

Well, hey there, and welcome to another episode of the Your Next Best Step Podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Cantley, and I am super, super, super glad you are here. I wanted to talk about a topic that I talk to a lot of people about, especially right now, because we're into the holiday season, and energy is really high, and there's all kinds of stuff that needs to happen. There's holiday parties and there's things that we need to do before the end of the year. Inevitably, businesses struggle with teams and the lack of communication with teams.

I wanted to talk today to give you an idea of an activity that you can do with your team if you've run into this problem, if you've had a difficult time getting your team to communicate better and getting them to really interact more positively, so that everybody can move forward and everybody can grow. Like I said, I cannot name anybody that I've ever worked with, whether when I was in corporate myself or since I've been working with businesses over the past decade, that hasn't had trouble getting their team on the same page. I think it's just something with human nature.

Over the years, I've built my team, and from time to time things come up, and, yeah, there are hiccups in the process and there are struggles that we encounter when we are building a team and when we have a team. I think it's just something that happens until we ourselves learn how to be a better leader. One of the things that I have found is that a lot of people think that managing people means that if I'm a manager, I have to tell people what to do, and that's really not the case.

Managing people, the bigger definition of being a manager and the bigger thing that we want to focus on is not necessarily just telling people what to do. I mean, yes, you will have employees where you're just telling them what to do when they're executing, because it takes all kinds in businesses, but the majority of what you're doing on a regular basis is ... Being a good manager, being a good leader, means that you are holding space for people to rise to their highest level of potential, their highest potential, but also, you're holding that space, so that if things start to crumble down, or something doesn't work, or a project flops, you're also holding that space to help pick up the pieces to get to the core of the matter, the core emotion that ... the underlying emotion that is occurring in a situation or to the core of the matter, so that you can find a solution faster and you can help them to move forward. So, it's not just about telling people what to do, but more about holding a space for them to rise, but also for you to help pick them up if they fall.

As we've talked about in previous episodes, failure is inevitable. I mean, things will happen. Things will not always go the way that you want them to go, but that's okay, because the more we are failing means the more we're trying. The more things don't go the way that we want them to go, the more chances we have to make things better, so that we can build more visibility and we can find out how to make our product, or our service, or just our business run even better. It goes back to that making things better by making better things, I like to say. I heard that from Seth Goden a long time ago, and that has just stuck with me ever since.

So, like I said, what it comes down to, the biggest thing here is that, first of all, as a leader, the more you understand your vision, the clearer you are on the higher purpose of your business, the vision you have for your business, the mission that you have, the problem that you want to solve for your customers, as well as who your customer is, the clearer you are on that, the clearer you can communicate your expectations to your team and also help them to understand things that you want them to do a lot better. So, that's the first piece. The other thing is, like I said, holding that space, not just thinking that

you're just barking orders at them and that you're just telling them what to do, but holding a space for them to rise to their highest potential and to get them to understand how growth happens.

So, the first thing is I wanted to go through four pieces that I believe are the four things that we need to do and we need to have in place, as a leader, as a manager, as a business owner in our business, so that we can build a better team and really get people to work together in a much more positive ... to get them to connect and interact in a much more positive way, because so often, and I've seen this, I get, "We're in crisis mode," and then people get in ... they just start to react to things. They just start to go into reaction mode. Okay? Then guess what happens. The communication and the connection starts to break down. What happens when breakdowns happen? More often than not, I think it's a human nature thing, people want to just look at what went wrong and who did what wrong, and that then takes that breakdown and that thing that didn't go so right and it makes it even worse. Right?

Again, I think it's human nature and it's just how people are, especially when things get busy and businesses are, especially if you've had some shifts in your business and you've had some hurdles that you've had to overcome, it's easier for people to look at what went wrong and focus on that and focus on who didn't do what and this didn't happen, instead of taking ownership for their own piece in the puzzle, and for maybe what they didn't do, or maybe even how they didn't speak up or they didn't help, or they don't want to take ownership for their own stuff. It's easier for us to look outside.

Again, that's when a lot of breakdown happens, because it's easier for people to look at someone else and say, "They're not doing X, Y, Z," than it is for them to take ownership and responsibility and say, "You know what? I didn't do this piece, even though maybe I wasn't in charge of the project or the event, but I didn't do this piece, and therefore the trickle down effect was this person couldn't do this, and this person couldn't do that, and that person couldn't do this, and it kind of moves from there." But also, as a business owner, and even if you are leading a business and running a business, you might not be the owner, but you're leading it, at the same time, we also want to make sure that we're taking responsibility for our piece in everything.

That doesn't mean that if the people on our team aren't getting stuff done, we take responsibility for that. That's not what that means. It means that we are showing up every day as a leader, as the leader that we want to be in the future, as the leader of a successful business that we see in the future. We're showing up like that absolutely every single day. We are also taking responsibility for owning the vision in our business and making sure that it gets communicated to absolutely every single person, not once, not twice, not three times, but on a consistent basis, so everybody understands that. We're going to talk about that in a little bit and why that's important. So, the more we, and that's what I said, the clearer we are as far as what the bigger purposes of our business, the better we can explain that to everybody that works with us, and for us, and everybody, and even our community and our customers, like everything just becomes clearer.

So, the first thing that I want to talk about, the things that we want to ... so that we understand what people need, what our team needs in order to be motivated, to come together, to connect, and to interact in a more positive fashion. The first thing, and I'm sure you've heard this before, people want to know that when they speak, that what they're saying matters, that you hear them, and that it's important. Okay? I hear people when I'm talking to leaders in businesses. I had one in particular where they were like, "I cannot get my team to work together. Every time I say something, they always tell me

that I'm not listening to what they say." I'm like, "Well, are you listening? Do you hear what they're saying?" "Well, I know like they have this idea, and I don't think it's going to work." It's like, "Okay. So, what you're telling me is you're not listening to them."

People, most of the time, when you're talking, and maybe you've caught yourself doing this, when people are talking, you're not really hearing what they're saying. You're not really listening to it, because what you're doing is you're just thinking about how you want to respond. The next time you find yourself doing that, try and take a minute and just say, "You know what? I'm not going to think about a response. I'm just going to be present to what this person's saying, and I'm just going to hear. I'm just going to listen to what they have to say." Listen fully with intention, not from the standpoint of, "Oh, I want to respond, because I know I have the answer and I know I can fix this for them," because so often we want to just fix things, but instead think to yourself, "I am going to just be present to what they're saying and I'm going to listen to what this person's saying, because it's important."

The more we do that, the more we really ... I mean, you can really hear and figure out faster what the solution is to what someone's struggling with. The more we just are listening, because we want to just respond to them and then shut them down for whatever idea they have, then guess what? We really don't hear what the issue is. We really don't hear what that ... or we can't figure out what that underlying emotion is behind whatever frustration is being expressed to us. I've seen this time and time again.

I have a client that I work with and their complaint to me one time was that they have this employee, this manager on their team, and this manager always takes everything personally. She always takes everything personally. Well, when we got to the core of the matter, what was happening is that for the longest time any time this person would bring their idea up, the person who was running the business would just immediately just shut it down. They would be looking at them and hearing what they were saying, but not to hear, and to listen, and to understand, but they were hearing them, so they could just respond and say, "No, it won't work, because of X, Y, Z." So, of course, after that, any time this person shared their ideas, they just felt like, "Nobody ever listens to me. Nobody ever listens to me, and they don't like any of the things that I have to say or any of my ideas, so I'm just going to stop sharing." Well, giant communication breakdown. Right?

Remembering that people that work for you, they want to know that you hear what they have to say, that what they say matters, and that you're listening to them, listening not to solve the problem per se, that's not what needs to happen all the time. Sometimes it's just to listen, to help them, to hear what they're saying and understand the problem better, so you can help them solve their own problem. That's an even more powerful thing. When you can get someone ... when you listen enough and ask the right questions to get someone to solve the problem for themselves, it's a much more empowering situation than just telling them what they need to do to fix it. So, give that some thought.

The second thing is that they want to know that they have the ability to be creative and they have the ability to be responsible for something, whatever tasks are given to them, and they can use their creativity and make decisions based on what they need to do. This comes into play a lot when I teach project management. So, when you're teaching project management to people, when I teach project management to people, I always say that you don't want to just talk with maybe the owner and one manager or just the owner brainstorms out a project and then just tells people what to do.

The better thing is to have your team be engaged and part of the entire process, so that everybody knows what ideas ... everybody has a chance to share their ideas. Okay? Plus, everybody knows how the situations are breaking down. People can share their thoughts about things or maybe give their suggestions, but then also they understand the whole process of how things are being broken down and who's responsible for what. They also know and feel empowered that they have the autonomy to make decisions based on the whole conversation that happened when this process when the project was being broken down and put into individual tasks. They understand the whole process behind it, and they know and want to take ownership for the things that were assigned to them, because they understand how everything fits in.

When you do a project and you do it in a silo or in a vacuum, or the project is broken into silos and everybody functions in their own silo, or when you do it in a vacuum and you have one person who's thinking of everything, and planning, and breaking everything down, and doesn't necessarily share everything with the group, well, of course, communication breaks down. Nobody really knows what's going on. Nobody was part of the process, so they can't take full ownership of something. The more you can give people that ability to be creative, have them be part of the process, and give them the ability to use their creativity to make decisions, if they make a wrong decision, they make a wrong decision and you fix it later, but to have that autonomy to take ownership of their tasks that have been assigned to them in their specific area and to also understand what everybody else's responsibility is, so that everybody can hold each other accountable.

The third thing is that people want room to grow. They want room to be able to grow professionally. They want room to be able to grow with personal development. They want room to be able to grow and just learn new skills or even improve their current skills, improve their craft. They want to be able to have some mastery to learn new things that will consistently move them forward, to go to classes, or to work with a mentor, or to figure out a new piece of software.

One of the things that I love is when I work with a new team member of my own and they're like, "Hey, Theresa, I saw this piece of software, and I thought it was really cool. I watched a demo on it. What do you think?" Go for it. You know, go for it. Learn it. Go for it. Or buy this course. Go through it. How can we implement it in the business? Giving people that chance to learn new things, so that they can keep growing, so that maybe if you have an organization that's big enough, they can keep moving up and having some career growth. But even so, just giving them the chance to learn new things, to be able to expand their position, that will ultimately help the greater good in the business, so giving them that chance to get some mastery.

The fourth thing, and this is a bigger one, which I touched on in the beginning of this episode, is people want to understand how they fit into the grander scheme. The clearer you on ... The clearer you on. The clearer you are about the vision, and the mission, and the bigger purpose of the business, as well as the bigger purpose of each individual and what they do and how they fit into everything. So, one of the things that I do is I walk business owners and leaders through something that I call a vision flow. Okay? What that flow is is it's like an org chart. So "O they can say, okay, here I am, the visionary, and these are the people that I want to work with me, and this is how their role fits into the grander scheme of the business to support that vision."

Understanding what the purpose is, the deeper purpose is of the business, and who the people are that you need on your team or that you want on your team, but then also getting them to understand, from the dishwasher, to the gift wrapper, to the maintenance man, to whomever, whoever it is, getting each person to understand and communicating this with them, what their bigger purpose is in the business and how they fit into the growing of the business and the success of the business. So often people get a job description and it's I'm a marketing coordinator, and then they see their tasks and they see their roles, and then that's it. So, the only thing that they know is what they're responsible for and what's part of their job. Right?

Many, many, many people never take the time to fully explain to someone what their purpose is in the business, how they fit into the greater scheme of things, how the dishwasher ... how the fact that they are spending time making sure that the dishes are properly cleaned and sanitized, how that impacts the whole experience for the customer and why it's important that they pay attention to those things and that they're there on time and that they show up every day. To get people to understand how their unique purpose and gifts fit into the grander scheme of the business and why their role is important. The first thing, like I said, is people want to know that you hear them, and that you're listening to them, and that what they have to say is important. Getting people to solve their own problems, not necessarily telling them what to do, but getting them to asking enough questions and listening, so that you can help them solve the problem for themselves and help them learn the lesson that they need to learn instead of just telling them what they need to do to fix it.

The second one is providing that autonomy and that ability for them to be creative, to be part of the process when you're planning things out, and also to hold them accountable and make them responsible for whatever it is that they need to do. Also, providing space for people to grow, to master things, to learn new things, so that they're constantly improving and growing, whether it's personal development, or professional, or new skills that they want to learn. Whatever that looks like, people want to be able to have that room to grow. There is nothing worse than staying stagnant in a role.

Now, granted, some people are okay doing the same thing day in and day out. However, I'm sure if you talk to them, because I found this to be true myself, there are things that they would like to learn, new things that they would like to learn, or things that they would like to be involved in. So, if you take the time to ask the questions, I'm sure that you would be pleasantly surprised to know that they're interested in more than what they've been doing day in and day out for many, many years.

Then the last piece is to understand the purpose, their own individual purpose, as well as how that fits into the bigger purpose of the business, and communicating that on a regular basis. So, I'm going to give you an activity, and this is going to be something that you can do with your team at any point in time. It's something that I walk people through, especially at this time of year, when we're closing out a year and going into planning for a new year.

The three things that I have people do with their leadership team, you can do it with all your employees, whatever your team looks like, if you have departments, you can do it by department, but is to ask three questions. Okay? So, the first one is ... and this is the activity that I do with people. Like I said, it's part of the closing out, it's part of the assessing or looking back, and learning from the past, and assessing the present, and planning for the future. It's part of that whole process that we walk through. This piece is just to help connect people together more.

So, the first thing is to ask, "What is most important to you?" Each one of your team members or each person has to state, and normally I get big pieces of paper, and they state either what core values ... so they pick words or just a statement, like what is most important to you? I like to tell them to pick three. It could be spending quality time with my family in the morning, or it could be learning something new every day, or it could be getting together with friends once a week, whatever that is, or it could just be purpose, to have purpose behind everything. Whatever those words are, when you start writing them down and everybody gets clear on what's important to them, but then everybody on the team can see. Okay.

Normally what I do is I write the person's name and then underneath it ... Now, if you don't have that many people on your team, you might be able to get away with one sheet of paper, but I like to do it where each person has their own piece of paper. Then on that, that person, you can put their name on the top of the paper, and on it they can write what's important to them. Let's say you have five people on your team. You'll have five pieces of paper. You can start to see they're expressing what's important to them, and everybody else on the team can see what's important to that person, but you can also see how those core values or those things that are important to each team member, then how that aligns with and ties together with the things that are the core values of the business itself. Inevitably, they always align, if you have the right team members. If you don't, it will stick out like a sore thumb. But let's just say for this conversation you can see how everything aligns with each other.

It's really nice though, because then people know what's important. I had one client that I worked with where they had two people that just did not get along. They were kind of like oil and water. When we did this exercise, it was an eye opener, because each of them could see what was important. The reason why they were like oil and water and they didn't really mesh that well is because they were total opposites. But once they could see what was important to each person, they could kind of say, "Okay. Maybe that person acts like this or maybe that person does this because this is what's important to them, and that's different than me. That's not something that's important to me, but it's important to them, and I respect that," and they could start to see how they could work together better based on what was important to each individual person. Okay? So, that's the first thing.

Then the second thing ... and this is why it's good to do it on different pieces of paper, but like I said, if you don't have a big team, if it's just maybe just you and a virtual assistant or you and assistant manager and that's your team, maybe you want to do it with all your employees or maybe not. Maybe try it with just the two of you and then do it with your employees, whatever it looks like. But this is why it's important, if you can, to do it on individual pieces of paper, because then part two is each person then, each person on the team, has to acknowledge or focuses on acknowledging their other team members for their unique gifts. So, now that you have your individual pieces of paper, so now each person has to write on that person's piece of paper.

Let's say you have a team member, Joe. All right? So, underneath Joe's he listed his core values. Underneath that each of the team members will then go over and write what they feel, what they want to acknowledge Joe for. Then we usually write, "I want to acknowledge you for," or, "I believe your unique gifts are ..." It could be you're really good at diffusing difficult situations, or you're super creative when it comes to decorating the store, or you are brilliant at breaking down complex problems, or you're really good at explaining difficult things to employees, so that they can understand better.



Whatever that is, each person would then write on Joe's piece of paper gifts that they wanted to acknowledge him for. What does he do better than anybody else on the team?

Then the third thing is then to ... and again, you're looking at what's important to the person, but then you're looking at all these amazing things that people have acknowledged you for on your team, and you're looking at this piece of paper, and it really starts to feel good, because, like I said, number one, you can see what makes everybody different, but then, number two, you can also see how each person's differences become strengths, and how everybody goes together, and why they're in the roles that they're in. The third thing is, what I like to also do is list out what each person has accomplished for the year. So, I typically do three core values in the beginning, and then whatever each team member wants to say about that team member, and then underneath I like to say three things that that person has accomplished that year.

Again, each team member is acknowledging them for what that person was able to accomplish, because it's so hard for us to see. We're always so focused on what we haven't done or where we've fallen short that we fail to see the things that we've been able to accomplish ourselves. So, I like say to have each team member write three things that that person accomplished, but then guess what? I also have that person write three things that they feel that they've accomplished as well. So, when you're done, you have this paper full of goodness that's hanging up there for everybody to see, and everybody can also see how, again, how the team comes together. Also, it gives us a chance to talk about how our uniqueness and our strengths complement each other and also how we can focus on connecting and interacting in a more positive fashion, so that breakthroughs can happen from those breakdowns that have happened already.

It's a really good activity, like I said, especially at this time of year, to really bring people together and to really reset the team and get everybody moving in the right direction again. It's nice to do it actually every quarter, because so often I focused on setting 90 day goals with people, so this is a great activity that you can do, that you can run through with people on a quarterly basis when you're setting your new goals, because if you have a team member that's falling short and they're struggling, it's a really good chance to bring people back together to help each other out, so that at the end of the year everybody can be successful and everybody can achieve all the things that they want to achieve.

Anyway, I hope this episode helped you. Building a strong team, if you want to scale your business and you want to achieve all the things that you want, that you've set out to achieve, and you want to make sure that people are taken care of, as I like to say, the more we can feed our souls and the more we can feed other people's souls, the more bellies we can feed. So, the more you have an empowered team and you focus on these things and really figure out how you can incorporate that into your business, the stronger your business is, the stronger your team's going to be, and the better a business leader you will be, and you'll be able to achieve more. Anyway, I hope this episode helped you. Until next week, take care and be well, and I will see you soon.