



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## The Partnership Mindset: No Ego, Just Results

**Shannon Waller:** Are you feeling trapped by your role? Would you like to experience some more freedom every day at work? Stay tuned to learn how a partnership mindset can shift everything.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. One of the things that has been occurring to me lately is the quality of relationships that I have with my work colleagues, especially one in particular, which is Katrina. She is my support partner. She's the one who organizes me, manages me, plays Tetris with my calendar, does all of the things. And it's interesting, because technically I am her boss, but really, as I said, she's the one that manages me, not the other way around. And I was trying to figure out why do I have such an easier time than some others that I have been talking to in terms of my work relationships?

Now, is it always smooth sailing? No, it's not. I'm me, people are people, all the things, but somehow it does not seem difficult for me to be able to be in teamwork with most, not all, but most people. And I realized that it comes down to one of the aspects of having an entrepreneurial attitude, which is to be a partner. And there's something that happens when you treat yourself as a partner and when you treat other people as a partner that is very different than the hierarchical structure that most of us are familiar with. Might have been, you know, climbing some kind of a ladder, all of that sort of thing. We think we're gonna have to be the boss if you're in a leadership position, or that you have to be a subordinate so you don't speak up.

There are all of these role-based ways of thinking that I think completely get in the way of great teamwork, of great collaboration, and frankly, get in the way of results, which annoys the heck out of me, because I just want to get stuff done. That is the point of us working together. So I want to kind of talk that through today because I want to dismantle any issues that you might be having. Ultimately, I actually want to give you a lot more freedom. Freedom to do what you're best at, freedom to play full out, freedom to speak up fully, freedom to contribute, freedom to include other people's contributions. That is my goal for this conversation, is that you leave going, oh, I just have to be me.

Now, you also need to be the best version of yourself. I was re-listening to one of my podcasts with Cy Wakeman, author of *No Ego, Reality-Based Rules for the Workplace*, and *Reality-Based Leadership*. Brilliant, brilliant woman. Oh my gosh. I re-listened to it and was like, oh, how could I have forgotten some of these things that work so well? We have an expression at Coach, it works so well, we stopped doing it. I'm like, ooh, yeah, that would be true. But one of the things that she said is, don't just bring your authentic self to work, bring the most evolved version of yourself to work. And that stuck with me after I heard it again. I was like, right, bring your best self. Thank you very much. Not your whiny complaining self, not your grumpy self, bring your best self.



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Another Coach concept is Front Stage/Back Stage. I think we all have a front stage that is best to show to the world. And I don't care if you're quote unquote in the backstage in your company, you have people you serve and they deserve your best self—as Cy Wakeman says, your most evolved self. But I want people to feel really free and comfortable to show up that way and I want to do everything in my power to encourage that. I want to eliminate any obstacles because I have such a firm, I would use the word belief, but to my mind, that's actually a little too hopeful. I have such a firm understanding and knowledge of how people can show up and who they can be and what we can create together when people are free to be themselves and free to be their best selves and contribute what at Coach we call their Unique Ability.

So I want to do everything, as I said, in my power to create an environment where that is true, because I'm very, very aware of what I can and will do. I'm also very aware of all the things I should have no business doing, should not do, run out of steam quickly. And I want to show up as my best self too. So if I can protect my energy and make sure that I'm contributing in ways that are helpful, as opposed to hindering, then that just makes sense. So I actually look for people who are different than me. And I take great pride actually in learning how to work with people who have different affect, so different personalities, different ways of striving per their Kolbe profile. And I appreciate them because they can and will do things that I can't and will not do. So that is key to me.

Now, is it seamless? No. Do I experience friction? Yes. And where we do need to be in alignment is with core values. That is absolutely essential. I find that if I can share a core value with someone, or preferably all of ours, then I know that we can work well together, because we're after the same thing. We all want positive and collaborative teamwork. We all are committed to being alert, curious, responsive, and resourceful. We want to accomplish growth and results, and we want to provide an excellent first-class experience for our clients. Those are our core values, short form is PAGE, positive and collaborative teamwork, being alert, curious, responsive, resourceful, focused on growth and results, and committed to providing an excellent first class experience.

So if I know someone's committed to those values, I can work with them. Am I willing to compromise those? No, I am not. Very, very clear. But once I know that, I'm looking to someone, I don't care if they've been with the company three months and I've been with company coming up to 34 years, doesn't matter. They have a talent, they have a capability, they've got skills, and they've got learning that I don't have. And I'm curious about what those things are. And there's an enormous freedom. The longer you've been somewhere, the longer you've been in a leadership role, we can get trapped by ego, we can get trapped by the authority that we have, and we have to really remember, if we can, what it was like to be a newbie, because it's terrifying. If you don't remember, it's scary. You know you don't know a



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ton of things and you're at the bottom of the learning curve and you're last in the boat, you could be first out.

So we have to remember other people are likely feeling very trepidatious and it's our job to put them at ease. And the sooner we can do that, the sooner we can get into great teamwork and collaboration. So again, when you treat people like a partner, they show up that way. And when people treat you like a partner, it's your job to show up that way. But there's an implied equality in partnership. And I went to ChatGPT this morning, my friend ChatGPT, and asked for a short definition. So this is what came up, which I think is a great definition. A partnership is a collaborative relationship. One of my favorite words, collaborative. Relationship where two or more parties work together toward a shared goal, contributing resources, skills, or effort, and sharing the risks and rewards. I'm really hoping it's a lot of reward, just so you know. So that's what a partnership is.

Here's what it does not say. Anything about status, anything about ego, anything about authority. It doesn't say that. What it says is, what are you collaborating in terms of your resources, your skills and effort? That is the point. And again, I said earlier that what I really wanted was you to experience a whole new sense of freedom. Well, that's just kind of it. I mean, when I'm free to show up as what I can contribute—and of course, I want to throw in profiles here with my 9 in Quick Start, my 3 Fact Finder, 2 Follow-Through, 9 QuickStart, 5 Implementer, my CliftonStrengths: Maximizer, Strategic, Individualization, Arranger, Relator. You know, I want to throw my PRINT, to enjoy life and be happy, to be strong and self-reliant. You know, I know those are all factors in how I show up and I work hard, not perfect, but I work hard to show up in best self.

And I want other people to be that self-aware and to know what they can contribute. One of the hardest things I find is when someone doesn't know themselves or too scared to speak up. I work hard to create a lot of safety, but at some point someone needs to meet me at least part of the way. So if someone's just like a weak little mouse, I may not be the best person to work with for you until you're further along in your development. I don't have Developer as a strength, clearly. I have Maximizer. I want to take someone who's really good and help make them amazing or contribute to them being incredible, even more so. But starting from scratch, not so much. Other people have that talent, thankfully, and they should go and do that with that person.

So I know myself, I know who can grow around me, and I also know the type of person who will just frankly get overwhelmed. So I get out of partnership with that person because I'm not actually going to be a contribution to them. And is there any blame about that? No, I just have learned that over lots of years. So that is important too, is to know with whom you can work and with whom you should not. And that's for their benefit as well as yours. This is not all about your ego. And I keep using these words. So Cy Wakeman's book, No Ego, genius.



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Another book, which I'm actually reaching out to the author to see if they will say yes. Brilliant, brilliant book. Probably the best book on leadership I have ever read. And I've read a lot. And it's by Derek Gaunt. It's called *Ego, Authority, Failure*. Really interesting book. But it talks bottom line about the failure of ego and authority in terms of leadership. And it gives you a ton of tools. He's from the Black Swan Organization. So if anyone's familiar with Chris Voss, Tactical Empathy, Black Swan Group, *Never Split The Difference*. This is what I'm talking about. Anyway, I'm kind of on fire about this book, as you can tell.

But when you can put ego and authority as an aside, then you can be a true partner. And then you're calmer. You can be alert to what the circumstances or the people around you require. You can be curious, as I said before. about what's actually needed rather than thinking about yourself, you're thinking about the situation or the person. You can be responsive to what is showing up in the moment. And then finally, you get to be resourceful because you know that you have some resources. Thank you very much. So that is also key.

So it's interesting to me that people, when they're in their heads about themselves, can't really show up as being a great partner because the focus is not on the right place. It's not on the right person. To be a partner, you need to be focused on the other person, on the situation. And I think that is a point of development. I think we go through a natural phase in human evolution, which happens every time a new baby is born. We all have to start from zero. You know, it has to be about you. You have to survive. You have to figure out who you're about. But at some point, hopefully there's a switch where you're like, oh, okay, I kind of got myself figured out or handled. Now, what contribution, what difference can I make?

And then you get to be calmer on the inside. And you're just curious about where you can make a difference and where you can contribute, to whom you can contribute. And you wanna find other people who have a similar mindset. I do not do well in that ego authority world. I don't know how to play the games. I don't wanna play the games. I could care less. I'm a bit of a bull in the china shop in those situations, which is why I love working with entrepreneurs. For me, entrepreneurs are, say what they mean, mean what they say, not trying to look a certain way to other people. They're pretty much straight shooters, as am I, so we get along just fine. I am not playing games and they aren't either. We just want to win in the marketplace. Thank you very much. And the marketplace gets to say, hey, great job. I'll pay you or miss the mark. Not paying you. Try again. Right.

So it's interesting. We're not trying to make ourselves attractive or please someone so they'll give us more status and authority. No, we want to make sure we are creating value and we get paid for it so we can keep doing it another day. So it's interesting, the marketplace does not care about status. It does not care about your ego. It cares about whether or not you create



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value. And that's what a partnership does. Partnership is about creating value. And when you can come at it from that mindset, it doesn't matter where you are in the company.

Now, one of the things I love and appreciate about Dan Sullivan so much is that I am his partner, he is my partner. We are both contributing what we're best at. And if he sees me struggling and trying to do something I'm not suited, he brings in another Who to our team. So when I recorded one of our calls and then I couldn't find the recording, this was for the book recordings that we do when we produce our quarterly books, he was like, oh, okay, let's never have to have you do this again. I was worried I hadn't recorded it. I was freaking out there for a little bit. He goes, great, let's bring in Margaux. So Margaux comes in, huge addition to our conversation and our teamwork. She's in charge of recording it, brings in some beautiful artwork on the Zoom screen every time she does it. So it's always this fun, unexpected, beautiful contribution to the conversation.

So now I just have to go back to being a partner with Dan. And he's a team member, as well as co-founder and co-owner of Strategic Coach. He is a brilliant partner. He just does what he's supposed to be doing, and he's counting on everyone else to do their part, and he gives you a ton of freedom to do that. He's the opposite of a micromanager. That's gonna be one of our next conversations, how not to be a micromanager, because he's a great partner. So if you are looking for more freedom, if you are feeling boxed in by your role that somehow you think you have to fulfill, and this, by the way, traps entrepreneurs almost more than anybody else.

One of my favorite insights or realizations about this was with a great client who was looking pretty stressed. He was leaving the workshop a few minutes early. So I said, hey, how you doing? He goes, oh, I'm okay, but my team wants this from me and I want this from me, but it's really hard. So he needed to be the CEO because he was also the founder. And he said, I've got two coaches that are CEO coaches to help me be better at this because parts of it are really hard. And his Kolbe profile is very similar to mine. I'm like, hmm, and I knew a little bit about him. I said, in my experience, there's a couple things you really care about. What are you most passionate about?

He goes, oh my gosh, I am most passionate about the client experience. And he said, and I love designing that. I love working with our team to help make that happen. And I said, oh, so you're the client experience architect? And he like jumped back and goes, can we talk more about this? I'm like, yes, we can. So we had a follow up call because I said, I don't think you actually need to be the CEO. I think someone else can fulfill that. What the team is probably counting on you is for you to be the best you. So we had our conversation, went a little bit more deeply into it, completely freed him up, and he actually sent me the very first card out of his new stack of business cards that had his name and that had Client Experience Architect and so he was completely liberated to do what he was unique at, which is such a fun thing.



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He was brilliant at that kind of design. And then they could hire someone else. He was much better at the regular CEO activities. He didn't have to go to CEO coaching school any longer. He just was freed up to be who he was. And that was so fun. He was so much happier, looked so much lighter, so much less stressed, and actually could make a bigger contribution to the organization.

So I see entrepreneurs feeling like they have to be a certain way or feeling like they have to do something. And frankly, if you were just a step aside and have someone else sit in that seat, if that is not where you want to be, so that you can do what you do best, oh my gosh, I think your organization would take off. And if you're a team leader who is actually feeling like the set of clothes that you're wearing don't fit, too big in some places, too small in others, then see if you can redesign your job and your title to more closely match what it is, what your unique contribution is.

I can't stand titles. My LinkedIn has one because it's practical for business purposes, but I give myself different titles at different times. But Entrepreneurial Teamwork Specialist is my current one, and that one fits me to a T. So I'm not interested in status. I am interested in being unique at what I'm doing and making that biggest contribution. And that's where I can be a great partner. This is what to expect from me. This is also what not to. And that my friends is freedom.

So my hope, my goal is that you see yourself as a partner. You treat other people as partners. You're intensely curious about how they can show up to be their best selves and make their best contribution. And that you create that environment. That to me is another way of talking about collaboration. It's another way of talking about Unique Ability Teamwork, but it requires this partnership mindset, because it allows you to work with people at different levels of status, quote unquote, and it doesn't flipping matter, because each person is bringing their unique talents, their unique contribution, you're all committed to growth and results, and that's what we are here for.

So that is my hope, my wish, I could even say my prayer, my ambition for you, you name it, that you can start to see things this way for yourself and other people. And I think you'll experience a huge jump in teamwork and collaboration, growth, and results. So any questions or comments, please let me know. I'd love to hear your feedback on this conversation. Really appreciate you listening. And as always, here's to your team success.