

Hey there, my friends and welcome to another episode of the Your Next Best Step podcast. I am your host Teresa Cantley and welcome to today's episode. We are actually on episode number 60. Wow, 60 episodes. That's unbelievable. I know we celebrated our 50th episode 10 episodes ago obviously, but I am so, so, so blessed and excited to bring this podcast to you every week and it's like we're having a conversation. It gives me a chance to chat with you virtually, to dive into some topics, to give you things to think about to help you build your business. And this has just been, I mean, I love doing these episodes every week. I am constantly brainstorming new things to talk about and looking at articles or just conversations that I have with people and just constantly like writing notes down saying "Ooh, that would be a good topic to talk about."

Because it's all based on, as I said in my intro, it's all based on real life experiences. It's not fluff or theory. A lot of it is my own insights and how things that I've done with people over the years, clients, businesses that I've helped build, and just kind of taking all of those insights and bringing them to you every week to hopefully help you to get through some of the struggles and making sure that you're celebrating wins, no matter how small or how big and just kind of everything in between. And just giving you a little glimpse or a big glimpse of my own quirkiness and just a little bit more about me. I'm not your typical business growth expert like how some business growth people are. I don't solely just focus on the numbers and I don't solely just focus on strategy. As someone called me, I'm a healthy blend of science meets Zen.

So we talk about strategy, we talk about financials, we talk about the business side of it. But we also talk about the emotion side of it and the psychology side of it and kind of what really goes into building a business. It's not just about the numbers, it's not just about the business side. It's about much, much more than that. It's about connecting, it's about connecting to yourself and what it is that we really want to do in this world as well as connecting to the people around us, our team, our employees, our community, which brings me to the topic today talking about connection. I've talked to a lot of my clients that I work with one-on-one and I'm actually in a workshop right now with one of my mentors and just talking about what's going on in the world today. I mean, there's so much out there with the small business loans, the PPP loan drying up and they're trying to get more money out there and just talking to and listening to stories from small business owners who, no matter what, they are not sitting back.

And a lot of them didn't get the loans and they're not sitting back and saying, "What am I going to do?" and just sitting there waiting for someone to come help them. They're actually taking action and they are doing everything possible to keep those businesses running. And not just for them but for their employees, for the people that have dedicated themselves to not just the owner of the business but to the vision of the business. I listened to a story this morning from a woman who owns a business up in New York City and it's a place where you can, I think it's called the Creativity Place or the Craft Place or Craft Creativity or something like that, but she owns this business and you can have party there for your little kids, you can take them there for classes, and basically she teaches them how to create with crafts. She was showing pictures, they paint, they cut out stuff and make things.

And she was talking about that she has put her heart and her soul into this business and her main concern was being able to take care of her employees because if she can take care of our employees, she can keep the business running and she can take care of the community. And she said, "It's not just about me, it's not about the money. It's about the passion that I have in this and the passion that the people that work here have in this." And it's just so powerful because I've talked to so many small business owners right now who have said the same thing. It's not just about me, it's not about the money, it's not about getting the loan, it's about being able to take care of the people that have dedicated their time and are super passionate about this business as much as I am, which is why I

wanted to talk about this topic today. How do you guide your employees and your team through a downturn like this?

Because as entrepreneurs, as business owners, we go through stuff ourselves and I've had this conversation as well with people who own businesses that they're like, "I don't have the answers. I normally have the answers and I can figure stuff out but I don't have the answers. I don't know what to do. I feel like I don't have control over the situation and all I want to do is just take care of my employees." And one of the things that I teach in my Business Growth Formula Program is that so many people focus on the external experience and getting more customers and retaining customers and that external piece and what we really need to do is focus on the internal piece too, which is connecting with our employees and making sure that we build a healthy, wealthy, happy environment for them. Because if we build it from the internal side, the external side will flow with it.

So I've talked to many business owners and they've said I, "What do I do? I feel so helpless in trying to guide my people. How do I even talk to them about what's going on so that they're not afraid?" And my answer to them is, all right first and foremost, the greatest need of any human being is they want to be heard, they want to be understood, and they want you to be honest with them. One of the key things to guiding your employees through anything is not that you need to fake it, okay? But that you're honest with them. A lot of people who own businesses think that I need to have all the answers. I need to be strong all the time and just be that leader. And the thing is that's not true. Being a good leader means that, yeah, you can lead in the face of fear, but you also have the ability to be vulnerable and say, "Listen, this is the situation. Yeah. Am I worried? Am I scared? Yes, but I'm not going to let that stop me."

And right there, that's one of the biggest motivators to guiding your people, to helping to guide your people through any downturn, and really through anything like through your business, but especially in a crisis or a downturn in your business, is to have the courage to be vulnerable, to say, "I understand how you feel because I feel that way, but I'm also not going to let that stop me." So the first thing that we can do in trying to guide our employees through this is, number one, to allow ourselves to be vulnerable, allow ourselves to kind of let them see and understand. I'm not saying you need to have a complete breakdown, but to say, "Hey, I understand. Here's the situation and I understand because this is how I feel. There's a lot of uncertainty right now. There's a lot of things happening. There's a lot of moving parts and I'm not really sure how to navigate all of it. But the thing is that I'm working on it, I'm working on it, and I am going to do everything possible so that we can get through this."

So the first step is to, number one, not freeze and not do anything. Number two, and I've seen some business owners do this too, which I don't agree with, which is sitting there and complaining and complaining and complaining about what the government is or isn't doing to resolve the situation. I don't think that's right either because when it comes down to it, when we get to the core, you are responsible for your success, not anybody else. I mean, yes, there are a lot of factors right now that are affecting small businesses and I see it and I'm fighting for them to get them help. But when it comes down to it, you have the choice whether to sit there and just let things go with fate and see what happens or, yes, to fight and to try and get loans or to try and get help, but also do things to help your business get creative. So, again, the first step is to understand that leaders have fear and that's okay.

But a true leader and the sign of real leadership is to be able to feel those negative emotions that fear that uncertainty and move any way to just say, "Yeah, I'm feeling this, I'm going to kind of feel it, acknowledge it, and then let it go. Because I've got a difference to make here." So that is the first and biggest piece, is to allow yourself to have the courage to be vulnerable, but move through it anyway, to say, "I'm afraid, but I'm not going to let that stop me." Because when people see that, that's inspiring. To say, "Yeah, I'm afraid. I don't really know what's going to happen, I don't know how to navigate this, but

that's not going to stop me because I care about this business and I care about you." So that's number one, and going along with that is to also be honest with them. I mean, you don't have to tell them the ins and outs of all the financials.

But you can be honest with them and say, "This is what's happening, and our income is down 80%, but we're going to get through this. We're going to get through this and we're going to figure it out and we're going to be okay." Because here's the other thing, there's so much stuff out there, there's so much false information, also so much negativity. I mean, you hear statistics all the time, revenues are down 85%, 20 million people are out of work, 13 million businesses are going to close. And people hear that and then they freak because it's like, "Oh my God, what's going to happen with our business?" So if you say to them, if number one, you give yourself permission to be vulnerable and let them know that you're afraid, but you're going to lead anyway. And then number two, just be honest with them and say, "Yeah, we hear there's so much stuff going on out there, but I want you to understand that we are going to get through this and we're going to figure out what we need to do to get through this."

So that is part of, I have five keys to leading your people, and this can apply to any time in your business, whether your businesses doing amazing or in times like this. So the first key is that communication piece, is keeping those lines of communication open. The worst thing in the world that you can do is shut down and not talk to people. Because again, rumors start. I mean, there were so many rumors that started with this coronavirus, about the National Guard coming out, and it was almost like they were instituting martial law. I mean, people hear all kinds of stuff and they panic and they freak. So the best way, and you've heard me say this before, clarity is power, the best way to prevent people from freaking out and shutting down and being scared and being worried and running for the hills is to communicate, to give them that clarity at as much as you can. Like I said, you don't need to divulge all of the background information with financials, but you can be honest with them and just keep communicating what's happening.

Keep communicating whatever plans you're putting in place with your leadership team or whatever it is that you're coming up with and that you're going to be implementing. You can keep in constant communication with them. Because here's the other thing, when you do that, that's how you start to build even more trust. That's how you start to build that relationship. And that is worth more than any amount of money that you could pay people. People, I mean, yes, everybody wants to make money because we need to live, right? But there has been research that has been done time and time again that money is not the top motivator for people. So it is understanding them, connecting with them, hearing them, having them under know that you understand them, that you appreciate what they have to say, and that what they have to say is validated, right? So if we keep those lines of communication open, that helps to alleviate and dispel some of those myths and rumors that are going on out there.

But also it helps to keep the fear and the anxiety to a minimum. And that is one thing that is like going crazy right now is that everybody is having so much anxiety, So one of the ways that we can do that is keep communicating. Along with that, number two is connection. So understanding, and this is part of my Business Growth Formula, I have something that I teach where we really go into and dig into assessing all of your employees and assessing the business. And when we do that, that's how we can understand what each other's unique gifts are. So in a time like this, making sure that we have clear lines of communication that are open and that we are also connecting with our employees, and what I mean by that is understanding what their unique gifts are and making them part of the plan, making them part of what's happening and even assigning them tasks to do or projects to take care of based on their understanding of the gifts that they have and their strengths and what they're able to do.

And, again, when you make people part of the process, when you make people part of something, they are more likely to be dedicated to it and be really into seeing it through to the end. That's how they take

ownership for their job performance. So making sure that you have that connection with them where you understand their unique strengths and how that fits into your plan so that you can make them part of the plan. Number three, this kind of goes along with it, is that collaboration. So often people get stuck, especially when we're busy being busy, people get stuck in, "My role is here," and they function in silos. So if you own a restaurant, "My role is bar manager." "My role is front of the house manager." "My role is cook." And they stay in that silo.

So in times like this, and this is something that I teach the people that I work with all the time, is that this is where that collaboration, understanding people's unique gifts, understanding what the plan is, and then working with a collaboration of people, so getting ideas, let's just take the restaurant example, getting ideas from the kitchen staff for maybe how you can do customer service better, or if you're putting out alternative services, like right now people can't go and dine in, so I have clients that are offering boxes, meal boxes. So maybe somebody who is normally a server, a waitress, can add input to how they're going to make the boxes. And using that time, and this is part of the whole thing of making people part of the plan and getting them to buy into the plan and you get them to buy into it by having them be part of creating it, so getting that collaboration going so that you can get new processes in place, you can streamline tasks.

It's not people working in silos, but people working together and when there is a business crisis, when there is a downturn, it's even more important, and this is part of something that he teach as to how diversity can bring innovation. Diverse teams, you don't have a team of just, and we'll go back to the restaurant example, you don't have a team that just consists of cooks. You have a team, you have a diverse team of maybe the cooks and the bartenders and servers coming together to build something bigger, to streamline processes, to put their ideas together that they may not have done before to keep things moving forward. And you would be super, super surprised when you have diverse teams like this they not only are bringing their experience in the skills that they have right now, but they're also bringing the experience that they maybe have had prior to working in this business to the equation, which is going to bring even more ideas into the business.

So, at a time when things have slowed and you're really trying to find alternatives to making money so that you can keep the business going, that can be a super, super powerful thing. So number four, that also goes along with this and you can kind of see how they all fit together, creativity. Got to keep the creativity flowing. No idea is a bad idea. No idea is a bad idea no matter what, but especially in times like this, no idea is about idea. So keeping that creativity going, just because you're a retail store doesn't mean that you can't offer a new service right now for a workshop. And it requires really digging in and looking at the experiences in the background and, like I said, the unique genius, which is part of the connection piece of this to find out what people can do and really using their backgrounds, their diverse backgrounds, their abilities, their strengths, and then really using your collective creativity to build alternative services that are just, I mean, they can be mind blowing.

Like I said, just because you're a retail store, it doesn't mean that you can't offer virtual personal shopping or you can't offer virtual consulting for how to redecorate your house with what you have right now. People are at home, they're looking at the same walls all the time and probably getting sick of what they see. So it doesn't mean that you can't use that creativity and offer something to help your customers. The other thing that comes out of these five steps is also having people understand even more what the ultimate purpose is of the business and who your customer really is and what are the things that they love? Because the people in the kitchen might see something completely different than the servers, who also might see something completely different than the people who run the bar, or the people who are doing inventory see something different than the people who are actually waiting on

customers. So all of these things together you can come up with the best ideas that you've ever had, things that you probably would have never thought about before.

So number five, going along with this whole thing, is consistency and whatever you put together using this creativity, using the connection, having your plan in place, and taking this and being consistent, so making sure that everybody is carrying out these tasks. When everybody works together, you've heard this before, you can achieve so much more. So making sure that everybody is carrying out their tasks in the right way, things are getting done, things are happening, as well as we can also talk about consistency in that you're being consistent with your communication, you're being consistent as a business owner in connecting to your team. Your managers, if you have a management team, they're being consistent and connecting with the people that directly report to them. When all of these pieces come together, this is how we can make sure that no matter what, no matter what the circumstances are in the business, we are continuing to create a healthy, wealthy, and happy environment for our employees.

Healthy in that it's healthy amounts of communication. Everybody feels safe. Everybody feels like they're not scared, they're not afraid they're going to get in trouble, there's healthy amounts of communication and connection. Wealthy, not necessarily from the financial standpoint, obviously, yes, we want to make sure that we are creating financial freedom for everybody in the business, but wealthy can also be something that comes from within. So a wealthy environment that is filled with joy, a wealthy environment that is filled with abundance, a wealthy environment that is filled with positive thinking. Your wealth doesn't necessarily come from money, but comes from that internal fulfillment that you feel and that you also hopefully your employees feel, and that comes from implementing these five things. And also happy, we want people to feel happy and we want to make sure that what they're doing, that they're happy.

I mean, we're not responsible for people's happiness. They need to feel happy, but if we are communicating on a consistent basis, if we have the courage to be vulnerable, if we connect with them, if we have that collaboration with the diverse teams, if we keep going with creativity, and we're consistent with all of this, hopefully it makes people feel happy. And the ultimate goal is, through all of this, we want to get people to not think and function out of fear, but think and function out of opportunity, using this to find the gold nuggets, to find the golden opportunities, so that we can move from a place of fear and struggle and start to move in a place of potential growth. Now, it may not be this huge financial growth, but the growth that we see could be the growth in our ideas, the growth in our structure, the growth in our thinking, the growth in the connection, and the collaboration that we have with everybody in the business.

And if we see that or we can focus on that, the money is going to come because the ideas are going to flow. We're going to be able to get stuff implemented faster. And then also eventually our businesses will be able to reopen and hopefully we'll be able to get some funding. But in the meantime, you have taken control of the situation with the things that you can control. So the biggest thing with guiding your employees in a downturn, what it comes down to is, number one, again, having the courage to be honest, having the courage to be okay with not being okay and saying, "You know what? Yeah, I'm afraid. I don't have all the answers. But we're going to move forward and we're going to get through this." So the more we can do that and the more we can apply these five key things, the more we're going to be able to continue to guide our employees the right way.

It's not from a place of, "I'm the leader and I'm going to be strong," or it's not from a place of fear, and it's also not from a place of not being honest to them. It's from a place of where you're moving from integrity, you're moving from trust, and you're moving from responsibility. And that is what we need to do being the leaders that we want to be, being the leaders of tomorrow, to get through all of this, no

matter what the circumstances are. Coronavirus today or whatever comes our way, we will be able to get through it. So I hope this helped you and I hope that whatever your situation is with your business and whatever is happening, I hope you are staying healthy, I hope you are staying safe, and I hope and I pray every day for all the business owners out there that we can move forward and that we will be able to get whatever funding comes from the government and that small business owners, local businesses are the core of our economy and the core of any community.

It's what keeps communities thriving, they are what keeps the economy growing, and I pray every day for all of the business owners out there, myself included, that we can continue to move things forward and get the assistance that we need, but also to use those God given gifts that we all have to be creative, to find solutions, and to lead in the face of fear. So I hope this episode helped you. Oh, also, one thing I just want to let you know about, I have a workshop, a free workshop, that is coming up and stay tuned for it. We're going to be giving the information on it shortly, but it's going to be all about how to fix things today so that you can grow tomorrow. So stay tuned for the link for that in the show notes for this episode. So until next week, take care, stay safe, be well. And I will see you soon.