



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Finding Your Right-Hand: The Essential Guide To Number Two Leaders, with Alec Broadfoot

Shannon Waller: Hi, Shannon Waller here and welcome to Team Success. I am thrilled today to have a very good friend, a very good client, Alec Broadfoot, here with me to talk about his brand-new book, which is super cool, *Hiring Your Right #2 Leader*. So, Alec, you're from Vision Spark. This is your company. And I have had the pleasure of working with you on a couple of different projects, notably our Who Not How webinars we've done with our friend Emily Morgan of Delegate Solutions. And I have loved partnering with you. You're someone who has vision, ironically, about teamwork. This is where we're so aligned. You are very clear on leadership, another topic about which I'm really passionate about. And I am thrilled about this book. I mean, it's not new new, so I know yesterday, but it has been out for a little bit. But it is such a great book. And I'm excited today to do a deep dive into what is a number two leader? Why do you need one? How to find someone? What are the key characteristics? What are the biggest mistakes you can make? Because I don't know about you, I don't like making mistakes. I'd rather avoid them. So thank you. Thank you for being here to share your wisdom. But before we jump into that, what are some things that people should know about you, Alec? Because I didn't give them very much of an introduction. So what do we need to know about you, my friend?

Alec Broadfoot: I've been an entrepreneur since I was 25 years old. So after I got my MBA, I went into banking and was in banking two years. And I had an opportunity to buy a mom-and-pop business. So since then, I've been an entrepreneur. I've had this company, Vision Spark, for the last 12 years or so, 13 years actually. And so it's been my passion. I finally figured out what I wanted to do in life and absolutely love it. So our company helps entrepreneurial organizations all across the world. We help them find their right number two leader and their other leadership positions.

Shannon Waller: Mm-hmm. And as you said, you finally figured out what you wanted to do, I always say, when I grew up. So you have dabbled in a lot of different things, which I think is amazing because you have had a lot of different entrepreneurial experience and you've learned that it's, as you say in the book, most companies have actually a people problem more than they have a process problem or any other type. So can you talk about like you are a people person in my experience. So talk about why that's important to you and what that connection is like and why it is so fulfilling for you to help people find their right Who's.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, so I had this mailing company about 20 years ago, and we were just killing it. We were putting our competitors out of business. We were making money. We were nominated for Ernst & Young's Entrepreneurs of the Year. But we could not hire. We could not hire at all. And I reached out to one of my mentors, and they're like, are you using any sort of assessment in your process, using data? And I said, no. We started using an assessment tool. And instead of 7 out of 10 people being fired or quitting, we retained 7 out of 10, right? And so we needed an office manager really bad. And we went through like four of them within a year. And one person test positive for drugs, another person left to join a cult, I kid you not. We had



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an amazing individual that wanted to spend more time with her family, which is great. So we tried to hire someone that replicated her. And so this position was open for a while, and this one particular woman came in, interviewed, and this is before I knew how to interview. But she, in my mind, hit it out of the ballpark.

So I said, before we hire you, I want you to take our assessment. She took the assessment, and the results were horrible. And I'm like, these results can't be true. And so I went out and I checked her references. And they're all like, oh, yeah, she's great. So long story short, within three weeks, we fired her. And everything the assessment said about her was spot on, like that she would be a slow learner, super insecure, super disorganized, no attention to detail, a social butterfly, and so from then on, I said, I'm not going to go against our assessment. And then during that time, I was involved with the peer group and I saw all my entrepreneurial friends making the same mistakes I used to make. So I sold that business. I went into consulting. I found out that I was helping companies improve their cash flow. And I saw that all these companies had people issues. And so that's how Vision Spark was started, by combining the science and my passion for helping people hire right. So that's kind of the backstory of it, but that's my why and why I started Vision Spark.

Shannon Waller: I love it. It comes from you having figured out how to solve your own problem, and then seeing that everybody else had the same problem, and then coming up with the, well, basically creating a company to actually address that. And just before we jump into the book, your company growth has been pretty spectacular. So tell us a little bit about, you know, it's been around for 12 years at the point of recording, and how you've grown, because you've grown kind of exponentially, which I'm very excited about.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah. I mean, for the first six years, you know, I had a business partner, a great guy, but we just kept on hitting a ceiling and we couldn't get past a certain revenue point. And it was pretty sad. And, you know, I was pretty prideful, you know, MBA. I thought I knew what I was doing. You know, I can run a company. What I didn't know is I couldn't really be a great entrepreneur. And so my business partner, he decided he had enough and he wanted to pursue other things. And so I bought him out and I reached out to Strategic Coach and I said, I need your help. I'd been reading about Dan Sullivan, *How The Best Get Better*. And so I joined Strategic Coach in 2018.

And so since then we've grown from a revenue standpoint, we've grown four times in revenue, and an employee count also four times. And so it's been really exciting. There's so many things I've learned in Strategic Coach that have helped my business and also have helped my business help other businesses. And I sent quite a bit of people to Strategic Coach as well just because I believe in Strategic Coach. It was a great, great honor that Dan Sullivan wrote the foreword in the book. And so it's one of the best days of my life when I heard he was writing the foreword.



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Shannon Waller: Hmm, that's exciting. Well, he is a brilliant entrepreneur and brilliant coach of entrepreneurs. So you and I feel the same way about him, which is fantastic. I love it. So let's dive into this whole idea of a number two leader because Vision Spark helps hire entrepreneurial leaders. And actually, even before we jump into that, I think there is something very unique, at least in my experience, having created The Strategic Coach Team Programs, including our Team Leader workshop, that there is something unique about it. First of all, anyone who works for an entrepreneurial company and then an entrepreneurial leader in particular. And then if you make even more specialized, someone who directly supports the visionary, the owner, right? Like that's rare air that people are breathing. They're not on every street corner.

And one of the things I really, really appreciate about you and your wisdom and your experience, which you've captured in writing, so lovely, is that you parse out the nuances of what is required, who to look for, what to expect from them, how to actually, as a visionary owner, how to sit better in your seat, to use an EOS term. And I think that those are distinctions and things to appreciate that a lot of people might not have given much thought to. They take it for granted. They're like, oh, anyone can do this. And I just, like all of your wisdom in here just, it opened up my brain even more. I'm like, oh yeah, I hadn't totally put it in those terms or I hadn't thought of it that way. So that to me is one of the huge advantages of getting the book and absorbing it is that you go like, oh yeah, I need to keep this, this, and this in mind. So let's talk about visionaries and let's talk about number two leaders. And number two leader goes by a lot of different terms, right? So what's in that bundle package of number two leader?

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, and I called it number two leader because there are so many names. I think there are 35 plus names for that role, depending on the industry. So we work with a lot of companies that run on EOS and other operating systems. And so, you know, integrator is a very common term. COO, president, second in command, director of operations, chief of staff, executive director, right? So these are all titles for this position, right? Even when I was at the Inc. 5000 Awards, a lot of the owners were referring to their number two as their CEO. So they were truly in that visionary owner's box seat, and they hired CEOs. That's the term they use, but it really, truly is the number two leader. And the number two is someone that oversees the day-to-day operations of the business. So everybody in the organization reports to the visionary entrepreneur. So the only two or three direct reports that a visionary should have would be their number two, their executive assistant, and maybe an innovation manager.

Shannon Waller: Oh, that's my triad that I like to talk about. That's in my next book.



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Alec Broadfoot: We have a podcast about that, right? We did on the innovation manager. So really, everybody else reports to that number two. And so someone who's over finance, NHR, someone who's over sales and marketing, operations, client services, whatever your organization is, all reports to the number two leader.

Shannon Waller: A lot of entrepreneurs will take pride in the fact that they can do a lot of those functions, sales comes to mind. And so why is it so critical for a visionary to actually let go, or as I like to say, pass the baton? Why is that key? Or what is the cost if they don't? For a lot of people, it feels like a big investment. They're letting go of something that is near and dear to their heart. Often they've been doing that role for a long time, so it's hard to think that anyone could do it as well as they could. But why is this such a critical step in terms of people's growth?

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, so there's different stories that come to mind, but most entrepreneurs that when they make that decision of hiring a number two, their lives get tremendously better, right? And so they have a lot more time and time with their family, time to spend in their Unique Ability. So the average entrepreneur probably spends, you know, 10 to 20 percent of their time in what they're really good at.

Shannon Waller: Right.

Alec Broadfoot: And so if you can make that 50 percent or 60 percent, 70 percent of their time is going to have a much greater impact on the company. So if they have someone in place that can free them up to do what they're really good at, their revenues and profits are gonna increase from a business standpoint. The business is gonna run better. The visionary entrepreneur is gonna have a lot more energy. Every day is not drudgery because they're not working in areas that are outside their Unique Ability. So if they're in those areas where they feel incompetent in or competent, using Strategic Coach terms, or things that they don't like or not good at, and so that takes energy. And so when you're in Unique Ability, you actually have more energy, right? Joy is another one that comes to mind. People fall in love with their businesses again, and they have more joy to give to their employees and their family.

Shannon Waller: That's a really good point. And you make that point in the book, too, that you stop hating the parts of your business. You love it. You get re-engaged with it. You get re-energized. And, you know, day-to-day business life, especially day-to-day operations for most visionary entrepreneurs, is drudgery. And sometimes, even if it's not horrible, it kind of just wears them down day after day after day. They're like, oh, I'm gonna have to deal with this problem next month and next month and next month. Now, what's interesting is those kind of challenges or issues are fun and enjoyable for the right number two leader. So it's gonna sound weird. Convince me of that. It's like, if I don't think it's fun, how can anyone else find it enjoyable? What's your answer to that objection? Because I'm sure you get it.



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Alec Broadfoot: It is hard for us to see how is that possible if someone enjoys that. But just to give you an idea, we did an activity inventory with my leadership team. And I had my team members write down what they'd love to do and are great at. So my integrator, John, he wrote down things that were my exact opposite. So he loved, you know, dealing with financial problems, customer issues, people problems in the business, holding people accountable, you know, and I'm like, what? Yes, this is something I love to do. And like, we had the exact opposite. And so many of our clients will say the same, like, it's so much better when you have someone on your team that has your back looking out for you. And you have more time to pursue your, you know, your life's passions.

Shannon Waller: And I think until you actually know and appreciate that other people love to do the stuff you don't. So we talk about Unique Ability, which is what you love to do and are best at, at its most simple definition. But then there's a ton of things at which you're excellent, competent, or incompetent that do not give you energy, satisfaction, or even results. And until you actually appreciate what you love to do and do best, you can't really appreciate that what they love to do and do best are completely different. And I think, you know, having people do what we call the Activity Inventory, and then you're comparing it, you're like, whoa, I didn't know life existed in that form until I saw it on paper. The point is, and this is a fun point that one of our clients made about one of our profiles that we use a lot called Kolbe, but he said, before I knew about Kolbe, I thought everyone was just like me, only not as good.

But I think that is a natural human thing. We tend to think that other people are like us, but they're not. Everyone is unique, and everyone has a contribution to make. And the number two leader has some very particular characteristics, which I'd love to dive into, that make them a winner in this role. So I love how you talk about John, because I think everything he loves to do is stuff you do not. But there are some more generalized characteristics of what makes a really successful number two leader. So can you also talk about the profile that you use? Because I've done it. It revealed things that no other profile did. We talked about that in one of our previous podcasts. But it's really insightful, particularly with the cognitive and the affective part of the mind. It's different than Kolbe. And you've really isolated six key areas that are profoundly important for the success of a number two leader. So could you share those?

Alec Broadfoot: Because I'm sure the profile we use is called the Talent Impact Profile, or TIP, for short. Your listeners can find more information at talentimpactprofile.com. The assessment has been around a long time. It measures six mental aptitudes, 10 personality dimensions, and has two distortion scores. So it can actually measure if someone is trying to gain the test, which is really cool in this day and age. So the big component, it measures mental acuity. So this is their strategic thinking ability. So you can have someone with a gray Kolbe. And by the way, our assessment works super well with Kolbe. When they get a gray Kolbe, they can have a great resume, a great background, you know, in the industry, cultural fit, but if you're looking



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for a strategic thinker, which is one of the indispensable traits, you need an assessment that measures that, right?

So it measures six different mental aptitudes and it measures ten personality dimensions. So we have determined through some of our own trials, but also we've had a lot of clients who will hire someone on their team to be their integrator or second in command number two that haven't worked out. And they'll ask us to say, hey, can you share with us your insight why this person is struggling in their role? And so through that, we've identified in the book, we call them six non-negotiables or six indispensable traits. I've since added a seventh, which the seventh is fit. So they have to fit with you and your team. But those six traits are, I mentioned, strategic thinking, so strong mental acuity. They need to be really good at planning and organization. They have to have the ability to anticipate and be proactive, right? So by nature, us entrepreneurs and visionaries, we're very quick on our feet, which makes us not very good in that area, very good planners. Someone who loves to follow a process that they can look at processes, create processes, implement processes. And so they need to be process oriented. So that's the third one. They need to be people oriented.

Shannon Waller: Right.

Alec Broadfoot: So you don't want someone who's just a taskmaster, you know, a drill sergeant. You want someone that is very people oriented. They love to develop people, which parlays well into the next one, which is you want someone who's a coach and they enjoy holding people accountable and managing others, right? And so most individuals in this world do not enjoy that. So that's really important. And then the last one would be they need to be really good communicators. So, you know, most individuals that I talk to, most of my entrepreneurial friends, most of my clients don't love communicating. They believe like we'll say it once or maybe they don't provide enough context or detail. Well, a really good number two leader is really strong at communicating and they enjoy communicating.

Shannon Waller: It's really funny that you say that because I, for my Team Success Handbook, created an entrepreneurial attitude exercise. And number 11 is communicating. Like how good are you at communicating? And I don't have entrepreneurs fill it out very often, but sometimes when I presented it as a tool, entrepreneurs have filled it out. And that's what they score themselves the lowest on, is communicating. I'm like, this is an entrepreneurial attitude. You should be fives out of five on all of them. They're like, yeah, I'm a three on a good day. So I have found exactly the same thing, which is really funny. So overcoming obstacles, solving problems, protecting the visionary's time, communicating the strategic thinking, implementation, coaching, as you said. Say a little bit more about fit. I'm curious about fit and what that means. Is that a personality thing? Is that a Kolbe thing?



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Alec Broadfoot: Yes, fit is number one. So Harvard Business Review, they said, what determines someone's success long term? Is it their education? Is it their industry experience? Is it their managerial skills? And it came down to fit. So did they fit with the team, fit with the culture? Did they fit with the leader, the hiring manager? So having that, that's super important, having that same culture and the same values. Complimentary skills, right? So one of the things we look at is someone's assertiveness level. So if a visionary is highly assertive, like they're very decisive, they want things done their way, if you have a number two leader that is also very assertive, there's gonna be a lot of friction. So you have to look for, are they gonna be complimentary in their personality types?

Shannon Waller: Yeah, that's really interesting. I am so clearly not a number two leader. As you're talking, I'm like, okay, I'm good at this part. I'm terrible at these. That's pretty funny, actually. Yeah, but I know that I need one. I want one. And when I get a chance to work with someone, it's dreamy. So you've really specified some key things. Now, I just have a question for you out of curiosity, and we didn't talk about this ahead of time. Most visionaries, do they measure high on mental acuity?

Alec Broadfoot: Most of the time, yes.

Shannon Waller: Most of the time.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah. So, you know, think of them oftentimes are at 100 miles an hour and they need someone to keep up. And if you hire someone at 30 miles an hour, you're going to be really frustrated.

Shannon Waller: I'm really happy to know that. And I would describe it differently, but I'd love that you have a measurement on it. One of the biggest issues I found, and I actually mentioned this in our last collaboration book, which is called Superpowered, is that in talking with one of our clients, Eric, it was like, he was so clear that he was super smart, had a very fast strategic brain, and he'd been working with team members who were not. Now, I'm sure they weren't slouches, but at the same time, it's like, mentally, you need people who will keep pace with you. It's not that we're not nice people, but if our brain's going fast, we need people who will keep up, and I don't think people need to apologize for that. There are smart people out there, and we need to find them. So I think that's something that's underappreciated for a lot of people, and maybe this is just my own learning.

It was probably only about five, six years ago that I learned that people cognitively are not the same. I figured everyone was pretty good. Turned out they might be, but it wasn't enough. And this is because we profile for other things. We profile for personality. We profile for Kolbe and how people strive. And if those two things fit and the person's not working out, there's only one thing left, and that is their mental horsepower or acuity. And so then I'm like, oh, maybe not everyone is the same on that one, which is kind of probably not politically correct to talk



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about, but I don't care. So I love and appreciate that that is a key part of it to figure out and to pay attention to, and the fact that it's measurable is huge.

Alec Broadfoot: And it's not really an IQ measurement. So it's, you know, someone could have a lower mental acuity and a higher IQ, but it's their learning speed. So how quickly can they process information? And, you know, are they more of a hands-on learner or are they more of a conceptual learner?

Shannon Waller: So useful, and I love that distinction too, because you can have a high IQ, but still have lower mental acuity. So good. All right, so let's talk about how many of these humans are on the planet. Because one of the things that I've realized, I mean, obviously we've intimidated a little bit. I mean, I said they're not on every street corner, but you've measured how many of these people out there. And what I've heard is there's a lot more visionaries than there are number two leaders by your standard. So let's talk about how many there are. How do you find them? You're an expert in this. So let's talk about, you know, if you've decided that, yes, oh my gosh, I need this human. What does that entail?

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah. So, you know, we have found that maybe three or four percent of the population have what it takes. So even individuals, you know, the average candidate will go through five rounds of vetting. And we start seeing like, you know, these individuals, their whole career has been, you know, maybe they've been in management, they've been a director, a regional manager, director of operations, and then we're looking at their interview results and their leadership scores as well as their assessments are like they've been in the wrong career their whole life. You know, so even at the end of the process, maybe one in three, one in four have what it takes. They're few and far between, and a lot of entrepreneurs, we want to hire someone from within. We'd rather hire the devil we know than the devil we don't know, right? Or we want to kind of do the easy thing. And that is often just a short-term, that's usually just a band-aid, and long-term, it's not a good decision.

Shannon Waller: Yeah, it's really interesting, I do notice that, and you and I both talk to entrepreneurs about their teams all the time, and they do wanna hire, they wanna promote from within and the rest of it. But the interesting thing, if they actually have created a Unique Ability Team, they have a lot of specialists who are fabulous in their particular area, but they've not created that kind of the number two leader the way we're talking about it, and they certainly have not replicated themselves. So they get in a bind. It's not a fun place to be sometimes is to try and figure that out. So, yes. So how does someone go about finding, attracting? Hmm.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah.



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Shannon Waller: I mean, obviously, this is what you do for a living. So you have a lot of wisdom about what works and what doesn't. So tell us about that. You have a very cool hiring process that really does guarantee, well not guarantee success. I think you've got a ridiculously high success rate. I've never seen anything so high. So what are some of the steps in the process? Like what should someone know going into this?

Alec Broadfoot: So the first part of our process is we get with the visionary and we have a brainstorm session and we ask them some particular questions. We want to be really clear on who they want, you know, who's going to fit with them, what success looks like. And we create a really magnetic, compelling position profile description. And that is used to target individuals, to bring in individuals that want this particular position. And so that's really important. You know, if you don't have a target, you're gonna miss 100% of your shots, right? So you need that target. And then you want the job description to read like none of the other job descriptions, right? You want it to be really compelling and someone should read it and be like, man, I wasn't even looking, but my spouse told me about this. This is me. I wanna work for this company.

So that's kind of the litmus test. You know, you never wanna hire from a pool of one. So the larger the pool, the better. The chances are you're going to find someone really strong. And so typically in our process, we have anywhere between 100 to 300 candidates that we get to vet. And so if someone wants to do it themselves, you really need that kind of pool of candidates to find a good one. And then we do several rounds of interviewing. Some advice that I give individuals that want to do it themselves is remember that the interview process is a disqualification process. So as you're interviewing, you don't want to qualify them, you want to disqualify them.

Shannon Waller: You've got a great quote in here, which is the best time to fire someone is when you're in the hiring process. I'm misquoting that a little bit, but I cracked up when I read it. It was just like, oh yeah, the best time to fire a poor performer is during the interview process. So it really is a disqualification, which is tough, especially if you feel like you're hungry or desperate or you're just looking for a warm body or anybody, to actually hold back and be very, very discerning about who you hire. Because there's nothing worse than hiring someone, investing all that time in the interview process and the training period, the onboarding, three, six months, and then to have that person flame out. You've just lost minimum nine months. And then you have to start all over again. So it makes sense to just be patient, be strategic, and not hire the first warm body that you find. So, love that. Okay, what's next?

Alec Broadfoot: So, screening interviews, behavioral interviews, so those are really important. Have scripted interview questions done ahead of time. And so you're not spending your time trying to figure out what you're gonna ask. You actually have them written ahead of time and ask them situational questions, make sure you're getting examples. So one of the questions we



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ask is, you know, tell me about a time when a breakdown in communication created a difficult situation for you. And so what you're looking for is someone that says, you know, let me tell you what happened last Tuesday when I had my leadership meeting, and they share something. That is a specific example, right? So individuals that say, well, you know, communication from time to time, you know, that's happened. You know, I can think of a few things, but it comes down to just being intentional, right? That is not a specific example. So that's really important.

And then having an assessment tool is important. So any strong assessment tool is going to increase your odds dramatically. I think University of Michigan said the average interview predicts success about 14% of the time, where you use an assessment tool, you're up to 52% of the time. It really helps. And then you want to make sure they're going to fit with your team and fit with you. And so you want to have some really good cultural fit questions, interview questions. And of course, you know, once they're hired, you want to make sure you onboard them for success. And that process is not done once they come in the door.

Shannon Waller: Okay, so tell me more about the onboarding process. So you don't just go, okay, now you were dating, now you're married, bye. Like, it's not that, right? You actually help with that process, too.

Alec Broadfoot: Yes, that is part of our process. You know, a good search firm will make sure that the candidate is really assimilated. So it's important from day one, we recommend our clients, they really share what expectations you have for them. So it's your job as the visionary, as the hiring manager, saying this is what success looks like. This is how I'm going to measure your performance. And make sure they have everything they need to be successful. So that's really part of the process. Frequent communication. So every day spending an hour or two with this person and then, you know, every two weeks having a three to four hour touch base meeting, a same page meeting. That's important. And then it can probably eventually scale back to a weekly meeting.

Shannon Waller: I think in a previous conversation we were talking about, I don't remember if it was the visionary or the number two who was a bit frustrated with the process. And then you said, well, how often are you meeting? And the visionary had like taken off. I didn't meet with them at all. So this is a what not to do, by the way, but can you relate that with more specifics than I just did?

Alec Broadfoot: It was a friend of mine. He was here where I live and he bought a house in the Carolinas on a lake. The example is he brought in a salesperson and my friend was responsible for 100% of the company's revenue. So he decided, I'll bring in a salesperson, they'll do my job, and I'll go ahead and semi-retire in the Carolinas, or 100% retire. And so they weren't working out. And so he reached out to me as his friend. We didn't help fulfill this role. But he reached out to me and said, Alec, this person's not working out. What am I doing? And I said,



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well, how often are you meeting with them? And he was really proud. He's like, we meet for 30 minutes every Friday. And I said, you know, let's say his name's Bob. I said, Bob, this person's responsible 100% of your revenue, and you've had a total of two hour's worth of meetings, you know, what, 30 minutes every Friday for the last month? I said, before you've taken off to Carolina, you should've been mentoring them, let them shadow you, you know, spend a minimum of an hour or two a day. Well, that person ended up quitting, but he ended up finding someone else, and it was much better because he learned his lesson, and he spent a lot of time in onboarding them correctly.

Shannon Waller: That story cracks me up and thank you for correcting all my details. But it's interesting because I often talk about with Unique Ability Teamwork, I use the metaphor of Unique Ability relay. So think of a relay race and you have a baton. Mine's in my drawer over here. Right. And you pass the baton. But some people we call a delegation drive-by. They whip it at someone's head and go off in the other direction. And that person can't grab it very successfully and, you know, complete the race because there just has not been a good handoff. One of the reasons why I remember this conversation is because it does require that time spent. Shadowing is huge. More is caught than taught. And so someone being with you, watching how you do business, watching with whom you interact, watching how you prioritize your time as a visionary and what you're not doing is just a huge data set that that person can then go and work on and, you know, fill in all the gaps for you, but not if they don't get to be with you. And that's true for most roles. It's also true even for assistants. But I think we just don't appreciate how people watching us work is incredibly valuable for passing on that really critical information for how they can actually be successful.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, more is caught than taught, for sure.

Shannon Waller: Good. All right, so just for fun, what are some other mistakes that people make? How can they screw up this process, you know?

Alec Broadfoot: Oh, yeah. So one of the biggest mistakes is, we talked about hiring from a pool of one. That's always gonna be trouble. Focusing on the resume, their experience only, you know, that's one small component. Most successful number two leaders, they have the six non-negotiables that we talked about. They fit with the team. It's not necessarily that they have a great resume. So they have really strong leadership skills. They've been from a small business. They have really good amount of resourcefulness, but you want to make sure that all those other components that don't focus on the resume. So there's a lot of lies on resumes. It's getting worse with AI. And so, you know, that's really, there's tons of embellishments. 100% of resumes have some sort of embellishment and over half of resumes, I was quoting 48% and then my assistant did research and she found that it was like more like 65% of resumes, have lies in them.



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Shannon Waller: Whoa. Yes, that's a lot. Yeah, there's another reason for me why resumes don't cut it. And that is because it represents only one part of the mind, right? So it represents the cognitive. And as you said, when you're profiling people, you realize they've been in the wrong career for most of their life, their working life. So it's one dimension. We use the cognitive to override how we naturally strive, things we care about. People are in jobs because their parents told them that's what they should be doing, right? Like, it measures such a small dimension of people. I mean, the interview with asking people specifically, okay, when have you handled a situation like this, shows whether or not they even, A, knew they were having that kind of a situation, and B, did they handle it well. That, to me, is much more the proof in the pudding. But it's too slim an indicator.

The other thing, because as I'm kind of thinking out loud, so I coach leaders in Strategic Coach in The Team Leader Program, and very few of them had education for this. They didn't necessarily have training for it. They've elevated because they kept kind of increasing their capabilities and making a larger and larger contribution. They're what I call make-it-real people. So if the visionaries are the make-it-up, these are the make-it-real, and then they manage teams of people who make it recur. So that's another Coach model, that's part of the teamwork triad. But they didn't have a lot of formal anything to get there. So I think you would miss a ton of potential candidates for entrepreneurial leadership, especially the number two position, if that's all you paid attention to. And schools don't train for this, thank you very much. They really don't. Like you said, your MBA, you thought it was gonna be more helpful than it probably was to be a successful entrepreneur. It's not gonna give you all the dimensions that you need. Okay, so how else can people mess up this whole process?

Alec Broadfoot: Just really not looking at, does someone really want this job? Is this their ambition? Do they want a job or do they want this job, right? So that's important. Making sure that they have really strong character, character, integrity. So that's important. What their capacity is, their mental capacity. Really making sure that you haven't, what the target looks like, what an accurate profile looks like. You know, you can't hire a great individual if you're not clear on who you want.

Shannon Waller: One of the things that impresses me about TIP is that you can do benchmarks. Do you want to talk about that? Because I think that's just a stellar part of the profile.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah. One of the neat things about it is that there's benchmarks. And so, you know, each of the dimensions are in a one to nine scale. And we have developed benchmarks or think of them as success patterns of where someone should score for that position. So if you think of it, you know, I'm going to use a salesperson and a controller. There are benchmarks and you're completely different. So, you know, like one of the things we measure is someone's energy level. And we want the salesperson to have a high energy level because



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we don't want them sitting behind their desk being very comfortable. We want them to get out or, you know, make phone calls, whatever, where you want that controller to have a lower energy, because if they have a higher energy, they're more prone to making mistakes. And so we have benchmarks for all 16 dimensions for you know, hundreds of positions, but we have mastered one for the number two leader.

Shannon Waller: So good. And I like it because it's from my company, for example, but it also shows the general trends across multiple companies. So very cool. How do you feel about hiring relatives for this position?

Alec Broadfoot: I think it's totally fine if they have everything you're looking for and they fit and it's a team fit. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. But it could be more rare, right?

Shannon Waller: Yeah, how often is that the case?

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, yeah, not too often, not too often. No, no.

Shannon Waller: It's interesting because sometimes they're the warm body that's lying around. No, sometimes that is the perfect person. And the great thing about hiring family is that usually there's an incredible trust level there that that person really does have your back. So that is one of the big advantages. The disadvantage is trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. And so wanting that to work, especially if it's a son or daughter, if that's not their natural capability or passion, do they really want it? Then I think you're doing them a disservice, the company a disservice, and yourself a disservice. So be very cautious would be my recommendation. All right, good.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, we've had two or three clients who've brought in, you know, it was a multi-generational company. The family member was the visionary and they wanted their son or daughter to eventually take over. So we helped them hire a number two leader to be the mentor of their child.

Shannon Waller: Nice.

Alec Broadfoot: And so that works out well because it's not the parent that's doing the mentoring. So that's an interesting component of it.

Shannon Waller: That is very smart. I like that story. Very cool. Anything else that people should know about hiring a number two leader? And I'd like to end off with it was just an affirmation of how critical this role is to help people grow. If growth is your goal, operating without one at some point, I think will be something that holds people back. What's your take on that?



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Alec Broadfoot: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, I've seen it with hundreds of our clients. And then, you know, back in 2021, I'm like, you know, I've seen enough with my clients having so much success. And I realized I had some head trash that my company was too small at the time to hire a full-time number two, and I said, I'm going to try it. I'm going to do it. And my life has been so much better. So I have John in place. He's a phenomenal number two. He looks out for my business. I'm able to take a lot more time off. The amount of emails I have to answer are down. The amount of days off are a lot higher. Last year, I was able to take a total of 140 Free Days, which include weekends. But that was probably 120 days more than I used to take. And then our business has performed dramatically better. We've been able to have this tremendous growth and success.

And then another story I'd like to share is we had this client who we helped him find a number two leader, and he was referred to us by an EOS implementer. We helped him find a number two, and I called the client back just to see how things were going, and I couldn't get in touch with him. And a few months went by, and I'm like, man, what's wrong? He's not answering my phone calls. So I finally reached out to the EOS implementer that referred us, and I'm like, how's Mike doing? He's like, great. I said, how's his integrator? He's like, oh, phenomenal. He's doing phenomenal. I said, oh, that's great. I said, I haven't been able to get in touch with Mike. Anything wrong? He's like, Alec, him and his wife are literally traveling the world right now. That's why we can't get in touch with him. So if that's what you want to do, that's awesome. But a lot of my clients, they have that number two, because they can have a lot more impact.

Shannon Waller: Well, you had time to write a book.

Alec Broadfoot: That's right.

Shannon Waller: Right, which when you're stuck in the day to day, you don't have time to do those bigger vision, bigger capabilities. You know, we're the number one salespeople for our company and not just on an individual level, but on a bigger level. And I've seen you have more space and capacity to think about, oh, okay, what's next for Vision Spark? What can I do? Where's your collaboration? You know, joining what now 10x and Free Zone, there's just more room for you to grow and think bigger about what the future holds, which is really exciting. Yeah, very cool. Now, I just want you to brag on yourself a little bit, because you have, as I mentioned, a ridiculously high success rate. So can you talk about, because there's people doing it themselves, that's one option, hiring a standard recruiter. Oh, and then there's you. Okay. Anyway, there's something else I'll bring out towards the end, but what's the difference between doing it themselves, hiring a traditional recruiter, or hiring you?

Alec Broadfoot: What would you say? Yeah, so Gallup says that if we, you know, companies in general, when it comes to hiring leaders are only about 18% successful. So there's an 82% failure rate. And then when you look at recruiters and search firms, there's really two numbers



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that evaluate them. So one is their placement rate. How successful are they at finding you, that person? So, you know, the average recruiter or search firm, it's right around 50% in terms of their success rate. And then what is the retention rate? So after one year, how long do they stay? So for us in a number two position, we have a 99% placement rate. And then our success rate is over 95% in terms of them staying a year or longer. So, you know, it's all part of the process and making sure you do proper vetting and, you know, we're the Who to find these Hows, right? So, yeah.

Shannon Waller: And you probably have your own selection criteria for who's a right fit client for you, because people can think that they want a number two but like, as you said, the very first meeting is that brainstorming session to get very, very clear on what they want. And some people really struggle with that. So who's a right fit client for you and who's not?

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, so someone who wants to grow, someone who's just so tired of working a lot of hours and they want to have their, you know, their life's back, and someone who really values expertise, right? So if a client says, hey, Alec, I need you to help me hire this integrator, this second in command, But I want you to follow my process or use my tools or my assessments. That's usually not a good fit. So someone who really values expertise, you know, individuals like, you know what, I have not hired well, I stink at it. Can you help me? Those are really good clients and companies that want to, you know, take their company to the next level.

Shannon Waller: And I would say someone who's willing also to have the time and working with you to make sure that you're fully equipped with what they want so that you can execute on your expertise. That would be another success criteria, I imagine.

Alec Broadfoot: There are probably four to five hours of time a client wants to spend with us and that's frankly not a lot of time because you know the average mis-hire costs maybe 278 hours of time, like that's what Brad Smart says, and so think about it, you know, let's get it right and they'll spend a little bit of time with us in the beginning and with some interviewing and so yeah.

Shannon Waller: Very cool. Yes, you are definitely the great food for that. One last question. This is a bonus one because I want to see if your experience matches with mine and it may be different and then we'll get to how people can reach you. But one of the things that I find really interesting is, a lot of people as they're looking to grow, look to hire people from a corporate environment or sometimes even government. And I'm curious as to whether or not that has been a successful strategy for you, whether you don't use it, if you do use it, how does it work? I see some issues sometimes, so I'm very curious. Do you find that people need to have some entrepreneur something in their background, family, their own experience whatsoever, or does hiring from corporate work? Personally at Coach, we hired three people from corporate structures and none of them lasted longer than 18 months. So I'm dying to get your take.



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Alec Broadfoot: You're spot on because individuals that come from corporate or government or academia generally do not work out. So there's a lot of bureaucracy. There's a lot of thinking that it's not my money and they can spend other people's money pretty easy. So what we look for, we really want them to have a core value of resourcefulness, right? So I know that's important in Strategic Coach as well. So we will put on there, you know, small business experience required. So we'll have people that we interview and we look at their resumes and they're like 20 years in corporate America. And once you interview them, you're like, hey, actually, my parents had a small business. I helped in a small business growing up. I totally understand. And so those people, we would allow them, you know, to move further in the process or their spouse has a small business, but they really get what it takes to be an entrepreneur and a small business owner. And they understand about resourcefulness.

Shannon Waller: Thank you. And I know that's the number one success criteria for an A player, according to Dr. Brad Smart. So yes, from Topgrading, which is why it's actually on our list, Dan was filling out alert, curious, responsive. And I said, how about resourceful? So that's why that word is there, because I had just finished reading the book. Yeah, but resourcefulness is so key. And just a little fun coaching tip. Sometimes if I'm feeling stuck in my own thinking or progress, I'll say, Shannon, how could you be more resourceful about this? And darn it, if some things don't come to mind, it's kind of a wicked question to have in your back pocket. But that I think everyone needs to be asking themselves that as an entrepreneurial team member, leader, even a visionary, I think is absolutely vital.

Yes, and I'm thrilled that your experience matches mine, that people who come from corporate, they're not bad people, but they're used to much bigger systems, they're used to hierarchy, they're used to status, and they're used to having teams of little minions to do stuff for them. And I've yet to find an entrepreneurial company where you don't have to roll up your sleeves and do stuff yourself. And to get resourceful and reach out to different areas, if people just have that limited, blinders-on mindset, and experience does not work. So I'm happy your experience matches mine. All right. So if someone is excited about hiring a number two leader, willing to engage with a great Who with great expertise, how can they find you? How can they reach you, Alec?

Alec Broadfoot: So our website is visionsparksearch.com. So they can go there and get some more information. They can reach out to me. I'm Alec@visionspark.com. I'm also on LinkedIn. So they're welcome to connect with me on LinkedIn. If they're on Strategic Coach, I'm on the Coach Connect. So that's another venture. And if they're interested in the book, it's on Amazon. It's free on Audible. And so, yeah, it's pretty easy to find.

Shannon Waller: I have my hardcover. It's also, the Kindle book is really on sale, just saying, and I didn't clue in that it was free on Audible. So I will get my next other versions of it as we speak. Alec, I mean, I enjoy your company talking about anything, but to me, it is incredibly



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insightful to do a much deeper dive into the number two leader, because that is not something I've only focused on before. This is the only conversation really about this very, very critical role. And I appreciate the fact that you've looked for lots of different types of leaders, but you have really developed your own acumen, your own experience. You've given a lot of thought to what, in fact, are the success criteria for this really strategic role. Why would a visionary actually want this? You made the investment yourself. And actually, before I, I keep thinking of new cool things to ask you, but what size of a company, because you said you thought you were too small. But how many people were you at when you hired John? Or when would you recommend people start looking for it? Because that could be something that holds people back from taking it.

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah. I mean, a lot of times financial is what holds someone back, right? So that financial aspect, I can't afford it. But if you think you're going to get value, most number two leaders, actually 100% of the ones we place will pay back what you pay them three to five-fold. So you're going to get that return. The sweet spot is generally in that \$5 million in revenue to \$100 million in revenue. But we have helped clients as little as \$2 million, \$1.5 million in revenue find their number two leader. So it may not be a COO, it may be a business manager or someone like that. But yeah, big or small, we've worked with our clients.

Shannon Waller: Great. Is there a number of team members or employees that also might be another indicator as well?

Alec Broadfoot: Yeah, so you probably need to be in that, you know, 20 employee and up size generally, you know, for a sweet spot, we've worked with ones that are smaller, but usually there's, you know, a couple people on the leadership team, or they're just ready, you know, they're thinking about starting with EOS or Pinnacle, and they need someone in place to make sure the ships run on time and beat the drum. And so we usually recommend hiring that number two first. So maybe they're in that, you know, 10 to 15 employee size.

Shannon Waller: Got you. That totally fits with my experience, too. You know, 20 is great, but 10 to 15, that's when things start getting a little wiggly on the outside and the person isn't able to focus as much on doing the key things that the visionary needs to do to move the business ahead. And even if it's not kind of like number two COO, it is that business manager. It is that director of operations who can very quickly escalate to that higher level of capability. But the sooner a visionary can get freed up to do what they need to do, usually the better. Awesome. Alec, as always, a total delight. Thank you, thank you, thank you for being you and for doing the work that you do and for putting it all into this awesome book, *Hiring Your Right #2 Leader*. So I highly recommend everyone go grab it. There's way more than we talked about today. I thought we'd cover most of it and there's still some things we didn't get to, like how much it's going to cost you to not hire the person and how quickly you can see your return, that's in the book. So just really appreciate it. So again, find you on LinkedIn, find you on Coach Connect if



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you're a Coach client, or just at Vision Spark, is that right? Search is how they can find you, perfect. All right, Alec, thank you so much. I really appreciate, as I said, you sharing all this today, and I wish you every success in your business.

Alec Broadfoot: Thank you, Shannon, it was great to be here.

Shannon Waller: Thank you.