



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Who's Leading Your Leaders? How To Create A Culture Of Feedback And Growth

Shannon Waller: Are you aware that your leaders also need to be led? Make sure that you are providing direction and care and opening the lines of communication so that your leadership can stay at the highest possible level and not devolve into entropy. Stay tuned.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. What I'm going to talk about today is how leaders need also to be led. And this is kind of an interesting topic, and it's an interesting one for entrepreneurs, because as entrepreneurs, we don't have a leader. We don't have someone who's looking out for us, who's helping us develop our areas of Unique Ability, you know, or letting us know when things aren't working. Who leads us is actually our marketplace, our clientele. They tell us when what we're doing works. They tell us when what we're doing does not work and when we need to do a course correction. So our feedback is the marketplace, as I said. You know, we look for opportunities for feedback. We talk to people, I hope, and we ask people how we're doing. So that's how we shift and adapt our behavior.

But I want you to think about for a moment the fact that the people inside your organization who may or may not have as much exposure to your clientele, they don't have that same kind of feedback. And as an entrepreneur, as an owner, if it's not your Unique Ability, it's not something you're passionate about, you may not realize the extent to which your leaders need direction. They need you to provide direction as well. And I really wanna stress this point because I have had the absolute honor and pleasure of working with a number of team leaders, some of them for a very, very long time, who continually grow, who continually expand themselves. I'm so excited about Dan's book that's coming out, the one that we've just finished working on called *Growing Great Leadership*, because it's all about how each person in this entrepreneurial network of our company that we have is always engaging in The 4 C's.

In other words, which is really our growth formula, making a bigger commitment, being willing to experience courage, gaining the capabilities that come from being willing to experience that courage and throwing themselves in the deep end, and then finally gaining the confidence that those new capabilities generate. And then what do we all do? We do it all over again, you know, make that commitment and scare ourselves, etc. So that's what a great entrepreneurial leader does. But one of the things that can happen is people get comfortable. And especially if there isn't a lot of growth happening, or if the owner is focused on other things, is that the team leaders can actually get to a level where they get really comfortable with where they're at. Growth does not look quite as appealing as it may have when they we're younger with the company, or frankly, just younger, and people get kind of settled. And I think that's interesting and also terrifying.

And I actually think it's really the role of all of us in a strong leadership position to make sure that the people who are leading the rest of the team are also growing, are also stretching, that we are constantly reinforcing their Unique Ability. We're also helping people increase their self-awareness with what is working and also what is not working. Because if people don't have



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Who's Leading Your Leaders? How To Create A Culture Of Feedback And Growth

any guardrails, we kind of go off the rails, so to speak. And it's key to have that feedback. So, the question I want you to ask yourself is, who is giving my leaders feedback? Is it me? Who's their marketplace? Is it their team? Do you have good structures for feedback and communication or not? If they're exposed to the marketplace, they probably are getting feedback.

It's really interesting looking at what I do. My feedback all comes from my clients. You know, if they say I'm doing a great job, as far as I'm concerned, I am. If they say I'm not doing a great job, that's also who I listen to. So I get my feedback from my clients. But most leaders in companies don't have that exposure. They don't have that relationship. And so where is it coming from? People do not operate well in a vacuum. And I realize that, you know, especially if you've got capable and trusted people, you may have dropped some of that level of communication. So I'm going to really stress and encourage you to pick up that baton again and to have regular conversations that will help people see where they're going, what's working, what's not, and making sure that they get feedback from everybody, not just from you, their superior, but also from their team. How is that working?

Now, I'm not a huge fan of corporations. Well, put it this way, I love corporations because they provide me with a ton of things that I appreciate. I'm not great at working in them, let's be really clear. But one of the things that corporations do well is provide growth paths for people and feedback, at least some of them do. So you get 360s and things like that. And there is opportunity for coaching and for growth in that way. And I would say that is an area that is missing, I hate to say lacking, in most entrepreneurial companies. And before I get into some of the solutions for that, because I have given this some thought, I want you to think about what are some of the pros and cons if you have this.

Well, one of the consequences of this is basically entropy takes over. And I looked up the definition of entropy. It's the gradual decline into disorder—for example, a marketplace where entropy reigns supreme. So it's a lack of order or predictability, gradual decline into disorder. I don't think we want that for our companies. And it takes some impetus, it takes some effort. And then it was really great because Mike Koenigs shared with the Free Zone group. And if you haven't seen this, it's totally worth looking up and we'll put the link in the show notes. It's Jeff Bezos' final shareholder letter as Amazon's CEO. And he has a profound insight into the nature of distinctiveness through an unexpected lens thermodynamics. So I'm just reading this here.

Drawn from Richard Dawkins' *The Blind Watchmaker*, he illustrates how maintaining uniqueness, whether in business, society, or personal life, requires constant energy and deliberate effort against the universe's natural pull towards uniformity. That really struck me and I'm like, ooh, if we want to have a Unique Ability team, if we want Unique Ability Teamwork, if we want unique leadership, we need to put in effort and energy to making that happen. If we don't, again, people go back to what they know and what's comfortable and



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Who's Leading Your Leaders? How To Create A Culture Of Feedback And Growth

they stop welcoming new feedback. I've been hearing this in a couple different companies. They resist change. Last time I checked, our entrepreneurial companies were all about change. That's kind of our lifeblood to some extent. Or systems, like why should we change that? Oh my gosh.

I've been checking out Grace Hopper. She's just brilliant. She's actually this person who has some amazing quotes. So she's a pioneering computer scientist with the U.S. Navy as a rear admiral, very decorated. And she just has some really great insight into this. She has some great leadership quotes. So one of the ones I found is, the most dangerous phrase in the language is, we've always done it this way. Yes, that would be true. So if you hear that statement happening, which I'm sure I've actually said once or twice myself to be perfectly honest, that is a warning signal that we are not changing, we are not growing. So that's key. She's also the one, this is where I first found her, she's also the one that says, if it's a good idea, go ahead and do it. It's much easier to apologize than it is to get permission. So asking for forgiveness is easier than asking for permission. Comes from her, Grace Hopper. Tattoo that on your brain.

So I think this is important. And I've been trying to figure out what's the difference between corporate organization versus corporate leadership and entrepreneurial leadership. And we'll talk about that more in a future podcast. And what is it about entrepreneurial leadership that is so key? Again, how is it different and distinct? How can we encourage this with people? Because frankly, people are raised to be competitive, not to be collaborative. And that's kind of what is actually required in an entrepreneurial world, especially if you want Unique Ability Teamwork. How can we put people more at ease so that they welcome new ideas and input, regardless of the job descriptions? I mean, yes, people need direction about how they can help produce results, but let's lead people versus managing people. Let's let technology manage the inputs and how things get done so that we can actually provide leadership and direction to humans.

You know, that's where it really gets interesting and where we can be particularly useful. The whole idea here is to recognize, it's like, ask yourself, oh, are my leaders growing? Are they willing to experience courage? Are they making bigger commitments? Are they clear on what their Unique Ability is? Are we reinforcing that? Do we have clear communication structures up from the bottom to the top, if you have any kind of a hierarchy, or from the outside in? That's the other way to look at it, if you have a flatter organization. And how are people responding to that?

Now, here's a little bit of the challenge. You may have no idea. You may be the very last person to know because people know how to talk to you, they know how to present their best face, they look great to you, but you really need to pay attention to what is underneath. Or if you do hear a little bit of a whisper of something not working, you can be sure that by the time you



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Who's Leading Your Leaders? How To Create A Culture Of Feedback And Growth

hear it, it's so muted that it is a loud roar underneath. So people are very aware of power structures, and they don't want to rock the boat, but they can be miserably unhappy, and you will be the last to know. And I wrote about this in *Multiplication by Subtraction*. So just pay attention. Talk to your people who have the ear of everybody, not just a few people. I don't want to encourage distrust or mistrust, but just be aware that people want to present their best selves to you.

And so you need to create psychological safety with your leaders so they feel free to talk to you and be honest with you. And you need to help them do that with the people with whom they work as well. It is not easy. You are going against gravity when you are doing this. But I really, really think that it's critical for you to be aware, to pay attention, because when the leaders are being led, you are aligned. Everyone is rowing in the same direction. You know, EOS really helps with this, with all of the different structures and the meeting pulses and the scorecards, all of the different tools that EOS has for this.

I've had the fortune of listening to some testimonials that we've been gathering because I'm all about entrepreneurial leadership this year. It's my mission. So we collected some incredible testimonials from the people in The Team Leader Program. And I get to see how people have grown from, you know, people who've been in the workshop for three months to people who've been in the Program for 10 to 15 years. And they keep growing themselves every quarter. They have a community of people with whom they can connect. There are other ones other than the Strategic Coach Team Leader Program, you know, so how are people getting outside themselves, having a perspective. Where are they thinking about their thinking? Are they measuring themselves against other leaders? How are they growing? This is key. Are they open to feedback? And it's not easy.

You know, I've been doing what I'm doing for a very long time. And sometimes it's not fun being questioned. But it's critical. You know, I need feedback. I need to know if what I'm doing is landing. How am I working with people? Sometimes I don't like the feedback, but it doesn't mean that I don't need to hear it. And I think all of us have that perspective, at least from our marketplace. But we have to remember, if someone's not exposed to your clientele, they need another form of feedback. And again, this is something I think it's a huge growth opportunity for entrepreneurial organizations to step into, because it's not something that is part and parcel of our current structures. And we know that as we're making stuff up and backfilling our processes, these are the processes that are last to get put into place. They're the latest to get put into place. We don't tend to do a lot of this.

And we don't want to be hamstrung by processes that feel constrictive. I totally get that. Processes for me are a hard one and take a long time to apply. Again, I am just so clear that if you don't have that, entropy reigns. And if you're feeling a lack of progress, a lack of growth, then this might be an issue, or this might be something to pay attention to, to make sure that



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Who's Leading Your Leaders? How To Create A Culture Of Feedback And Growth

you open the lines of communication, dive right in. You, as the key leader, have a huge impact on this. You make a difference, and you opening up this conversation will wake everybody up, and I know it will have a very beneficial effect.

So, I'm excited about increasing the leadership for leaders, because I think that's incredibly valuable. Find some way, shape, or form to make it happen. It doesn't have to be just you. Again, there are other coaching programs and tools to help you do that. But with that ability for people to collaborate and get exposure to other people like them, it's incredibly useful. And they learn, and they keep growing, and they keep your company growing too. So that is my message for today. Thank you so much for listening. I'd love to hear any thoughts or feedback that you have. Please let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. And as always, here's to your team success.