



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

**Shannon Waller:** Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. Today, I'm very excited because I have a very special guest and friend on the podcast, Ben Wolf, to share, Ben, your expertise on Integrators, which has been the subject of this podcast before. But entrepreneurial companies need someone to be that, as it's sometimes called COO, second in command, Integrator, if you're familiar with EOS language. And this is your area of expertise, which I'm very excited. And I'm also excited because you actually have a survey for people to figure out what they need. Because I know when an entrepreneur is looking at passing over the baton, which they do very gingerly and very carefully with a great amount of trepidation, they don't have a lot of clarity about exactly what they need that's gonna help their organization grow, and also how in God's name can they trust somebody. So you have spent time, effort, energy, all the things developing this, creating a whole cadre of fractional COOs, and I cannot wait to glean all the knowledge. So thank you so much for being here.

**Ben Wolf:** Well, thank you for having me. It's an honor. I appreciate it.

**Shannon Waller:** Yay. All right. So before we jump in, you're also an entrepreneur with a great entrepreneurial story. So, and I know you from Strategic Coach, from working with you. We've had many conversations about team stuff. So I love it that we're buddies in this. How do we support entrepreneurial companies through great teamwork? So that's how we know each other, but you'll do a much better introduction than I will. How did your entrepreneurial journey start? Like where'd you start and how did you get where you are now?

**Ben Wolf:** It was definitely a long and winding road, as the Beatles song says. And hopefully it's a stairway to heaven as well. But I started relatively recently on the road as an attorney, as a corporate bankruptcy attorney at a big firm in New York City. After that, I found myself through an interesting and unexpected series of events at an entrepreneurial company, a start-up with zero revenue, and me as the first full-time employee. And even though it was not my background, I came from a corporate law background and had the opportunity there, though, again, kind of unexpected, to build most of the operations of that company and learned a lot by doing so. We went from, like I said, zero revenue and me as the first full-time employee to, by the time I left, we were over \$100 million gross annual revenue over that.

**Shannon Waller:** What kind of company was it?

**Ben Wolf:** It's a healthcare company called Freedom Care, and we did a form of consumer-directed or personal-directed home care in the state of New York. And now, even after I helped with national expansion, a little bit after I left also, but I think they're now in about 14 states and about 700 team members all over. But anyway, so it's very, very successful, big company, a flaming Visionary of a genius who is the founder. So, yeah, obviously it's credited to him. I mean, that kind of explosive growth. But I was able to set up, you know, operations and systems and teams and processes and lobbying and technology.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

And I just got the opportunity to build a lot of stuff over there and learned a lot about building businesses at different stages, you know, from five people and what that kind of business looks like, what a 50-people business looks like, what a 100-person business looks like and everything in between. And just learned a lot through that process. Spent some time afterwards as a CEO at another healthcare company before hanging up my shingle as a fractional CEO or Integrator as a solo practitioner. And then about a year after that, got to be fully booked, what I considered as a solo practitioner to be fully booked at the time. And about another year after that, I started adding other people to the team, turning it into a firm rather than a solo practitionership and a solopreneurship.

And now we are at this point, 11 COOs and Integrators on the team. And we're gonna talk about the three different types of COOs or number two leaders that we've identified, but we've got all three types represented on the team, depending on what our clients need. And joined Strategic Coach about three years ago, recently joined the 10x Program. So I'm gonna be in your group, Shannon, look forward to seeing you in July. Can't make the April one, but look forward to seeing you in July. And that's the short version.

**Shannon Waller:** I love it, thank you. Well, first of all, kudos for helping grow a company from 0 to 100 million. That is no small feat, and I'm sure required an enormous amount of work.

**Ben Wolf:** It was. There's the heavy lifting. We're like killing ourselves 100%. We'll talk about the Visionary. I mean, our first real marketing campaign, aside from a little Google pay-per-click, after that was our first real marketing campaign was a New York City subway system campaign.

**Shannon Waller:** Wow.

**Ben Wolf:** And setting up operations and technology to be able to support that when we like really launched.

**Shannon Waller:** Interesting.

**Ben Wolf:** So that was quite interesting.

**Shannon Waller:** What I finally figured out a little bit ago, 'cause I joined Strategic Coach in 1991 and I was number six. And what you would now call a start-up. That term did not exist back in 1991 that I was aware of. And it wasn't a tech start-up, let's be clear. But it's interesting when you see a company grow in terms of revenue and team members and systems. So one of the things I'm very aware of, mostly because of conversations with my clients, both 10x entrepreneurs and 10x team leaders, is that ability to scale. And that's kind of the, the point that I'm seeing. And I think actually having a COO, fractional or otherwise, is a critical step in helping a company grow and scale. Because at a certain point, you will hit a plateau and I'm not sure you can actually progress. Like there's only so much one human or



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

even a small group of talented people can do unless they have that bigger perspective, which I think this is a pivot point, a catalyst for growth.

But there's lots of people who have scar tissue. Just talked to one the other day. He's like they tried to hire someone internally. It didn't work. And that person either goes back down or leaves, does not end with a good taste in your mouth for anyone. And how to do it well is hard. And I think that hesitation is what stops people. So I love that you've done it more than once and you're doing it for your own company and you're helping other companies. So I feel like your comprehension of what it is and what's required is really, really deep, but it's not just a one-on-one. You've actually put it into a format and a tool. We love our thinking tools to help other people, you know, have access to that expertise and figure out what they need. So, excellent. I love it. And before I forget, your company name is Wolf's Edge Integrators. So you want people to have that edge? So do I.

**Ben Wolf:** Yes, exactly. All right. Wolf's with an S. Wolf's Edge Integrators.

**Shannon Waller:** Yes. Wolf's apostrophe. So let's dive a little bit deeper into that COO role, why it's so important. We'll talk about fractional full time. We'll talk about the different types in just a moment. But let's talk about that shift that an entrepreneur Visionary needs to make if they're gonna hire a COO or elevate someone into that role. Talk about that process, that mindset shift. I have my observations of it, but you've been much more intimate with this than I have. So what do you see? What is a COO? Again, COO, Integrator, second in command, there's all the terms. How do you define the term and what is the relevance of this particular function, this role?

**Ben Wolf:** Yeah, there are a lot of words that people use, like you said, Integrator, second in command, COO. I think a lot of them can either have meaning or lack meaning for different people, or they could create different confusions. COO, for example, some people use to refer to the head of the operations department. Some people call that COO. And so I think that that can also create a little bit of confusion. So if it's okay with you, I'll stick with the term number two leader.

**Shannon Waller:** Excellent. Love that.

**Ben Wolf:** Which I know Alec Broadfoot, who's been on the show, also likes that terminology. We like that terminology because it can describe what we're looking to describe. But you asked, what is a number two leader? What is that role? So I would say a couple of bullet points. One is that it's really the person who's driving execution in the business, both the core business execution, whatever the product or services that the business is doing, so the core business functions, as well as driving forward the major initiatives that make tomorrow better than today, that move the ball forward.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

One of the ways you can identify if someone is a number two leader or not is that this is the person to whom the leadership team or management team reports. They're reporting to the number two leader. And they're responsible for P&L, make sure the company's profitable and financially healthy. And that's it. I think that those are the main elements I would look at to see who is or what is a number two leader.

**Shannon Waller:** I like it because you haven't made it super complicated. It's pretty straightforward. Now this is interesting. So I know because Coach has been running on EOS for a little bit. So we have a leadership team and we have Babs and Dan, co-founders of Strategic Coach. Babs really runs the company. People think Dan runs the company. I'm like, yeah, yeah, no. Dan runs the Program.

**Ben Wolf:** Dan's the talent.

**Shannon Waller:** 100%. Absolutely. He describes it as a theater and he runs what's on stage and Babs runs everything on the other side of the doors, which is most of the company. Babs runs the company, so all the leaders have been used to reporting to her. So a COO, pardon me, number two business leader, is there a bit of a shift? Well, I know there's a shift that leaders have to make to going, oh, I now don't have direct access to the Visionary entrepreneur. Now I've got this person. Is that sometimes a little tumultuous?

**Ben Wolf:** Well, obviously it is, right? It can certainly be. In some organizations, I don't know if Strategic Coach defines it this way, but in some organizations, you might say that because you run on EOS, you might say Babs is the Visionary. Someone else is the Integrator, if there is someone else, or maybe she's both roles. And then Dan is, you know, like, I don't know, head of content or like head of ideas or something, you know, like something else that is just take off, like he doesn't have to attend the weekly level 10 leadership team meetings. So he doesn't have to be the Visionary. I mean, he could focus on what his Unique Ability, right, which only Dan invented the concept of Unique Ability.

**Shannon Waller:** He's the Visionary for the Program. I mean, you know, ultimately, what that is, but really Babs is kind of Visionary for the company. So we don't totally fit the model. Everyone thinks they're special. So do we. So let's talk about it from the Visionary standpoint. Why is having a second command leader or number two business leader, what benefit is it for them? What leverage does it provide? What problems does it solve to have that number two leader in place? Because most of them are doing that role. They're playing both roles right now.

**Ben Wolf:** Right. Right. Exactly.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

**Shannon Waller:** Yeah.

**Ben Wolf:** You know, we have 65 to 75 percent, I don't remember, of the people that have taken that MOAA assessment that we told you about are serving in both roles. And the thing that's important to understand, like, what's the significance? Why would one need or want or is it a benefit and not a detriment to have a second in command? It's all about, back to that concept of Unique Ability that Dan taught us all, which is that there are things that only that owner or Visionary is able to do and that they love doing and are great at. So whether that's making big deals, getting big contracts with suppliers, R&D, developing the next product or service, whether it's being a thought leader, being the face of the company, these kinds of relationships or being the rah-rah like culture builder within the company. Like each one has different things.

Each person is individual, has different things that is their Unique Ability. There's stuff that really only they could do as well as they could do it and that they love doing and are great at. If they would be freed up from having to drive execution of both the core business and the initiatives, they're gonna make tomorrow better than today, if they're freed up from that, to be able to spend a lot more time in their Unique Ability because they don't have a day job in the business. So they're free to take meetings and go to conferences and be with their family and go on vacation, you know, and recharge and get new ideas. They're free to do all that stuff.

Then the company is going to grow by millions, by millions, by millions. You know, it's really penny-wise pound foolish, to use that phrase, to say like, oh no, let me keep my hands and keep everybody connected to me, keep everything in the day-to-day connected to me. Then I do have a day-to-day job in the business. I'm not free to spend time on my Unique Ability. So maybe I'm spending ten, five, four, three, two, one percent of my time on that Unique Ability. And what millions, what potential is my business losing out on because I'm not having and empowering the right kind of second in command.

**Shannon Waller:** That picture you just painted of freedom, I could taste it. And I know so many clients who are starting to salivate as you're talking. It's like, yes, that's exactly what I want.

**Ben Wolf:** Imagine if you didn't have a day job in the business. Imagine what you could be doing.

**Shannon Waller:** Yeah, I mean, talking to a good friend of mine, it's like he wants freedom from operations and finance. He's super clear so that he can go and do acquisitions and go and do cool stuff.

**Ben Wolf:** Yeah, acquisitions, that's another great example.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

**Shannon Waller:** Right, that's a great way to grow and focus on his—or Free Zone collaborations. Which, oh my gosh, so many, just had a couple of Free Zone workshops and clients that I got to hang out with. So exciting, but you can't do that if you're bogged down in the operations. So this is a key strategy for increasing what Coach talks about, The Four Freedoms—time, money, relationships, and purpose. Let's be freed up for those things. All of them.

All right. So in your years of experience being the number two business leader and helping grow companies and then providing capabilities for other companies to grow with number two leaders, you have discerned, one of our favorite words from Working Genius, that there are actually three types of number two business leaders, which I find completely illuminating. And then you have a survey to help figure out what you have and what you want and what you need. Also really powerful. You're like, oh, that explains a few things because I've done it twice now, which is cool. So thank you for that. So can you just dive into what the three different types are? Because I think for me, it was so illuminating.

**Ben Wolf:** Sure. And I think I need to say a little bit about why we discovered those three types, which is that we used to think that there was one type of number two leader, like it's just one concept, one general idea. And it's really only about individual compatibility between the individual COO or number two leader and the owner. And then with our own firm, Wolf's Edge Integrators, like we're thinking about our own team, you know, one of the three types is Executive. So we just kind of thought, oh, there's one type of number two leader and the attributes of an executive number two leader. We thought, okay, that's our differentiator with the marketplace.

And what we didn't realize was that there's really different qualitative types. There's different things that businesses need at different stages of their growth and evolution. They need a different type of number two leader. It's not always the same. And if you don't have the right type, it's just going to be frustrating or you're going to be wasting time and money. So we came to realize these three types. And this is based on the insights from our whole team, which has been, each one, decades of experience scaling and running companies. Collectively, our team has led \$2.2 billion worth of businesses over their careers. And we've leveraged all of their wisdom and insights kind of as over the months that we were developing this MOAA assessment, M-O-A-A, MOAA assessment. And so that's how we came up with this.

The names of the three types are Operational, Conductor, and Executive. I'd be happy to dive into what each one is, but it's important to understand where their business is and where they want it to be in the future, what kind of future they want, and how fast. And we realized that we needed all of that information. We can't just say, what kind of Integrator do you need? It really depends on where you are in your business evolution and where you want to get to and how





YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

fast. So the assessment kind of in the back-end calculations takes that into account and tries to look at things.

Like if you are dealing with constant chaos and you're on the edge of catastrophe almost every day, that's a business stage we call Survival. There's Survival and then you elevate to Owner-Dependent, which means that you're past the chaos of Survival mode, but it's still very much a job, right? It's still owner in, fingers in all the pies all the time. And that's Owner-Dependent, so it's got stability, and so it's much, much better, much, much less unpleasant than survival mode, but still owner very much in everything, definitely not a Self-Managing Company. And then we get to the third stage of evolution, which is Incremental Growth, which means there are other drivers in the business. It's not totally Owner-Dependent anymore. It's, you know, maybe to that point of Self-Managing or pretty close to it.

And then there's those who want scale, right? Someone who just wants the 10x, right? They really want massive growth, massive improvement, qualitative or quantitative, and massive change. And that's sort of what we call Scale mode. And if you are in Survival mode, and you're in everything, then you need an Operational number two leader. That's one of those three types, Operational number two leader. That's someone who can document your processes, get the CRM set up, get the ERP set up, get your people following it, start putting some measurables into place. Get the day-to-day operations right, because why are you fighting fires all the time? Why are you fighting catastrophe all the time? Because you don't have the right people and or processes and systems. And so the Operational number two leaders setting up those systems and processes and then running those systems and processes.

If you would say, oh, I want an Executive Integrator because I want to scale, but you're still in survival mode. That's great. We'll get there. Like there is a right time for that. But that Executive number two leader is not the right fit for what you need right now. It's going to be a misfit. Not that they're not qualified, not that they're not smart, but they're just not the right fit for what you need right now.

**Shannon Waller:** No, in fact, it could be a bit of a disaster because they're going to want those systems to already be in place so that they can scale it. And you're actually going to make the most use of them.

**Ben Wolf:** They may not be the most effective person to get really into the weeds to the extent it needs to be done to set things up.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

**Shannon Waller:** One of the things we talk about, Coach, because we talk about 10x all the time, is one of the things you do not want to do is multiply complexity. That is a really bad idea that no sane person takes on.

**Ben Wolf:** Simplify, then multiply.

**Shannon Waller:** Simplify before you multiply. And so what you're talking about, this person gets things running, simplifies it down, gets them structured, gets them systematic, so that then you can go to the next phase. Okay, so tell me where Conductor and Executive fit in.

**Ben Wolf:** Conductor fits in, let's say you have a bit of a management team, even if maybe they're underperforming, right? We all know the realities of the world. Maybe they're underperforming or partially underperforming, but you have somewhat of a leadership team, you have somewhat of a management team, you've got someone in charge of operations. Now, when I say operations, that's one of the departments of a company, of any business, and that's the department operations that actually provides the product or service to your clients or customers. That's basically how I define operations.

So you have someone in operations and the Operational Integrator or COO can fulfill that role, but usually is a full-time person. You have someone in operations and now you're ready to take it to the next level, right? You want to get from Owner-Dependent to Incremental Growth or Scale, right? So the first thing you need is a number two leader who's a Conductor type, and a Conductor conjures up that image of the conductor of an orchestra, right? That person's not necessarily playing an instrument. They're not sitting necessarily in another seat on the accountability chart, but they're ensuring that everyone's efforts are coordinated towards pointing in one direction, all working together. They're ensuring that, what's the process in marketing? How does that connect to sales? What's the process in sales? How does that connect to operations? What's the process in operations? How does that connect to finance? You know, what are our big priorities? What needs to happen?

So decide, discernment, right, between those priorities. Come up with a roadmap, an order of operations, ensure everyone's playing off the same piece of sheet music, playing at the same tempo and the right tempo. And so they're putting these systems and processes into place, getting the right people into the right seats on the leadership team and other key seats and ensuring that everyone's efforts are coordinated, focused in the same direction, in the right direction, because otherwise there's just tons of wasted energy. And so you're going to get much, much, much, much faster, much, much further, much quicker with a Conductor, number two leader than without one.





YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

**Shannon Waller:** Is there a size of company, either team members, revenue? Again, industries are so different, like a tech company could be super small with super high revenue, and that's also true for some professional services, so.

**Ben Wolf:** Well, that business that I mentioned before, they were, you talk about high volume, low margin, that was.

**Shannon Waller:** Yeah.

**Ben Wolf:** I told you it was 130 people and over \$100 million annual.

**Shannon Waller:** Wow. Crazy.

**Ben Wolf:** You know what I'm saying? It depends on the business. Again, it depends how it's structured 100%.

**Shannon Waller:** But is there some kind of ... if you're four people, you probably need the really basic one. And I don't mean basic bad. I mean basic just to get stuff organized. Is there a financial revenue or number of team members point where it tends to be Conductor or not? Is it just too diverse based on industry? I do not know the answer to this question.

**Ben Wolf:** Yeah, I'll throw out some numbers, you know, based on our experience, but it's to be taken with a grain of salt, right? Because like you said, every business is different and it's not a hard and fast rule. But we tend to see, as you know, Operational, oftentimes it's going to be between 5 and 20 people in the business, depending on the situation. It could be between 5 and 10 people in the business, could be from 750,000 to 1 million to 3 or 4 million, somewhere around there. We might find with Conductor that somebody could be getting closer to 4 million to 5 million, up to 7 million to 10 million, somewhere around there. And Conductor, you get to be 1 or 2, 300 people, you're probably gonna need an Executive, right? Because even if you're not scaling super fast, you need someone who's ran and scaled businesses of your size or bigger before. And you want someone that's coming with experience.

**Shannon Waller:** So it sounds like 10 million plus, a hundred people plus, that's kind of what you get into the Executive. Is that right?

**Ben Wolf:** Yeah, or even less. People wise, I might even say 50, 60, 70 plus, but that's it. And we didn't define executive yet. So what I would say about Executive, it's just somebody who's a great COO and has experienced scaling and running much bigger businesses, right? They've done this before. You're a 50-person business. You want to get to, you know, 500 over the next few years. You need someone who knows what that looks like. They've done it before. And so you need someone with just more years and larger companies experience. Because even if you have a skilled Conductor, the challenge is, if you're really scaling big, then the challenge can be that they can have you very effectively do whatever you agree to do.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

But if nobody on the team knows the right thing to do because they haven't done it before, then it's going to be an experiment. It's still an experiment, and it may work out. And again, it's not bad. It's just not going to be as fast. So you'll be able to effectively do it. It's like, oh, all right, that didn't work. Let's try something else. Maybe this will work, and you can try different things, hopefully in Strategic Coach or some other way, you could find friends, maybe you have good ideas. With the Executive Integrator who's on your team, they're just able to say like, look, I know what structure we need or what things to do first and second and third to get where you wanna go. And it's not like a dictator, it's a discussion, negotiation, et cetera. There's things that we don't know, obviously, but you want that person in the room helping make the decisions.

**Shannon Waller:** Okay, so I have a question. So it sounds like if you're looking for experience from someone who's done it already, it's probably not going to be a homegrown human. It's not necessarily someone that you can promote from within because they haven't done it before. They grew up with you. Their level of capacity is where you're at now. Their level of experience, I should say.

**Ben Wolf:** Well, most entrepreneurs, their own business is the largest that they've ever ran. And their leadership team members are in the highest position they've ever been in the largest company they've ever been. Because like you said, they're homegrown. So this is something that whether it's an outside hire on a full-time basis, whether it's fractional, you have the ability to bring in people who have done it before and can get you there faster than you can with the experimentation of doing it with people who are all, like yourself, all doing it. There's nothing wrong with that. That's how all businesses start and are all doing it for the first time.

**Shannon Waller:** That's so fascinating. I was coaching what I call my 10x Team Leader group in Chicago, which is just an amazing group of humans, all just perfectly described, how you describe them. And they haven't had necessarily some of that big corporate experience. So my question, because I've had opportunity to work with the corporate, I've worked with entrepreneurial, prefer entrepreneurial. When you bring in people who've done it before, it's really mindset. There's an entrepreneurial mindset and there's a corporate mindset.

And so I'm going to presume that one of the, important things but also harder things to do is to find people who are not super rigid, structured, top-down, hierarchical, but actually can get into the entrepreneurial ecosystem and help bridge that gap. Because if you come in, my experience, and it's been with our own company and my friends' companies and my clients' companies, when you impose a corporate mindset on an entrepreneurial company, it's like oil and water. They repel one another. The corporate mindset can do harm, you lose the magic of the entrepreneurial company. Again, clearly I'm on the pain side of this more than on the



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

positive side. So please educate me. Do you know what I mean? That would be one of my dangers if you think about it that way.

**Ben Wolf:** No, 100%. And that's why when we're bringing on somebody onto our team, if all they have is corporate experience, they're not even eligible to join our team. Like our team at Wolf's Edge Integrators, you know, some of the members of our team do have many years. One of them was a COO running a division of Chubb Insurance Company with like \$2 billion budget under her supervision. One or two billion, I'm not sure the exact numbers, but another member of the team was running Sallie Mae, like in the banking world, or part of Sallie Mae, I don't even know, COO at Sallie Mae, I think. But they've all ran entrepreneurial companies also. They've got to have at least two or three years, aside from their corporate experience of successfully scaling and running businesses in the entrepreneurial world, because otherwise, yes, 100%, that is a very, very real danger. I've heard too many disaster stories just like you're saying as well and you know, certainly that's not helpful.

**Shannon Waller:** No, we brought in three. This is like at least 10 or 12 years ago We hired three people, all happened to be men. We had finance, sales, and marketing not the second-in-command kind of business leader, but still, and the longest lasted a year and a half. And all had come from bigger companies, I believe. Now, they had grown entrepreneurially. We were talking with my husband earlier before we had record, and he had so much autonomy in his division. It was kind of amazing. So big companies do have an entrepreneurial aspect to them as well.

But it was interesting, like Babs was, no offense, smarter than the CFO we hired. So that didn't end well. There was competition with another one of the people. Anyway, none of them lasted more than a year and a half. And so they were rejected from the system. I'm partly aware very personally from it and it was awkward and the conversations were, someone else like went to different people to try and get sign-offs. I'm like, oh lordy, no collaboration whatsoever. So I have scar tissue left over from that. So I think finding someone who has that love and passion and appreciation for entrepreneurship and the fact that it's quirky on every day, good day, bad days. It's individual, it's unique. And to be able to have that relationship with the entrepreneur, but also be able to bridge the gap with the team is phenomenal.

I'm blessed to know a lot in my Team Leader group of essentially the number two business leaders and they're gods and goddesses. They're just incredible people. So I also know the good side. I love this distinction, Operational, Conductor, and up to Executive. Now, it's interesting, though. I'm sure there's also some bridges. Like, I know some companies who are larger but still have the Conductor kind of person.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

**Ben Wolf:** It could work. It could be holding them back. They could be going slower than they need to be because of that. Maybe that person would do better to run a division or, you know, be a leadership team member as you get to that next type of scale.

**Shannon Waller:** Yeah, I think that progression is really interesting. So two things that I want to talk about before we close off. One is the survey. But even before we jump into that, the difference between fractional and full-time. So you provide fractional number two business leaders. Amazing. And you've got this incredible cadre. I got to see the whole list of people. It's very cool. And you have all three levels. You've got Operational, Conductor, and Executive, which is great.

**Ben Wolf:** Just to be clear, we use the word type, not level.

**Shannon Waller:** Thank you.

**Ben Wolf:** Different types. That's much more polite. Because it's important. If I need Operational and I have Operational, it's not like a lower level. That's the type that I need. And Executive would be a lower level because it's the wrong type. And so that's kind of a distinction that we make. And the other thing I would say is that we have one recent client that we just took on where we're actually placing two simultaneously because they don't have a head of operations. But if it's a smaller business, they'll take on two seats, the Operational role and the COO role. But in this business, they don't have an Operational, but it's a much larger business, but they don't have head of operations. The owner is like a chicken with his head cut off. And so we're placing a member of our operational team as their operations leader, not COO, and a conductor member of the team as their COO. And they're gonna be working together and helping this guy get to hopefully a much better future reality.

**Shannon Waller:** Oh my gosh, love that thinking. All right, so let's talk about fractional versus full-time. What do you notice? Who needs what when? Is it a transition from one to the other or not? How's that work? And then we'll get into the survey.

**Ben Wolf:** Sure, I think I have to mention the survey anyway to answer that question.

**Shannon Waller:** Okay, let's go there.

**Ben Wolf:** No, no, I'll just mention it briefly, then I'll answer it, but it's all about, which type of number two leader do you need? Like, that's what it's about. You might be able to afford an Operational leader, you know, somebody who would maybe be full-time, 120,000, but you need Conductor or Executive to do what you need to do. Then yes, you could hire a COO for 120,000, like that exists, and you can give them that title, but if they're not that type of person, then you're gonna be frustrated with them, they're gonna be frustrated with not being able to succeed, it's gonna end after another year or two, and you're gonna be starting at square one two years from now.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

So you can't answer the question of full-time versus fractional without first answering the question, what type of number two leader do you need? Now the question is, once you know what type, I need Operational, I need Conductor, I need Executive, once you know what type, bring in that MOAA assessment, it's [wolsedgeintegrators.com](https://wolsedgeintegrators.com). People can find it there. There's a link on the homepage and also a pop-up will come up. [Wolsedgeintegrators.com](https://wolsedgeintegrators.com), take the MOAA assessment.

But once you know what type of Integrator you need, then say, okay, now, is that a full-time job or is it not a full-time? Like, is that level of, and that type, I did that same mistake. Is that type of Integrator a full-time job? Like, is there a full-time job for that type of Integrator or that type of number two leader in my business? And two, if it is a full-time job, can I afford it? Can I afford what the market requires for someone of that type? Let's say I need a Conductor number two leader. That could cost you \$250,000 plus bonus and benefits if you're gonna hire someone like that full-time. And maybe I can't afford that, or maybe I can afford it, but it's really only gonna take up 20% of their bandwidth. And for one of those cases, I'd rather have you do fractional rather than full-time, because then you're getting the type of number two leader you need.

So then you'll successfully get to where you need to get to, as opposed to just hiring what you can afford, which might be less money than that, and then you won't get to where you need. So it's kind of like they say, the long, short path. It seems like a shortcut, because, oh, I can hire, it's full time, get a lot more hours from this person, great, awesome, more hours, less money. But then you're just not going to get to your destination. It's actually the long path, even though it seems like a short path.

**Shannon Waller:** I actually feel like you're doing good for everybody, right? Like your specialty is providing fractional number to your leaders, but I feel like you're actually helping everyone in the whole industry because you have a way to help people sort and screen out what they need. So thank you. It's a generous thing to do. So before we wrap up, I redid the survey last night, which thank you. And it was really interesting because one of the things that helps identify is who you currently have what you need, and there's another step, and then obviously what the action plan is, and it's kind of enlightening. For me, it was like, that explains a few things.

So could you just talk about the survey? You've already said how to get it, so [wolsedgeintegrators.com](https://wolsedgeintegrators.com), and go right to the website. We'll put the link in the show notes, so that's easy to do. So I think that's super important, and just go and do it. It's one of those things, so you can learn where you're at. But talk about the four things that it helps identify. Anything that helps you think about your thinking, which Coach is all about, I think is incredibly insightful, and I appreciate when other people have ways to help me think about my thinking. Or Dan also says, the problem is never the problem, the problem is not knowing how to think



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

about the problem. And you help people think about the problem, which I love every second of it. All right, so with enough fanfare, talk about what the survey does. And you're gonna have to, just for my audience, share what MOAA stands for.

**Ben Wolf:** Yes, so M-O-A-A, MOAA, stands for Mother of All Assessments. So, meant to be a little funny. Yes. And that's what it stands for. I would say one quick thing on the previous discussion first, which is fractional versus full-time, which I would just say is that every fractional number two engagement, at least for us, is interim. It's meant to lead to full-time. You want to move the ball forward a great deal, get people in the right seats, move some major initiatives forward that were probably long stuck, and then pass the baton to somebody else to take over for us on a long-term, full-time basis. So bring in one of those search firms like VisionSpark and a lot of other friends of ours who are great at this, and either elevate someone up if there is a good candidate from inside who has a lot of institutional knowledge, if there is not an appropriate person who's going to excel in that role from the inside, hire from the outside.

Anyway, so I just want to quickly say that. But the assessment will tell you, of those four stages we talked about, Survival, Owner-Dependent, Incremental Growth, and Scale, they'll tell you where you are, and based on your goals, where you want to be. That's two things it's going to tell you. And based on that and some back-end magical calculations that we've tweaked after a number of iterations, it's going to tell you which of those three types of number two leader you currently have, even if you as the business owner are de facto or officially sitting in that seat. They're going to tell you what type you are while wearing that hat. And it's going to tell you what type of number two leader you have and what type of number two leader you need if you're serious, and I say that word very intentionally, if you're serious about wanting to achieve what you say you want to achieve in the timeline you say you want to achieve it.

If you're serious about wanting to achieve that as a type of number two leader, you're going to need to get there. So that's what it's going to tell you. Like you said, it's going to tell you some next steps to take. There's a link in there if you want to discuss your MOAA results with myself. You know, that's a link. You could set up a meeting like that to kind of go over the results. That doesn't cost anything. And that is high level what it's going to tell you. So hopefully it gives you some actionable information. In the next couple of weeks, we're also coming out with a new assessment. I don't know when this episode is going live, but by the time it goes live, it may be out already.

But we are actually developing an assessment specifically for the number two leader so that they could take assessment to see which type they are. And that way, we have both halves of the equation, right? Not just the part, what type do you need, but if you're considering somebody from your own team, or if you're hiring, or if it's a recruiting firm, Alec knows about this, but like, you know, he knows we're developing this, but, you know, this is gonna tell you,





YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

take this assessment to tell you which type you are, you know, or you could have your candidates take it to see which type they are. And now you have both halves of the equation. You have which type you need, and then the Integrator could tell which type they are.

And if they're working in the type, you know, if they love Operational, setting things up, getting in the weeds, getting their hands in everything, they love the Conductor, if they love the Executive, they're going to see which type they are, and they're going to enjoy and get a lot more satisfaction and be a lot more in their happy place. And they're going to be the Working Genius, et cetera, you know, doing the kind of engagement where their type is required, and they're gonna be much, much more satisfied and much happier.

**Shannon Waller:** It's like a match.com for number two business leaders.

**Ben Wolf:** For number two leaders and business owners, yeah. We're not building that yet, at least.

**Shannon Waller:** No, no, no. I'm kidding. So here's the deal. You know, I'm certified in a number of assessments. Creating assessment is no small task. I got to see an earlier iteration of it.

**Ben Wolf:** Thank you for beta testing months ago. You know, back in the summer. You're welcome.

**Shannon Waller:** I'm like, okay, these kind of things I have questions about. But I did it again yesterday in preparation for today. And I'm like, okay, this is super useful and educational and made me think. It asked me, what are you serious about? So it's provocative in a good way because you're not just like that. It will get you in your heart, not just your head, which is always useful. So, Ben, this is awesome. So thank you so much. I think for me, it's a big education. I'm thinking, okay, number two leader. I know what that is. And then it turns out, oh, there's a lot more to this than I ever dreamt of. And so I appreciate the heavy lifting that you put in both personally and as a company, the distinctions that you're adding are super helpful.

Companies grow in stages and we have different things that we need to get to, how you've delineated them, Survival, Owner-Dependent, Incremental Growth, and Scale. That's brilliant right there. And then the different types of, I'm going to say operational leaders that will help you get from one to the other and then fractional to full time. You've just added a lot of depth, as your Fact Finder will do, to the conversation that I was simplifying. So I personally really appreciate that. You've educated me on how I can be better, and I know that this will be an incredibly useful conversation for those listening because it's all about entrepreneurial team success, entrepreneurial growth, leadership, and freeing people up, as you were talking about earlier.



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## Why Your Business Stalls Without The Right Second-In-Command, with Ben Wolf

Thank you so much. I have learned a ton and I'm super excited for people to get their hands on the MOAA. Just go to [wolfsedgeintegrators.com](http://wolfsedgeintegrators.com). Just scroll through the website. You'll see descriptions of Conductor and Executive leaders. So there's lots of cool stuff even just to learn on the website, but do the survey is my motto. Anything else that people need to know how they can reach you? All the good things.

**Ben Wolf:** You can reach me on LinkedIn or, you know, again, [wolfsedgeintegrators.com](http://wolfsedgeintegrators.com). Everything's there.

**Shannon Waller:** Awesome. Ben, thank you so much for your time and for sharing your wonderful expertise. And again, for all the heavy lifting you put in, clearly it's a lot.

**Ben Wolf:** Thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity.

**Shannon Waller:** Oh, you're very welcome.