could then apply for people's benefit. So again, I just want you to kind of log on to the opportunity of really directing yourself and everyone in your organization to strive for excellent and unique abilities and spending their time there and really working hard to free people out from what they're incompetent or competent at. It is not serving you, and it is not serving your company, and it's certainly not serving your clients. So, that is my thoughts and message for today. If you have any comments or questions, please let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. And as always, thank you for listening and here's to your team's success.