YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Is Your Team Scared To Make Decisions?

Shannon Waller: Does your team confidently make decisions or are they scared of your reaction? Stay tuned to learn more about how to get your team in motion. Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. I've had a really interesting and fun week, but I also came to some conclusions that I could not wait to share with you. So I was in a number of different team conversations. It's been a bit more of a back stage week, fewer front stage things to do. So I actually had time to hang out with my teammates and my colleagues and my other team leaders, and a pattern started to emerge. And I wanted to see if this was true for you, and if so, ask you what you're doing about it.

So what I've noticed is that people were waiting a lot. They're asking for permission before taking action. That's weird. Why aren't people just going ahead with it? So what I'm noticing is that people were slow in making decisions. They would revisit the same decision over and over again because they were concerned that the person would change their mind. One person did it because, I think, asked me a question, if I wanted final decision making on something. And this is someone with whom I've worked for 20 plus years. We both work on the same project. And you know what? No, I don't want to see it. You've got this. And I said, and if I don't like it, I'll let you know. She was like, great. So, I loved it because I could just go, hey, that's … she was, I think, being polite and asking me, because I do—I appreciate how things look, and it was about some marketing and how something looks in some pictures. But at the same time, she's as much vested in this as I do, and I completely trust her decision making. And I know we can have a conversation if it didn't work. So I was like, no, go, make it happen.

And then that happened again with someone, but a particular decision that was made for one person, we want to make it consistent for everybody. And they were going to bring it back to the decision maker. And this decision has been made. Let's just draft up the communication, make sure it happens, remind them that they did approve it and go—no more revisiting. This is getting tedious. And then someone else about a new launch of something in our company. And they're like, oh, well, it's not going to be 100 percent done. And they didn't want to see it until it was completely finished. I'm like, yeah, no, close the door on the part that's not done yet. And let's just go with the part that is done, get us in there as quickly as possible.

So even though Activator is not in my top five, it is in my top seven, I believe, from CliftonStrengths standpoint, but I just felt like I was activating all over the place, which by the way, was super fun, let's be clear. But what I realized I was doing was giving people the confidence that I think they needed to go, to make a decision, to take action, to move something ahead. And I was thinking, why aren't they feeling that? And what happens if it doesn't work out, right? So what's causing people to pause? Well, a couple things. One is, again, politeness, a sense of hierarchy or power, whatever. And for those of us that are in a leadership position, people give us power. You may not even be taking it, quote unquote, but people are giving it to you. It's very important that we empower them with very clear

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parameters in terms of where their decision making lies and where it does not, right? Because that's a thing to make sure that people really do understand what the rules are.

So this is interesting because it goes back to some different types of decision making. And I love what I've learned about Jeff Bezos's framework, which is Type 1 versus Type 2 decisions. Type 1 are actually the slow decisions. These warrant slowing down, pulling in more judgment, doing more research, that deeper dive, because they're gonna last for a long time, and there's usually a big cost of time, energy, attention, and money that goes into it. So a Type 1 decision is one where you actually do want to go slow. And then there's the Type 2 decisions—they call it two-way door, where it's reversible. If it doesn't work, you can change it. A picture up on a screen, don't like it, we can swap it out. No big deal. So as much as possible, where it's low risk and easy to change, those are the types of decisions that really make sense to be pushed down and to make sure that your team knows that they have authority over those things. You know, not only do they have responsibility, but they have authority. They can make a decision, and then they can also unmake it and learn from it, if that's what needs to happen.

So the Type 2 decisions should be delegated and made fast, often by one person or a small group. So you want to take this into account when you are delegating, and if you never make it clear, guess what? You're the bottleneck, because every decision, Type 1 and Type 2, goes right back up to you. In fact, people lose discernment. They lose a sense of which one's a Type 1 or Type 2 because you have control of all of them. In my experience, people shut down that part of their brain because there's no point. Apparently the brain sheds cells it's not using. So if your team is not exercising their decision making muscles, their decision making brain cells, they go away; they go dormant, put it that way. And then it's very awkward to restart the engine on that one, just saying. So you really do want to give people authority on that.

Now, if you're with someone really brand new, you're not going to hand them the keys to the kingdom and say run. Not to mix too many metaphors, it's like basically giving someone scissors and telling them to run with scissors. That may not be a good idea. So definitely be really, really clear on what type of decision making it is, the parameters, if there's budget involved, check out the reversibility of the decision. If it's not hard or time consuming, tell them to go for it. This is how they learn. Then you also need to be someone who's cool when it didn't go the way you thought it would or when there's a mistake or a breakdown. If you are someone who flies off the handle, loses their cool, loses their fill in the blank for the other words for this one, then you're going to scare off someone who otherwise would have been a confident decision maker.

So it's really important that we are self-regulated as human beings, especially as leaders, because other people are looking to us and they can read our facial expressions, they can read our body language, they'll read things into our tone of voice. And one distinction I've been making lately is that sometimes there are decisions that I do not like personally, or that's not

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the way I wanted it to go. And I can be disappointed about something or mad about something, but guess what? I'm still going to make that decision if it is in the best interest of the company. And that's what I found myself saying this week is, hey guys, we need to make a decision and move on with this because this is what is in the best interest of the company.

This is what it means to have a purpose-driven company. EOS talks about this. This is why you want to have your core mission and values laid out. You want to have your tenure target set out so people know what you're doing. It's also why you want to be super clear on your core values. One of the things I've heard said about core values is that core values are really, really important because they tell people what to do and how to do things when you're not there. How great is that? You know, for our company, P-A-G-E, PAGE, okay? Positive and collaborative teamwork—being alert, curious, responsive, and resourceful. G stands for growth and results. I want to add speed into that one, by the way. And then E is about providing an excellent first-class experience.

We run 500 workshops over the course of a year. Do you think Dan or Babs or other team leaders need to be at every single one of those workshops to ensure that people are providing an excellent first-class experience? No. In fact, we have PAGE awards for people who demonstrate that. You know, when they take an extra effort to return something to a hotel where a client's left a laptop behind, or they make sure that something gets shipped, or sometimes our clients have been escorted to an urgent care facility because they're not feeling well. I mean, our team goes above and beyond all the time to provide an excellent first-class experience, and we celebrate the heck out of that. And I love it. And guess what? They don't have to ask permission.

So I really want to make sure we understand the cost of being fuzzy or being grumpy or prickly or flip-flopping our decisions. Because what it does is it slows down decision making. It prevents people from taking action. And if you slow decision making, you slow progress. Doing kajillions, but doing a ton of research and not taking action, you haven't learned anything. Take action and learn from the impact on that. The marketplace has a vote. I love Dan quoting, apparently Mike Tyson said, "Everyone has a plan until I hit them." That still cracks me up. It's like, guess what? We can do all the research in the world, but then we take action and the world does not respond the way we thought it would. Guess what? We need to iterate. We need to adapt. We need to change. We don't have to like it, but we need to accept it and move on.

Personally, professionally, this is the way of the world. And this is the entrepreneurial world. If you want to be successful in this, it is super key that you train yourself and your team to respond to reality, not just what we made up in our heads. You know, what we made up in our heads is 50 percent. The world has the other 50 percent. So the quicker we're in motion, the faster we learn. In preparation for this podcast, I was rereading my Team Success Handbook

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because success strategy number seven is take action. Whenever possible, make things happen. Don't wait for others to make the first move. But how we respond when things don't go the way we would have done them, or people don't do things the way we would have done them, or it does not go as planned, how we respond dictates how confident people are to take action. We need to be gracious. We need to help people learn from experience. After all, that's how we got smart. And we're still learning. That process never ends, I hope. It's like, oh, do something and figure it out based on that. And if it's a reversible decision, don't worry about it.

So it's one of those things where we can tell people to take action, but we have to reinforce that with our behavior. And with our behavior, when things go well, we celebrate that success. And when things don't go well, we respond graciously from a learning perspective, not from a punishment or judgmental perspective. It's tough to do. We all go in The Gap all the time. I don't like when things don't go my way. Let's be really clear. But how I respond and how I treat other people in that is absolutely vital, and including myself, by the way. It's important that I don't beat myself up if something goes wrong. I can be bummed for a minute, and then guess what? My job is to get on with it. Figure it out, Shannon. Keep going. And I want to encourage other people to do that, too.

It was really fun activating this week. I thoroughly enjoyed it, but I also made sure why people knew I was doing it. It's like, hey, this is what's best for the company. This is what we need to keep in mind. Dan, Babs, other leaders, they might not like something or have a different opinion, but if it's best for the company, ultimately, that's what we're all here for. That's what we have in common. It's not just about their personality. It's not just about my personality. It's about what is best for the company. What's going to move us ahead? What's going to help us be more successful? Do that. You will not be in the wrong. if you take action in that regard.

So if you notice that in your company that culture is getting a little frayed, or maybe you just need to build it up from the beginning, or that you used to have it and it's lost a little bit of traction, I hope today has given you some tools to be able to think about it. It's like, oh, is my facial expression and my tone of voice preventing people from being confident in making a quote-unquote risky decision for them? Because we're in a position of power. We need to use that power incredibly responsibly. And we need to empower other people with things that really are not all that risky, like not a big deal. Help people gain discernment in the type of decision you were willing to move fast on and you want them to move fast on and the ones that actually require slowing down. I've learned this because I've taken so many decisions to Babs, co-founder of Strategic Coach, and I've learned which ones are which. And I'm very confident taking action on tons of decisions that other people are not because I've been around forever. So that's one thing, and I've gotten her brain, so I understand it.

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Now, if someone hasn't worked with you for a long time, you need to communicate what your thinking is. Let people know. Our tool, The Impact Filter, genius for helping do this. Take a particular situation, well, we actually do have an exercise where it's called The Delegation Filter. One of my favorite ways to use this incredible tool is to go, okay, in this type of situation, here's the purpose, the importance, and the ideal outcome. Here's what best looks like, preferably a story from my own experience. Here's the worst experience when we don't take action or if it goes poorly. And then here are the success criteria to ensure the best result and prevent the worst. This can be in terms of hires. This can be in terms of clients. I have signed people up into the Program that were not right fits. I had to refund my commission check. I have to tell you, did not enjoy that experience. No fun at all.

This is what can happen if you ignore the parameters. And here are the success criteria to know whether or not someone's a right fit for Coach. Here's the success criteria for having a really great Team+ coach, for example. Here's the success criteria when you are working on this type of a project. Here's what it needs to look like when it's done and done really, really well. So getting your thinking out is an incredible shortcut for people getting to know what is important to you. What are your priorities? What are you looking at? And when you can tell real stories from the best and the worst, oh my gosh, this is how so much training is done in the military. Here's what happened when I pulled the pin out of the grenade and didn't throw it fast enough. You know, here's what happened when I didn't have good enough camouflage. Here's what happened when I ignored my direct orders. These are learning situations and they're real. They're not pretend. So this is the kind of education we need to be giving our teams.

Sometimes you know something that to them looks like something small. You're like, oh, no, no, no, mayday, mayday. This could be really, really bad. And other times they think something's a big deal. And yeah, don't worry about it. That's super easy to fix. But you can't share that perspective until you have those conversations. And again, The Impact Filter is just a great way to get your thinking out on paper and then to help them think it through. The other tool, The Strategy Circle. Again, these are all in our quarterly books. The Strategy Circle—here's the goal, here's the result, which is what it looks like when it's done and done well, which is very, very clear after you've done The Impact Filter, by the way. They go together. And then what are all the obstacles in the way? Think that through together.

And by the way, I'm someone who's very optimistic, so I usually miss about half the obstacles. So I actually count on my team to have a perspective and I'm using this word discernment a lot today, but they have distinctions about challenges in terms of time or technology or resources that I just don't and probably never will. So I actually count on my team to help me with the obstacles. And then we all jump in together to help come up with the strategies. So that's a rough picture of that. And then the other number one learning tool, and I'm very excited because our upcoming next quarterly book, so it will come out in December of 2026, depending on when you're listening to this, is called Failure To Breakthrough. And in it, Dan

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and me outline The Experience Transformer. It's actually never been available as a tool before to the world.

So I'm super excited. If you're not in Coach, then this will be your first chance. If you're in Coach, then you'll already have it because it's so incredible. It's my number one favorite learning tool, bar none. And just really quickly, the outline is, what's the situation? What happened? What about it worked? Because even when things didn't work, when overall, it wasn't all bad. And even in great situations, some things could have worked better. So what worked, what didn't? Do an analysis. Then, knowing what we know now, what will we do differently? And there's a brainstorming column and then you come up with your new integrated success strategy and method, really making sure that you don't lose what worked and you fix what did not. That is your new series of strategies for success for next time.

You can't make over the past—that's done—but you can take your learning and apply it to the future. So at least you'll have a different set of problems. I do appreciate that making a mistake once, cool. Making it a second or third time, not so much. This is how you can prevent that from happening and learn from our experience. And this is really what the heart of entrepreneurship is all about, is putting things out there, testing them against the marketplace, and then making them better. There's no such thing as perfect. Get it out the door, get it out into the world, and then help it become even better. And that world can be your team, that world can be your clients, whomever it is that you're serving, but it's just important to be in motion.

So Strategic Coach tools of Impact Filter, Strategy Circle, Experience Transformer, you being self-regulated, super important. You help people recognize that they're always on the winning or the learning team. And the only time we're ever on the losing team is when we're not winning or not learning. That's how you grow. That's how you iterate. That's how you create a culture where people are empowered to take action, because they're not scared of the consequence. They'll know that you'll deal with something graciously. That is so important. And if you're in a position of power, your word has weight, your facial expressions, your body language. Other people are reading you, even how you walk in the door in the morning. If you forget to say hi to someone or you're in your own head, they will avoid you until you look like you want to be interacted with. And they'll do that out of respect and fear.

I don't love being feared, just so you know. I don't think that's a particularly creative or positive way to be. But pay attention. Pay attention to how you're coming across and how you're responding and knowing that who you are makes a difference to the people that you are leading, which is everybody, and then take that into account. And you can say, hey, I'm grumpy about this decision. I don't like it, but it is what's best for the company, so I'm going to go with it. You get to be human. Just be real and don't be a tyrant. But I think you know that already.

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Is Your Team Scared To Make Decisions?

All right, so the whole point here is to speed up decision making, give your team confidence, and give them the learning that they need to know what type of decision it is. Type 1, take your time. Type 2, easily reversible. Let's go delegate that so that your company can move ahead. Let's get everyone on that entrepreneurial page. Encourage them to read The Team Success Handbook. I think that will help you feel more supported so that you're not the bottleneck with all the decisions. And again, decisions are being made and your company is moving ahead. It's learning and growing and providing even more value to the marketplace. So that is my message. I hope it wasn't too much of a rant. I'd love to know your input, your thoughts, any feedback. Please let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. And as always, here's to your team success.

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