

Hey, hey, and welcome back to another episode of the Locally Grown podcast. I am your host, Theresa Cantley. I wanted to talk today about a topic that I've had a lot of questions about recently as I've worked with people on setting their strategic plan and just working through some of the struggles and challenges that local businesses have had trying to hire good employees and retain good employees. But also, what do you do when you have a challenging employee, or even several challenging employees? This is something really, really difficult to absorb and to really understand where those challenges are coming from. Most times, they are not where you think they're coming from, or the issue is not where you think it is. I wanted to talk about this. I had a conversation last week with someone. They were actually having a tough time with four people on their team and asking, what do you do?

Because right now, nobody wants to... I don't even want to say reprimand, but needs to have a difficult conversation with somebody, with an employee who they're having a challenge with, or even bring something up that might be challenging with a person or with a group of people for fear that they would leave. The conversation that I ended up having is that it's taken us so long to hire people, and we're trying to get back up to speed, that we don't want to rock the boat. Then what do they do? They end up walking around on eggshells.

That's not good for anybody. That's not good for a business owner. That's not good for a management team. It's not good for employees either. Why? Well, for the obvious reason. But also, when you feel like you are walking around on eggshells, subconsciously, what happens is you have a fear of making a mistake. You also build up a lot of resentment about your job, about the person, about the people that you work with. You also, that creativity that you might have ends up being squashed. When it's time to be creative, it's really difficult.

Nobody wants to walk around on eggshells. We shouldn't walk around on eggshells. That's why they're eggshells. Because, inevitably when you walk on them, they break, just like people's morale can break when you're walking around on eggshells, a culture can break, relationships, connections, all of the things you don't want to happen will happen.

As I have heard a lot of these things, and I've heard this for a while, as I've talked about on the podcast, business has changed over the past several years. Business has changed. People's buying behaviors have changed, employees have changed. There was a lot of, over the past three, four years, maybe even a little bit longer, there's been a lot of bad business practices that have been exposed.

I know when I was working in an environment that had a lot of bad business practices, I vowed that when I left that environment that I would never work in or help someone who had that type of environment and wasn't willing to change it. I also vowed that I would help people if they were willing to change it, to change it so that they didn't have any bad practices in their business.

Again, the past five years has exposed a lot of things that people were doing in small businesses, particularly in large businesses, that weren't so great. A lot of them were centered around employees. We had the whole quiet quitting culture. We had the great resignation, then we had the great, everybody was applying for jobs and back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth, which it gets frustrating after a while because the fix to it is rather simple, but at the same time, it's hard. It's simple, but it's hard. Why? Because it requires us, as business owners, as leaders, to really look inside ourselves first, which is really hard to do, and admit that, am I doing what I should be doing to train this person, to guide this person, to teach this person prior to holding them accountable for something?

It takes a lot for most people, most managers and leaders and businesses to, when they have a situation with employees and their team, especially now, it takes a lot to stop and say, "Wait a second, what am I doing? Did I coach them enough? Did I train them enough? Do they have a clear idea of what the vision

is? Do they have a clear idea of what the mission is?" If the answer is no, then some of the culpability rests with you as the business leader.

A lot of managers that I've seen in local businesses, the only thing, and this is where it's a difference between a manager and a leader, the only thing that they want to do is point fingers and blame people and dictate to people what they need to do, and then they can't figure out why they have such challenges. The first thing that when you have a challenging situation with an employee or a group of employees, the first thing is to ask yourself, did I... When I elevated this person, when I promoted them, or when we hired them, or whatever it is. Okay, when we hired them, when we promoted them, maybe they've been there for a long time, and asking yourself the question of, number one, are they clear on what the vision is? Are they really clear on what the business stands for? Are they clear on what the culture is? Do they see other people living and breathing that culture? Do they understand what the mission is?

These are all super important things to discuss. It's not a matter because people think, "Oh, I just tell them the vision when they first start, and then they just know it." No, you need to say it and say it again, and say it again, and say it again, and weave it into everything that you do and everything that you talk to them about. All right? Because that is the why behind what it is that you're doing in your business. The vision is the difference that you want to make in the future with your team.

That's the first piece, is have you done that? The other thing is asking yourself, does this person understand the expectation of their job and their role, not just from the standpoint of the skills that they're doing, or the tasks that they're doing, the skills that they need and the tasks that they're doing, but more from the standpoint of what is their role? Really, what is their role? As a leader, it's to, especially if you're in a particular area, what is the role of that leader? It would be obvious that the role is to grow and get a specific area of that business to grow, flourish, and be a part of, or make that part of the vision happen.

Do they understand what their role is? I don't care if the person is a regular hourly employee, or if the person is a manager, a salaried manager, part-time employee, full-time employee, it doesn't matter. Everybody has a role in co-creating the vision of the business and making it happen. Everybody has an important role in upholding the mission of the company. Everybody has a role in creating that experience for the customers. Of course, everybody has a role in making sure that the culture stands in integrity and the culture is upheld.

Making sure that they understand what their role is and what the expectations are of the things that they need to do. Now, when you're going through this, okay, because a lot of... I've seen this happen many times over where we want to promote an employee from being an employee to being a leader in a business. We just think that we're just going to promote them and they're going to know what to do automatically. I've seen this happen. I have another client where they have someone that they hired who was never a manager in an upscale restaurant, but they hired her as a manager, but never gave her any management training. Over the years, have expected her to carry out leadership roles when she's still functioning and thinking like an employee, which is very, very difficult to make that shift if you don't have the right guidance and you don't have the right coaching.

When you are an employee, you have a certain perspective about things. You have a certain perspective and a certain... I'm going to say philosophy of what you do and what your role is. When you become a leader or a manager in the organization, that philosophy and that perspective needs to shift. Many times over, when you don't have the right guidance, and you don't have the right coaching, and you don't have the right person helping you, people fail to make that shift. Then what happens is they get frustrated, they're not really sure what to do. They consistently still have an employee and not like a

leader who leads employees. We end up with a lot of challenges, just like I was describing with one of my clients.

What do you do? You need to make sure that you have, and I talk about this a lot, and it's a big chunk that a lot of local businesses don't pay enough attention to, which is that employee development. It's not just regular employee development, but it's also you have your whole set of program for developing your employees, but then you also have a leadership, or maybe you have mid-level management development, and then you have your leadership development, but you need to make sure that you spell out what does that development program look like? Because you can't just expect that people are just going to understand what they need to do and they're just going to shift. It doesn't happen that way.

It doesn't happen that way because there's a whole new set of expectations and responsibilities and things that you need to do that you need that guidance in order to make that shift over. Making sure that you're taking the time to develop people, but you're also setting those expectations and what their role is.

The other thing that I see many times over, and I just heard this, it's funny. I'm having all these conversations with people. When I get on here, we talk about it because I want to teach you and let you know that you can learn from it too.

Anyway, a lot of leaders in businesses that I've seen don't want someone to fail, because they think it's going to make them look bad. What they fail to realize is that letting someone, because again, we talked about expectations, we talked about what their role is. Giving somebody responsibility to take on a specific task or a project, or whatever, and then letting them do what they need to do. Instead, what many leaders will do, or managers will do is if somebody doesn't do it, they get assigned something and they don't do it, they don't take care of it, or they come to them and say, "Well, I'm not really good at writing, so I don't want to do this." They end up doing it for them. What do you think happens? There's resentment buildup with the manager, who then does the task for the employee, or resentment for the team member that didn't do this.

There's resentment that builds up, but then there's also, you are robbing them of an important lesson that they really need to learn, potentially having something flop, and failure... I heard this the other day. I heard this, actually, it was this morning. Failure, when we look at failure, failure is only how we perceive it. Oftentimes, people think failure, "Oh, I failed," and there's such a negative connotation with it. Believe me, I was one of those people. Sometimes, to this day, I get in my own head and I think that, but really, what failure means, if we look at it, is something didn't work because we were taking action, because we actually tried something. It didn't work, and because it didn't work, there's a lesson or a learning in it that we really needed so that we can take the right action and we can make something work. But that's the piece that people missed, is that they say, "Well, I can't let somebody fail." I used to say that to my bosses, "I won't let you fail."

I would bend over backwards and just completely sacrifice myself to make sure that stuff got done. Stuff got done. When something didn't work out, they got mad. In essence, what should have happened is if something didn't work out, looking at it and saying, "Where was the lesson in this? What did we need to learn so that we can do it differently next time, or that we can make it better next time?" Or maybe, we need to get you some help, or maybe we need to get you some more training.

You see what this is all centered around? So far, is really taking time to connect with your team, setting the guidelines. Those guidelines are your core values. What are your core values? How do they then relate back to your corporate culture? Or not corporate culture, but your culture in your business? All

right. That culture will be, it'll be interwoven through everything. Those core values will be interwoven in everything, whether it's with your employees, or it's with your customers on the outside.

Making sure that, again, asking yourself, have I done everything to help this person? Have I done everything to set them up for success? If the answer... More times over when we have a challenging employee, now granted, there are people that are very toxic. Those are the people we just need to just look at that and say, "Okay, there's no help in this person and we need to just part ways. Thank you very much, but this is not working." But more often than not, when we look at is this a training issue or a behavior issue, did I do all that I could to help this person, more often than not, in my experience, the answer is no. The answer is no, I didn't take time to consistently work on developing them, consistently work on getting them more training or to consistently work on what can we do to improve things.

The other thing is looking at, when you ask yourself those questions, you can also ask yourself, "Okay, also along with this, am I empowering them to really own their role, or am I enabling them to continue to hide?" That's another big powerful question that you can ask yourself to say, "Am I, again, doing everything that I can in order to make sure that this person really can step into their role and succeed at..?" Because if they succeed, everybody succeeds and the business succeeds. [inaudible 00:19:10] this weeks ago where you feed the business, the business feeds you, or the business feeds you, you feed the business, whichever way you want to look at it. What that means is that the business will take care of you. You want to set your business up so that you take care of your employees. At the same time, when you do that, on the flip side, setting the expectation that also you need the employees to come the other way. The employees will then invest back in the business.

But in order to do that, they need to have clarity around what it is that they're working towards and what the expectation is of their role. Now again, you will have people who are really not interested in doing anything. You will have people who are not interested in learning. You will have people who are interested in just gossiping and causing issues. The moment you ask yourself those questions of, have I done my part to help develop this person? Have I done my part in order to communicate how they are co-creating the vision of this business? If the answer is yes and that's how they are, again, it is time to part ways, because truly toxic employees like that, people who just gossip all the time, who don't really care about the business, who take shortcuts all the time, who are actually detrimental to the growth of the business, then it's time to part ways. It's time to part ways and say, "Okay, you know what? Thank you for playing our game. Here's your parting gift. We appreciate it, but this isn't working."

But if not, and it's time to, if you say, no, I didn't do enough to develop this person, then it's time to reset the focus with them, set their goals, set some goals that both of you can work towards, set some milestones to achieve those goals that both of you can work towards, and set some boundaries as far as, "Okay, this is when we're going to meet. We're going to meet biweekly at this time, or we're going to meet once a month at this time," which enables them to work towards their goals, do the things that they need to do, try doing some things that maybe are out of their comfort zone, and then be able to come back to you to ask for help.

That's how you can empower them to really step into what they're doing, and empower them to really own what they do in the business and to really know that they are, again, part of co-creating the vision for the business.

Again, just asking yourself, is this a training issue or is it a behavioral issue? Have you done everything to develop them? Are you empowering them, or enabling them and making sure that you are holding them accountable and responsible to themselves, not just to themselves, but also to the team? It's harder to hold ourselves accountable than it is to hold other people accountable. Teaching them and guiding them to say, "Listen," or getting them to do something that's out of their comfort zone, because then when

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they are responsible for themselves to get something done or to learn something, that goes a long way towards uplifting them, improving morale, and also getting them to continuously keep moving forward.

The last one is making sure that you are meeting with them regularly and you develop some kind of a development program so that, for the different groups of employees that you have in your business, so that you can keep them consistently improving and keep them really understanding their part in the greater vision of what you're trying to accomplish.

I hope that this helped you. In case you are wondering, "All right, how do I start really defining this out?" I do have a free download for you. It is all about creating your strategic plan. Within this, a big part of creating a strategic plan and then executing it is having the right team. You can go ahead and download this at TheresaCantley.com/strategy. It will walk you through different parts of a strategic plan, particularly as it relates to your culture, your team structure, and what you need to do to make sure that you keep your culture and your vision aligned together. Go ahead and download that. I look forward to seeing you back here next week for another episode of the Locally Grown Podcast. Bye for now.