



## YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

# This Is The Difference Between Your Team At 80% And 100%

**Shannon Waller:** Is your team operating at 80% or 100%? Stay tuned to learn the whys and wherefores of how to really supercharge your Unique Ability Team. Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. Today I'm going to talk about something I think is kind of interesting, and this is really an awareness issue from your part. As an entrepreneur, as a team leader, as a team member, I'm curious as to whether or not you know if your team is operating at 100% or have they throttled back to 80%. And I've seen it happening in some companies that I'm familiar with. And it's interesting is, what is that fine distinction?

You know, one of the ways of quantifying it is the difference between excellent and Unique Ability activities. So when you're at excellent, this is when you have superior skill, you are better at it than most people. You get great teamwork, a good reputation, success, people come to you with it. But on the inside, you're like, been there, done that, got a few t-shirts. You know, so it doesn't have some of that passion that Unique Ability does. Unique Ability is superior skill with passion. You love it. It lights you up on the inside. You can always think of new improvements. And again, it gives you energy. At the end of the day, you are more lit up than when you started the day, which is kind of magical. I really like that alchemy.

And it's interesting because there are a lot of excellent teams out there. And frankly, I would take excellent over competent or incompetent any day. So I'm not dissing excellent ability teams. However, there's another gear. And it's interesting because I think a lot of companies strive to get to that level of Unique Ability Teamwork. Some are more successful than others. Some get there, but I'm also aware of some of the factors that can have it devolve if you think about it that way. So I'm gonna talk through some of these because—well, actually, before I even do that, why is it important to have a team that's engaged, because that's really what we're talking about is engagement, at 100% versus 80%? Because that's another way to quantify it.

Well, if you have a team that's engaged at an 80% level, they're going to do what's expected of them. They are going to deliver quality results. There's no question about that. They're going to do what they know. They are going to take pride in the quality of their work. So all of those things are good. And you may think, Shannon, what's the problem? That's what I'm looking for. You know, I'm working hard to get to that level. But again, there is another gear, there's a higher level that is available when you actually tap into people's hearts, you tap into their passion, because excellent can be done with the cognitive above the neck. You know, intellectually, people can do it.

But what you're missing is their heart. You're missing passion. Passion comes from below the neck, right? This is, you know, what lights people up? What are they really interested in? And when you have someone who is highly skilled and passionate, oh my goodness, it is so much fun. And what I really love about working with people who are in their Unique Ability is you kind of just have to point them in the right direction. You don't need to, quote unquote, manage all



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of their behaviors, their activities, their time. They love it for its own sake. They're intrinsically motivated to get this done and to work on these types of projects and to engage in this type of teamwork.

And it's really interesting after, well, coming up to my 34-year anniversary at Strategy Coach, it's my minimum standard. It sounds really picky and it kind of is, but I want to work with partners. I want to work with people who are incredibly highly skilled at what they do and they love it. I want that passion. I bring passion to what I do. Working with people who are not passionate or merely okay is like ugh, nails on a blackboard. It's just no fun. And I want to have fun. It's an important motivator for me, too. We can have fun and work our tails off. There is no question about that. I put a lot of energy and effort into it, and I want to work with people who do exactly the same thing.

There's a vibe that happens. There's a rhythm that happens. There are so many shortcuts that happen when I'm working with someone where I do exactly what I'm supposed to be doing, and they're doing what they're doing with passion, with heart. Magic happens. And that's become my minimum standard. And I think for individual examples of teams and teamwork between two internal collaborators, some of you have built incredible teams based on this. I got to work with one yesterday. Oh my gosh. Such a great team, so incredibly collaborative and supportive of one another. And they're growing. They're doing their best they've ever done. And that's been building over the past few years. It's just so much fun to be a small part of their growth.

But they run on Strategic Coach principles. They're a strengths-based organization. They've just got incredible heart and they are such a joy to work with. And they're also sponges. They love to learn. So it's really, really fun to just, again, be a small part of their journey. So there are companies out there and teams out there that operate on this level. But I'm very, very conscious of some things that can undermine it and people that can undermine it and mindsets that can undermine it, not intentionally, not maliciously. It's just, you know, these things I'm going to talk about are kind of a more corporate approach.

And I do think, by the way, that I've never said this before, but I do think Unique Ability Teamwork is pretty much in the realm of entrepreneurship. I'm not sure how much or how often or how frequently it exists in the corporate structure. I also don't live in that world. So if you're listening to this and you have alternate experience, please share. I'm super curious. Let me know at [questions@strategiccoach.com](mailto:questions@strategiccoach.com).

If you have a different experience, my experience of corporate, which is a long time ago, is that people were excellent. But their hearts were elsewhere. They were outside the company. They were outside the business. They had other passions. And they brought their best intellectual selves to work, no question. They want to earn a good salary and provide value for that. They're good people. But the organization never got their heart. And I don't know about you,



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but I want to build a company where people's hearts are involved, and their will, this is what Kolbe measures, and our will gets activated by what we're motivated to do. And when you have team members who are excited about your bigger vision and what you're up to, and that they're contributing to something bigger than themselves, and they really feel that, they don't just think that, but they feel that. That's pretty incredible. You have just harnessed a dragon. Just want to see how to train your dragon. So that's the first word that came to mind. But you've harnessed this incredibly powerful force. How amazing is that?

So let's talk about some of the things that really undermine this. And again, I often don't think it's intentional, but it actually is kind of easy to squish. I think the difference between excellent and unique is the difference between 2x performance and 10x performance. So there's a big variable in there. And, you know, 2x, most people would be more than happy with that. Not me. I want 10x performance. But that means you have to set up the structure and the environment for people to really give their all and to feel safe doing that. I think that passions can be squished. They can be shut down. They can be curtailed. And then you just get this diminishment of energy. You get this diminishment of creativity, which is a really big cost. And you get people just kind of playing it safe.

One of our core values is having a no defense budget. And Dan wrote this years ago, and it's pretty much emblazoned in the inside of my brain. So no defense budget means we are playing full out. Does it mean we're always winning? Nope, we play full out and we lose sometimes or we don't win, but we always learn and that learning educates our future wins, which is pretty fun. And so we keep learning and we keep growing. The other day, we had a fabulous team meeting, the other week actually, and we celebrated five people, five people this year who are at their 25-year mark at Strategic Coach. How epic is that?

Now, is this someone who had one year's experience repeated 25 times? No, we are a growing company. We are, I don't remember how big the multiple is, we are bigger from 25 years ago. We were baby, we were little. We were a small company, now we're a midsize company. And it was so cool. So what is it that has people stay with an organization for 25 years? Well, it's that they're growing. They're learning. They get to explore their passions. They get to work with other people who are also passionate. They get to do really good quality work, in our case, for who I think are the best clients on the planet, right?

So they're doing meaningful work and they're doing work that is both personally meaningful to them and that also has a great impact on other people. That's how that happens. And it's unusual. We've worked with lots of other teams and we go around like, oh, how long have you been here? A few months, a few weeks, maybe a year and a half, maybe two years. Strategic Coach is like 18 years, 19 years, 20 years, 25 years. And the rest of the team is like, hmm. Like just the amount of baked in experience and wisdom and teamwork is phenomenal.



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So we can operate, I wanna say in stealth mode, that's not really quite true, but we can operate so easily together because we all have this context and this framework. We know exactly what we're producing. We've been doing it for years, that knowledge gets passed on. And so we can deliver a really high quality experience. We're not fumbling. Yes, we keep learning, but we also have this huge bank that we're adding that new learning to. We are very experienced. There's not a lot we haven't run into. It's very fun.

So how does it get messed up, especially if you have a Unique Ability Team and that's getting a little bit diminished? Well, and you really want to pay attention to whoever is leading these people, and this goes all the way from the business owner, entrepreneur, so if that's you, please pay attention to leadership, right? Like, is it entrepreneurial leadership or is it corporate leadership? Very, very different things. Years ago, we brought in three corporate leaders. We thought we needed to hire some expertise. We need to hire people who already knew how to do this. They were going to help us scale. I think the longest that any of them lasted was 18 months. One we let go of, one left shortly before we let go of him, and the other one jumped off the boat. So they didn't last. Culturally, they were not a fit.

And so I've been giving a lot of thought to this. Like, what is so different about Strategic Coach? Why do we have this crazy longevity of team members? Oh, I'm not even mentioning one of the coolest ones who's Rose, Rose Doll. And it was wild to realize I've known her for 30 years because that was the anniversary that she celebrated. That was incredible. And I believe she started when she was 19. Like, how is that even possible that someone wants to stay with an organization for that long or that an organization wants to keep someone for that long? Because it works both ways. This has to be a joint decision to do that.

And it's because Rose has been able to find her Unique Ability. She's incredible on the web development team, and she's incredible on the Salesforce development team. She is amazing at working with the developers and working with the rest of the company. She knows how to translate our business processes into that structure. She is amazing. And she just thrives and their teams thrive. And she is still growing. I was just in a meeting with her the other day, instituting Asana and helping us get Asana integrated into more teams. And she took the lead on that. She told the team, okay, stop using the previous project management system. We are cutting over on this date. And by then you have to be in it.

And even though she's like a mild-mannered person and very mediation oriented, there's an all-business side to her too, which I really enjoy. So she's serious when she says something. She does it quietly, but she gets stuff done. So she's helping us grow. She's helping us develop. She's aware, you know, alert, curious, responsive, and resourceful to new innovations that will help the team and the teamwork work even better. So I love that. She is still growing in her role. She's still making a greater contribution and our company and our team is thriving



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because of that. That's what we're talking about. So that kind of leadership is fantastic. It's entrepreneurial leadership.

Some of the other types of things, especially with these three, turned out to be gentlemen that are no longer with Strategic Coach and haven't been for a while, is they came in with a different mindset. They came in with, I would say, a hierarchical mindset. We did hire them to be experts. They're like, oh, okay. Well, guess what? That lends itself to ego a little bit. And truthfully, they just could not integrate with how we do things. So as I've been thinking about this, how does Strategic Coach do things? And I've gotten to hang out in Free Zone workshops lately, and I've been coaching, and I've just been able to hang out with Dan a lot with interviewing him for podcasts and for books.

And it just hit me the other day that in Strategic Coach, if you're a client in Coach, we have you reflect on your own experience with any type of coaching. We have you reflect on your own experience. If it's a brand-new idea, we say, okay, where have you experienced this thought or this context previously? And we have you reflect on that, distill the very best lessons to apply to your future. That is not how most business works. It's like, oh, who's done the research? What outside expert can we find? Is there an internal expert that we can find? They're looking for this head-based intellectual, usually research-based. By the way, and this is not bad, it's just when that is the default, rather than going to the team and go, okay, what have you learned about this? Where have we done this before?

We have this brilliant tool, coached it in our team meeting called The Experience Transformer. And it kind of goes like this. What's the experience that you want to improve and learn from? And it can be a good experience, it can be a not good experience, doesn't matter. It used to be called The Negativity Transformer, now we call it The Experience Transformer because we realized we could use it on good things. In that situation, what worked or what's working? And then also in that situation, by the way, that's a little bit of a Positive Focus so that you don't get too much into the weeds and get into complaining, not healthy and not creative. In any bad situation, there were some good things and in good situations, there were some things that could have worked better.

So it's like we tend to hyper focus on the few things that didn't work instead of going, oh, this worked, this worked, this worked, this worked. Technology, timing, teamwork, there's elements of all of those that can work. Then what didn't work? And usually there's a breakdown in the process, a misunderstanding, misalignment, miscommunication, etc. So you identify those, then you brainstorm. Okay, knowing what we know now, what would we do differently next time? We can't do an official redo on the last one, but we can distill the learning down so that we can apply it to this situation. And in this situation, and this is where you bring in all the key players, like who's been involved in the circumstance, who has some knowledge about this.



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And I love doing Experience Transformers as a group. It is so much fun because we ping off each other. I'm like, oh my gosh, you're right, that worked. We do it on all of our successful events, like did one a little bit ago about the Couples Connection workshops. And it was so cool. It's like, here are all the things that worked, and here's a few things. And we've done Couples Connection for, well, let me see. I think we did the first one the year before I got married, and we're coming up to 29 years. It's a lot of Couples Connections. So we keep getting better, which is the whole point of this. And then, once you've figured out what would you do differently next time, then you go, keeping what worked. Do not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

And in your new brainstorming, what's your new course of action? What's your new set of strategy? Keeping what works, and adding in solutions to fix what didn't. This is such a powerful way to grow. This is what all of our team members have done, and this is how we've grown as a company. And if we realize we don't know something, we are very happy to go and tap into expertise in the world. And I love that now using Perplexity or ChatGPT, you can tap into that expertise so easily and so quickly and so cheaply. How cool is that? So you get to research stuff so efficiently. It's perfectly made for my 3295 Kolbe MO. Gotta love that instant gratification.

So we have a default to internal learning. And I realize that's very different than the external default that, in my experience, corporate structures have. And is either one better or worse? Here's the interplay. I think external experts, big fan, love paying high amounts of money for short periods of time for expertise. Totally sign up for that. But I think if you have a Unique Ability Team, they are the ones that are used to being referred to. They are the ones that are used to being referenced. And so it's really important to take into account their information and what they've learned. They've gone through that experience. They have a lot of wisdom to share. So that's what I think is really important.

So this is kind of a list of don'ts, by the way. We will get to the list of do's, don't worry. So if you want to maximize your team's engagement, don't shut down their new ideas. Make sure you reference them first before you go outside. Do not micromanage. If people have the experience and you don't, even as a leader, great. Let them run with it. They will figure it out. You know, this is the whole part about trusting your excellent and Unique Ability team members. You want to make sure that they trust that you will listen to ideas, that they will get the credit for that, that they are acknowledged and appreciated for their ideas. If you take it for granted or don't acknowledge them for it, that also feels really crappy.

So then they start giving less. They start to throttle back, to settle at this lower level of productivity. And you may not even notice. I'm trying to remember who exactly said it, but it was such a mic drop moment at workshops. He said, sometimes you're failing so slowly, you think you're winning. Ouch, ouch. And this is what's happening when team members switch





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back from giving 100% of their Unique Ability, their passion, their ideas, and they settle back to what they already know. So it's very, very costly. And it happens when people give up hope that things will change.

So it doesn't take a long time to get a team from unique to excellent. It really doesn't. Some of them will keep trying to poke through and like, hey, we're used to doing it this way. You know, let's work on this together. But it doesn't take long for people to get beaten down. I do think that Unique Ability is rarer, and I think it needs to be babied and protected and supported and reinforced and not taken for granted. So you want to make sure that you keep the morale high. Don't demoralize them. Really make sure that you are honoring your internal learning process, even if you bring in outside people. Really, what's the word, inculcate people into your culture and let them know this is how we do things. And if this is not how you can work, then probably here is not the right place.

And if someone is showing up that way, even if they've been there for a long time and all of a sudden they change their tune, good, then it's like, hey, point this out to them. This is not working. You're not being collaborative. And then help them make a better choice, either to stay and change their approach or to exit to a better future for them. So really key that you pay attention to this. Do not let it go. Do not step over it and think it will magically go away on its own. It will not. And it's very much up to us as leaders, and I don't care if you're an overall leader, a situational leader. It's up to all of us to uphold our culture and to uphold that Unique Ability framework. That is what is most important.

So speak up. I know it's easier if you're higher up in the organization, but this is critical. This is key. This is how you tap into that incredible capability that team members have and they want to contribute. And when they do, they stick around for a really, really long time. You don't have to fire people. You don't have to look for new folks because you've got people in there who are growing, who are helping to grow your company. I mean, I'm not at all a fan of someone who's just resting on their laurels and they think that because they've done it well in the past, that's going to just give them credit today in the present or the future. Nope.

I don't want to do that and I've been around a really, really long time. It's important to me that I keep growing. I keep learning. I'm as good as my last podcast. I'm as good as my last recording. I'm as good as my last book project with Dan. I'm as good as my last coaching workshop or my last speech, right? If I'm not constantly getting better, then that's a problem. And I've been around for a long time. So it's really critical that everyone has a no entitlement attitude with this, one of our other core values.

So anyway, I just want to kind of attune you to this opportunity to have this incredible Unique Ability Team. It's going to look different. It operates on different principles. I love this about Coach for our clients, and I also love this for our team, that we are learning from our own past experience, distilling down that incredible wisdom, and applying it to our future—knowing what



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we know, knowing what we don't know, and being incredibly resourceful to go get it if we don't have it, right? So it's this incredible interplay with the world, and there's so much capability and so much talent, both in your company and outside. It's how do we get good at this? How do we get good at this interchange with the world to keep feeding our strengths and what we're already really good at and reinforcing our own areas of Unique Ability? That, to my mind, is the ultimate.

So it's been really fun to kind of break down that difference between excellent and unique. What I want for you, I want that for you personally, and I want that for you for your company, is you're operating at that Unique Ability level. But you need some awareness about what will keep it and what will protect it and what will diminish it. And sometimes we can do that inadvertently, especially if we think we know better. So you might need to be aware of your own behavior too. But I just think the opportunity for growth, the opportunity for Unique Ability Teamwork, the opportunity for creativity, the opportunity to just expand into new levels that you never dreamt of based on the Unique Abilities of your team, is phenomenal if you support that. If you have that as part of your ecosystem and as part of your structure and you don't mess it up, then that is what's possible for you.

So I'm very curious to hear your thoughts on this. Hopefully it's given you some awareness of some distinctions that you might not have had. I know the distinction between excellent is 2x and Unique Ability is 10x hit me actually in a couples workshop a few years ago. It was like, oh, that's the difference. And the difference is passion. You know, superior skill with passion lights you up. You'd love it. I want to work with passionate people, and I want you to be working with passionate people too. So let's design this. It's a great future for us. It's a great future for people with whom we work, and it's a great future for your clients because of all of the incredible value that these people provide. So any questions or comments, please let me know at [questions@strategicoach.com](mailto:questions@strategicoach.com). As always, thank you for listening, and here's to your team success.