



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## How To Bring Your Entrepreneur's Ideas To Life

**Shannon Waller:** Do you want to be a great sounding board for your entrepreneur? Are you interested in learning about ideas pretty much when they're formed? Stay tuned to learn how to be a phenomenal listener and help to actually get these plans and ideas out of your entrepreneur and into action. Stay tuned.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. This year, I am all about entrepreneurial team leaders, how fabulous they are, how critical they are. And today is something really about how to increase a particular skill of being a very important sounding board. So this episode is primarily oriented towards team leaders. If you are a team member and want to be a team leader or just want to be incredibly valuable, I would say stay tuned. And if you're an entrepreneur who wants to be listened to, please forward this podcast to your key people.

So one of the insights that I had recently was there are very specific ways, and it's actually really needed, for how you can pull ideas and plans out of your entrepreneur. Your entrepreneur has really interesting thoughts, really interesting ideas. Often for like Working Genius, they're on the invention side of things. They're like big picture people, but they need help with getting it down to something they can get their arms around or more importantly, what other people can get their arms around and understand the scope and the tasks and the boundaries and what to do and what not to do and just thinking through a particular idea.

And entrepreneurs get really stuck with their ideas. This is something no one talks about, but I know it is extraordinarily true. And ideas stay nascent. They stay inside until someone can have a conversation with them to pull it out and to prompt them. And it is best done in conversation. Sometimes we expect ideas to come out of a person fully formed. It doesn't usually happen that way. It's usually a little messier and frankly gets co-created in a powerful conversation. I know that's how I've created enormous value for Babs Smith. I'm her strategic partner. It's what I do with Dan Sullivan all the time in all of our recordings, all of our Inside Strategic Coach podcasts, all of our books. My job is to help pull those ideas out of him.

So this is where this is coming from. This is from my own many, many, many years, decades of experience. And I also was just talking with a client this week and I offered to do a particular tool with him. It's called a Mindset Scorecard, because he needs one for the next thing that he's doing. It will be incredibly transformational, be very fascinating and useful to get those ideas out into the world. But until someone sits down with him and helps him do it, it's not going to happen. So I volunteered because I'm really interested in the result.

So this is a very useful function, which you may not have thought about for yourself. You may not have put yourself in this position. I actually call it being a sounding board and being a great listener. So we're going to go through what are some of the characteristics? What are some of the skills? What are some of the mindsets? And frankly, you know, one of the things is to be present. So how do you need to be in order to show up to be a great listener? So that's what I



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wanna talk about. And again, these skills are useful in many, many situations, but particularly in an entrepreneurial company. So these skills and capabilities that I'm talking about are useful in a ton of different situations.

However, they are particularly relevant in an entrepreneurial company. Again, where you've got someone who makes it up, but they need help with making it real and making it recur. So you can be this Who. You're very important if you're able to do this. I have to tell you, you will create enormous value if you master some of these skills. By the way, it's critical that you do this not to elevate yourself, but actually because you're really interested in the ideas. You're curious. You want to know more. You see the value of getting them out. Do not make this about you. You will get all the status and all the praise that you need as a result of making a contribution. Do not have this be your way of climbing a ladder. It will backfire, I promise. This is about you making a genuine contribution, so stay tuned. I'm excited about this.

All right, so how can you do this? First of all, you volunteer. When someone says, hey, I've got this idea, or you hear your entrepreneur say something interesting, you're like, oh, I would love to hear more about that. Can you tell me more? And all of a sudden, when you become that kind of generous listener, which is a great term we learned from Collaborative Way, all of a sudden they're like, oh, someone is A, paying attention, B, cares, and C, wants to know more. That's as hard as it is. Okay, that's as hard as it gets. All you have to do is go, oh, that's really interesting.

So one of the things here is to be enthusiastic, be curious, want to know more, and it's fun. I've actually created a little Impact Filter on how to be a great interviewer, so some of the things I'm gonna talk about come from that. There are more. But part of being a great interviewer is being a great listener. You also have to be, as I said, present. If your mind is elsewhere, if you're distracted, they're going to pick that up and they're going to shorten what it is that they have to say. The sentences will be shorter. They'll talk less. They'll talk for a shorter period of time. You will not get the full-fledged idea out of them.

So it's really key that you actually clear your mind, go for a walk, take 30 seconds. Oh, you know, I really want to learn more about that idea. I have a deadline to meet in 30 minutes, but could we talk later this afternoon? And they're like, yes, we definitely could. And then make a note of what it is that you found so interesting. I do this on a Trello and Asana board. Dan says something interesting, I capture it. Literally, it takes three seconds. And occasionally I'll be in a restaurant and I capture the thoughts on my phone. I'm like, I'm not on my phone. I just want to interview this for our podcast, Dan. He goes, okay. Totally fine. You know, so you can do it anytime, anywhere. Have a super simple process for capturing these ideas, but really useful.



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And then sit down and have a conversation. And I have to say, tell me more. It's three words and you lean in physically. I don't care if you're on Zoom or if you're even on the phone, people can pick up the energy. If you're in person, obviously, literally lean in. But it makes a difference when you show interest and curiosity. And exactly as I'm talking to you right now, I want to hear about your ideas. So what is it that is so intriguing to you? And then reflect back. You're like, oh, wow, when you say that, here's what I think about. How does that fit in? And they'll be like, oh, I don't know. Or, oh, how about this? And the idea flushes out. It becomes bigger and more expansive.

And this is great because what happens is your entrepreneur, any other person, has a particular set of talents and skills and capability and experience and viewpoint on the world, all of the things. And when you add yours to that in a thoughtful, considerate way, you're not arguing here, you're pulling out, you're very intentionally pulling out, actually, then they get to, again, think through their idea with more depth from other perspectives. We all only have our own. And when someone else adds to that, you're like, oh, I hadn't thought about that, or this is what occurs to me when you ask me that question. And it becomes richer, and it's actually really fun.

This is a completely and totally creative act. You are birthing something from zero to one when you are doing this. You're midwifing, if that's actually a term. So if you enjoy it all, this process is kind of magical. It's very, very fun. You're being very supportive. You're contributing your own ideas as well. You're a wonderful sounding board. You're a mirror. You reflect back in a really positive way. And that does great things for the brain, by the way. Mirror neurons, they're called. And people get calmer, but they also get more into their idea. And it gets better as a result of your conversation. So you can just see how incredible this could be.

Now, if you are aware of Strategic Coach tools, which frankly, if you get any of our quarterly books, you're going to know a few, just saying, Strategy Circle, Impact Filter being a couple of them. 4x4 is another, goodness, there's a bunch, Certainty/Uncertainty. If you know Strategic Coach tools, it gives you a huge advantage. Our tools are actually a conversation that you can have with yourself and others. For example, Strategy Circle. So say your entrepreneur comes to you with a result—I want this. Or they come to you with a strategy—let's do this. And you're like, oh, okay, that's really interesting. What problem are we solving with this particular strategy?

I cannot tell you how many times I have asked this question of the aforementioned humans, especially Babs, because I'm like, okay, I know that strategy is coming from somewhere, but I don't exactly know where, so tell me what problem we're trying to solve. And then I get to bring in my strategic thinking strengths, which frankly is number two from a CliftonStrengths standpoint, Maximizer number one, Strategic number two, and I can add to that. Or if I was a logistical person, I could add the logistical thoughts that I have about it. Or if I'm a relationship



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person, I could bring what I know about relationships to that conversation. And that's incredibly useful. They're talking to you because A, you've expressed interest, and B, you're someone who can make things happen.

So you want to flesh out this idea. Expecting someone to come to it in a way that is perfectly digestible for you, probably not going to happen very often. Part of our job is to be a great translator, to be able to help interpret and not out of thin air and not just out of your own perspective, but out of conversation. I cannot stress this enough how important it is to have this conversation. Let me go back to Strategy Circle.

So part of the Strategy Circle is figuring out the goal. What is it you want to have happen in the future? The result, what does it look like when it's done and done really, really well? This is the after, okay? What are all the obstacles in the way? And then finally, what are the strategies? Now, does someone always give you that information in that order? No, they do not. But once you have that framework in your mind, you can be like, okay, so you just got a strategy. Great. What's the obstacle you're addressing? I can't tell you how powerful that is. And then you get to write it down, by the way. They're not going to, just saying.

Another one of our brilliant tools is the Impact Filter. So useful. Now, Dan is kind of an introverted guy. I know. Surprising, right? Because he's very prolific. But still, he does a lot of internal thinking. In a year, I can't remember how many hundreds he does, he can do up to three a day for his own thinking. Sometimes it's a Fast Filter, the short version, sometimes it's a long version, but he uses it to filter his own thoughts. He's kind of unusual. Most people I know need to talk it out. In fact, a really good friend of mine, Nicole, does this with clients, with entrepreneurs, most of whom are in Strategic Coach, and she helps them fill out Impact Filters. How cool is that? And then sends it back to them.

That's how useful a service this is. You can do it internally as well. So really powerful to do this. So Impact Filter is purpose, importance, and ideal outcome of this idea. Okay, so this is kind of the intellectual sale is what we call that. And then the next part is the emotional sale. Best result if you do take action, which is like, oh my gosh, it's gonna be incredible. We're gonna make such a difference, have an impact, and people are gonna feel great. What's the worst result if you don't take action? So maintain the status quo. And I always like to add, if it goes really poorly, it's a little bit of scaring yourself. So best result gets you excited. Worst results should scare you a little bit.

But thinking that through is really powerful. And then you get to the success criteria. And those are so valid. That's how do you ensure the best results and the ideal outcome? And how do you prevent the worst? And that success criteria is now the checklist for the team. You can take it and do a Strategy Circle based on that. Once you have that, you can take this plan and run or pass it to the right person or share it with company or with a client or with a vendor, whomever, developer, all of those things. But you helping flesh out the idea to get it to this



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point is huge. So, again, if you have, well, you can get the books, be in the Program, whatever it is, you have a massive advantage if you know some of the tools.

Certainty/Uncertainty, what do we know about this? What don't we know about this idea? Again, great precursor to getting an idea into implementation. So, again, there's a whole mindset behind what I'm talking about. You have to be curious, you have to be open, you have to not be about you or your ego or your status, you know, all of those things. It has to be really caring about the person with whom you're communicating and wanting to get these really interesting ideas out. At some point, they may go, oh, you know what? Through this conversation, I realized this is a really bad idea. This is not going to work for this and this reason. And you're like, okay, good to know. We don't have to waste any more mental energy on this. Move on to the next one.

There will be lots more of these ideas. I know one thing about most entrepreneurs, there's a lot more where this came from. but they get, as I said, stuck. They get too many in their body and in their brain, and they get frustrated, and they get grumpy, and they can be hard to work with because they have no one with whom to share these ideas. And if they do go and communicate it to the team, who's already very busy doing their checklist, thank you very much, the other people just look at it as an interruption. So if you can be that person to help take that, you know, genesis of an idea, that make it up part, and then just help flesh it out a tiny, tiny bit, and to get it into a form where it's actually translatable, you're actually helping to make it real.

And if you're generous enough to actually type it out, which I often do, I cannot tell you how many tools I have filled out with both Dan and Babs, mostly Babs, but I also do it with Dan sometimes, and clients, oh my gosh. I don't do this anymore, but there are clients with whom I have filled out the tools, and it is transformational, and they love me forever. Yes, that is completely true. They still love me and it could be years ago that I did it with them. That's how impactful this is. And you know this, you know when you've got an idea and you don't know what to do with it and then someone is really interested and helps you think it through and helps you talk it through and maybe even writes it down, it feels like such a gift. So that is really what you're doing.

Now, last set of strategies I want to give you if you want to be a great listener, if you want to help pull those ideas and those plans out of your person, whomever that is. By the way, this could be an entrepreneur with a team member or team leader as well. So, note to self. The last thing I would highly recommend is to use some of the amazing Chris Voss terms. So these come from his book, Never Split the Difference. There's some great YouTube videos. He's got some phenomenal courses. His team is awesome. We've done a fair bit of training with the Black Swan Group. That's his company. Just amazing to watch them in action.



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But some of the phrases that I keep handy in my back pocket, there are three, plus repeating the last three words that someone said. So when you reflect back and you say, it seems like, it sounds like fill in the blank. It feels like fill in the blank. You are checking for understanding. And they will either say, no, it's this instead. Or if you really got it right, they'll say exactly. That means they feel 100% completely understood and heard. Again, huge gift that you're giving someone. And then the other thing that you can do is simply repeat the last three words. So they're on kind of an interesting thought, and you don't want to distract them. You don't want to take them off target. You just say, oh, da-da-da-da-da. And they're like, mm-hmm. And then they keep going.

Now, I feel like I've just given away my secret. You know, one of the things that Dan says to me often, he goes, Shannon, you ask such great questions. And I kind of have taken an inventory. I don't think I ask him very many questions. I'll say, tell me more. Sometimes I'll say, it seems like, it sounds like. I use the last three words. I mean, now that you know this, you can pay attention to my interviews with Dan on Inside Strategic Coach, but it feels like a very intriguing conversation for him because I am attentively listening. I am enthusiastic. I've given you some of the questions to ask, you know, in terms of things from the Strategy Circle or The Impact Filter or Certainty/Uncertainty. I am fully present. I always want to know more details and be more specific. It's just a powerful way to have a conversation, especially when you want to get an idea out of somebody.

So I'm excited because I'm excited for entrepreneurs to have someone else who will be a sounding board for them and care about their ideas and help get them out. It just helps everyone feel better, even if it ends up being a no to the idea. And I think it allows you as the listener, as the questioner, to play an incredibly vital and useful role in your company. Being a sounding board for an intelligent, ambitious, creative, successful entrepreneur is a blast. You'll be the person they want to come to, to talk through their new ideas with. That sounds like fun to me. You know, especially if you have any interest in ideas, then that's really useful. It's a great role to play, and I think it's a great way to create enormous value, and it puts you at the heart and center of what is really going on with your entrepreneur, and probably, frankly, with your company.

So I wanted to share this with you because I want to make a difference for everybody. I want to make a difference for your entrepreneur. I want to make a difference for you. And I certainly also want to help you make a difference for your clientele, which is hopefully where some of these ideas end up. I just think it does everyone good when more of this happens. So I hope this is useful information for you. I'm excited to hear about some of your ideas.

And here's the other thing. You're probably already doing some of this. If you're listening to this podcast, you have some of these skills already, you may just not have appreciated them. You probably are a sounding board for some key people in your life. So kudos, love that you're



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also doing that. And hopefully this will help bring into a level of awareness some of the things that you're already doing really, really well, and maybe give you a few new tools to take it to the next level. Thank you so much for listening. I hope you find it incredibly useful. If you have any questions, please let me know at [questions@strategiccoach.com](mailto:questions@strategiccoach.com). And as always, here's to your team success.