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How To Escape Email Jail, with Deirdre Van Nest

Shannon Waller: Are you getting lost in email? Stay tuned for a phenomenal conversation with my dear friend, client, and coach, Deirdre Van Nest, as we talk about not only how she reduced her email time from two hours to 15 minutes per day, but then eliminated it altogether. Enjoy.

Hi, Shannon Waller here and welcome to Team Success. Today, I am over the moon excited to talk to one of my very, very dear friends, a client who's also my coach, and this is Deirdre Van Nest of Crazy Good Talks. Deirdre, I'm so excited to have you on the podcast. We've been talking about this for a long time.

Deirdre Van Nest: I know. I'm so happy to be here. Yes.

Shannon Waller: Usually you're like, "I'm not ready yet." I'm like, "Yes, you are." Anyway, I'm just thrilled. We're actually doing two podcasts together, so stay tuned for the second one. Let me just set up this podcast. There is a topic that you brought up in a workshop about six months ago that has to do with email that just lit everyone up.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes.

Shannon Waller: It went on for a 15-minute conversation. We're going to get to that. But before we do, I just want to brag on you a little bit, and I'd like you to let people know a little bit about you because you're in Strategic Coach, you're in the 10x Program with me. I'd just love for people to know a little bit more about you. I want to tell the story of when we first met.

Deirdre Van Nest: Okay, I would love that.

Shannon Waller: I was doing this speech, this is when I went to Florida where there's no COVID and got COVID, but I was doing this speech and it was a big speech with what I considered to be a very illustrious audience, one that was super-duper successful, wealthy. I was nervous, which is probably why I got sick because I think my immune system was down. But what was magical is I actually got to see a lot of great people at the conference, and the co-organizer, Brian Sweet, who is wonderful, had invited me.

This is where I met you. I saw you speak and I was entranced. I always loved coaching, couldn't really say the same about speaking, because I found there was a distance between the me and the audience. I didn't know how to relate to them. I didn't know how to connect to them. Coaching, completely fine. And also, people choose to be there when you're coaching. You just show up in front of them in a speech for the most part. I didn't know how to bridge that, and you did it.

You talked in such a real, personal, heartfelt, meaningful, impactful way. I was on the edge of my seat and so was everybody else. And then I learned that you're a speaking coach, and I



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was like, oh my God. I ran over to your table, and then I asked in Coach terms, "Could you please tell me three things I did well and three things you thought I could improve," which you did, and we have been working together ever since. And for some weird reason, I didn't actually know you're a client then, but you were.

Deirdre Van Nest: You didn't know. I know. Isn't that funny? I think you figured it out a few months later, like, "Oh my gosh, you're a client." I'm like, "Yes!"

Shannon Waller: How could I not know that? Anyway, that just started our relationship, our friendship, our partnership for which I'm really grateful. Crazy Good Talks is something I wholeheartedly recommend, and it's just been a joy working with you. I have so upped my game. I have 10xed my speaking game. And for me, the big thing, the middle part was fine, it was the beginning and ending that needed work.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yeah, and that is for a lot of people.

Shannon Waller: And now I come in strong.

Deirdre Van Nest: I love it. I love it.

Shannon Waller: And I end strong thanks to your coaching, thanks to your comments about what slides to put in, thanks to knowing when to do the offer, the call to action, all the things. I'm at least 10x better because of your coaching. Just want to kick that off and say thank you.

Deirdre Van Nest: Thank you. Thank you. You had to do the work. I can only give you the strategies and the mindsets and the tactics, but you had to do it. You are an amazing student.

Shannon Waller: Thank you.

Deirdre Van Nest: Kudos to you.

Shannon Waller: Most of it happened when we were one-on-one because I'm not a very good student in every other way.

Deirdre Van Nest: Okay, wow.

Shannon Waller: That's my introduction of you, but you're also just a very wise, savvy entrepreneur who solved a few problems that I can't wait to share with our audience in our podcast. That's my introduction of you. How would you introduce you? What is important for us to know about you? Your business is evolving. You've got some new stuff you're up to. Just share a little bit about Deirdre so people can really get a flavor for who you are.



Deirdre Van Nest: Yeah. I mean, I would say that I think the best way to talk about what I do is even to form a question. I would ask you, how do people make decisions? Do they lead with emotion or logic? Emotion, right?

Shannon Waller: Yes, 100%.

Deirdre Van Nest: People make a decision based on emotion, and then they're going to back that up with logic. But what most entrepreneurs do when they're talking about what they do, they talk about it in a way that's very logical and technical. They don't connect with the emotional centers of the brain when they're talking to prospects, whether it's in a presentation, whether it's on a video, on a podcast. They're not making that emotional connection. They're actually hindering the decision-making process.

They're hindering the trust building process. At Crazy Good Talks, I've developed a communication method called the Crazy Good Talks Blueprint that teaches entrepreneurs how to get to the yes quicker by the way they communicate. How do you get to the yes quicker? How do you build that trust, that connection, that likability in three minutes or less? How do you hold people's attention, whether it's for one minute, one hour, or one day, and then inspire them to take action? That's what we're all about.

I'm a corporate keynote speaker and trainer. We also have some coaching program, storytelling, and speaking coaching programs of Crazy Good Talks for individual entrepreneurs. That's what we're up to and what we're excited about doing in the world.

Shannon Waller: All the things.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Shannon Waller: That point about the emotional connection is so key, and there's two things about that. One, it totally matches and mirrors with our values, which is where Strategic Coach's D.O.S. Conversation comes from. You connect with people's bigger vision of their future, and then relative to that, what are they worried about, dangerous, what are they excited about, opportunities, and what are they confident about, which are their strengths.

Yes, it's emotion, and then we back it up with all the facts that we're so good at providing. The other thing is, and I think one of the things I've really learned, and if I notice a good speaker versus a not great speaker, and after working with you, I'm completely spoiled and much pickier.

Deirdre Van Nest: I know. Everyone's like, ah, my bar was low before. Now it's high. I'm spoiled. I'm ruined.



Shannon Waller: I'm kind of forgiving, but I've been a little more discerning lately. But you help people get out of their heads and keep their attention out on the audience. You have a, I want to say multifaceted, way of how to connect with people emotionally with a meaningful, intelligent message, let's be clear, and inspire them to take action.

If we look at the three parts of the mind, the cognitive, the affective or feeling part, and then the cognitive or the action part, you can help people construct that into an incredibly compelling, as Dean Jackson and Dan Sullivan would say, compelling offer to take action in the direction that is useful for them and for you.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yeah, thank you. Well, you know what's great about it? It is a skill that can be taught. That's what I love about this is I think most people think, oh, you're either born a gifted communicator or not. No, no, no. That couldn't be further from the truth. Now, just like athletics, some people are born with an edge. Some people are born more gifted.

However, the playing field can absolutely be leveled once you know the science behind putting together your communication in a way that is actually appealing to another human being, persuasive, engaging, and connected. And then if you're willing to practice those skills, I mean, you can absolutely knock it out of the park. Can I just share a quick story?

Shannon Waller: Yes.

Deirdre Van Nest: Actually there's a client of mine, he's a financial advisor. I'm going to call him John. He's your typical, no offense to the CPAs that are listening, but he's kind of that CPA type, just a little drier, the more quintessential stereotypical. You wouldn't expect him to be someone who could knock it out of the park as a presenter, much less if he was going up against two other advisors, actually win business against them. We trained him. He went through our speaking program.

And about six months in, I get a call from him and he's like, "Okay, I have this amazing opportunity. I have to do a finals presentation," which is kind of like an audition for the business to a real estate board. They're looking for an advisor for the board. But if they like the advisor, they'll introduce this advisor to their 10,000 realtors. I mean, this was a really big opportunity. He's like, "I've got a 20-minute presentation. They've narrowed it down to three people based on credentials."

Let's just say credentials are table stakes, right? We're not saying you don't have credentials and that's not important. Based on our credentials, they've narrowed it down to three of us. Whoever basically wows in the presentation is going to get the business. You better believe it, Bob and I went to work and we used all the skills that I've taught you, Shannon. He crafted this



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great 20 minutes, and he calls me afterwards. He goes, "Deirdre, before I even got back to my office, the chairman of the board called me and said, 'We choose you.'"

Shannon Waller: Oh, that gives me goosebumps.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes, I know. Me too. It gives me goosebumps. This is not someone who was born with this and not someone you think could do it. I don't count anyone out. Anyone who wants to learn is willing to do the work, absolutely, you can be a really powerful communicator and presenter.

Shannon Waller: Okay, now we need to do a third podcast on exactly that.

Deirdre Van Nest: Okay, we'll do that. We'll do another one. We'll do a third podcast on this, yes.

Shannon Waller: But it's even just cool talking about this to Steven in the introduction because it's so confidence inspiring to know that if you're technically excellent, you can also be very compelling. If you're very compelling emotionally, you can add a really intelligent message to that. I tend to be very action oriented and lighthearted. I can be serious minded as well and get people in those other places. Wherever you start, you have just a great way of crafting that whole process. It gives confidence about it. Again, could be one person, could be two or 300, could be thousands for that matter.

Deirdre Van Nest: Absolutely. Could be thousands, yes.

Shannon Waller: The confidence to know that whatever the audience size it doesn't matter is a very cool confidence.

Deirdre Van Nest: It's amazing actually. Yes. Knowing that you can stand up and you can hold people's attention is very powerful.

Shannon Waller: And you can get over hangups that you might have.

Deirdre Van Nest: Oh, yeah. I mean, I used to be terrified speaking.

Shannon Waller: Like my little mental conversations about, oh, there's a formality there. I'm speaking to them, not with them. I don't know how to make it conversational because that is my jam. All the things. You just blew all those right out of the water.



Deirdre Van Nest: You totally let those go, which is great. I used to be terrified to speak. I never wanted to get on a stage. The fact that I do this is just crazy to me, but it also speaks to the power of having a process and a system.

Shannon Waller: I love it. All right, even though it's super tempting just to jump on that topic.

Deirdre Van Nest: Email. I know. I know. Email.

Shannon Waller: Yes, let's talk about email. Because if you're going to be freed up to do all of the great coaching and speaking and all the things that you're up to at the moment, email can suck everybody down. Email is challenging because first of all, email is not in Coach terms. You could have Free Day messages. You could have Focus Day messages, in other words, moneymaking, or you could have Buffer.

There's no triage for the email, and you don't know what's in there. There could be gold or there could be trash, and you don't know. It's this big complexity. It takes time. It takes, most importantly, mental energy. It's not something that I know that anyone enjoys. But you shared a, I'm going to call it hack, a strategy, a process that it didn't sidetrack the group at all. They're like, "Oh my God, we can solve this problem finally."

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes, and how did you do it?

Shannon Waller: Yes, exactly. Share how you used to handle email and how you're handling it now and how the heck you got there because I think that's going to be pretty fascinating.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. Let me tell you what I said to the group. I think the question was something about what's a great thing that's happened in the last quarter? It was something along that nature. I raised my hand and I said, "Oh, I only spend 15 minutes a day on email." Everyone's head was like, "What?" I was like, "Yes." I said, it used to honestly be the bane of my existence. There was nothing worse to me than having a great creative day like podcasting with Shannon and then just knowing at 4:00 I had hours of work to do to, like you said, go through the email and figure out what I had to do, and then I had to make decisions about it and use my brain to answer it. It made every day difficult thinking about that, and it sapped my energy and my creativity. My business manager at the time saw me just progressively struggling with this and she goes, "Okay, why are you doing this? You are spending too much time on email. If you're not working with clients or creating content, we're not earning money."

Shannon Waller: It's not a focus.

Deirdre Van Nest: You talk about that a lot in Coach too. What's the Unique Ability? My Unique Abilities are being sidetracked because I'm in the emails for hours. She's like, "Okay,



so we need to come up with a process for you and Lilian," and Lilian is my executive assistant, "so that is her role, her job, and we get you totally out." I had tried this before with Lilian and it always migrated back. I think a lot of entrepreneurs try it. When they're on vacation, their assistant handles it.

But then when they come back... You know what I mean? You can just go back to the bad habits. This time around, I went on vacation. And while I was gone, Ali trained Lilian on what is called the Eisenhower Matrix.

Shannon Waller: Ooh, I did not know that.

Deirdre Van Nest: Let me tell you how this originated. Dwight Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States, and he was a five star general during World War II. He famously said in a speech, and I wrote this down so I get it right, he said, "I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent is never important and the important is never urgent."

Shannon Waller: Interesting.

Deirdre Van Nest: From my understanding, he prioritized what he needed to do as a general and a president based on some of these principles. But then Stephen Covey, the amazing late great Stephen Covey, popularized this, I think it was in *The 7 Habits*, and called it the Eisenhower Matrix for Making Decisions. It's an organizational structure. I'm going to recommend if you're listening to the podcast, just Google Eisenhower Matrix and you'll get a lot on it so you can visualize it.

I'm going to talk about how we took that and applied it to our business to give some ideas for the listeners on how they can do the same. There are four categories. You've got the category of urgent and important. Then you've got the category of important but not urgent. Then you've got the delegate category. And then when I was doing a little research, the category I found online was delete, but we chose not to do delete, and I'll talk about what each one of these means, we chose to do not important, not urgent.

Those are the four. That language does trip people up a little bit when I've talked to them about it. I want to encourage your listener to use whatever language makes sense to you after I describe what each category is. I don't think you have to call it these things, but your organization has to understand. You and your assistant have to understand what it means. At *Crazy Good Talks*, here's where we landed. The urgent and important meant it was something that Deirdre, that I had to do by the end of the day.

Shannon Waller: Like that.



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Deirdre Van Nest: If not immediately. A lot of times there's not a lot of speaking emergencies. Fortunately, I'm not a brain surgeon. I mean, there are some, but there's not a lot.

Shannon Waller: I love this.

Deirdre Van Nest: For my business... You might have a different business. If you're in manufacturing, there might be a literal emergency that has to happen right that moment. But for mine, that's how we characterized it. Deirdre had to do it within the same day. By the end of the day, I had to attend to this. Okay?

Shannon Waller: Got it.

Deirdre Van Nest: Important but not urgent meant we could schedule time for me to get this done.

Shannon Waller: I like that.

Deirdre Van Nest: Important was usually something that had to do with my or the company's long-term goals or short-term, meaning not the same day, maybe the next week, the next month. We'll talk about scheduling in a minute after we get into the category. Usually within three to five days I had to do something with this important, not urgent. Then we had delegate, which meant I did nothing. Lilian would either do it herself or she would find who on the team it needed to be sent to do.

Shannon Waller: Is this the urgent, but not as important? Is that this quadrant, this part of the matrix?

Deirdre Van Nest: No, delegate is its own. I know, it can be a little trippy. You've got urgent and important, same day in Crazy Good Talks. Important but not urgent means I have to tend to this within three to five days. Then we've got the delegate quadrant, it's its own quadrant where me, the entrepreneur, doesn't do anything with it.

Shannon Waller: It's basically not Deirdre.

Deirdre Van Nest: It's not Deirdre.

Shannon Waller: Yes. The not Deirdre Quadrant.

Deirdre Van Nest: Exactly. It might not be Lilian, but Lilian is responsible for knowing who it does go to.



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Shannon Waller: Got you.

Deirdre Van Nest: And then we chose not to do delete. We did an important not urgent because there are things that I don't want to delete that are not super important and they're not urgent, and I can get to it when I want to. And it's funny, I felt bad, a friend of mine who's in Coach with me when I was describing this, she was looking over my shoulder, Shannon, and saw one of her email's in not important, not urgent, and was very offended and I tried to explain, I was like, no, this doesn't mean you're not important.

This is why I want to do a little disclaimer. It doesn't mean you're not important. It just meant there was really no timeframe attached to this. You weren't asking me something that pertained to Crazy Good Talks' long-term goals. That's what we have that category for. For the delete, Lilian knew to go through what she could and couldn't delete, just to not ever even have in the category. And then not important, not urgent would be things like... Let's see, I'm just looking at something here.

Okay, somebody sent me a thank you email and giving me an update on something. With those, I would usually go into those once a week and just sift through what I wanted. Each entrepreneur has to make their own matrix for what their times are going to be on each of these quadrants.

Shannon Waller: Got you.

Deirdre Van Nest: All right. Before we move on, have I said anything you think is unclear, or that someone's listening is going, "I don't get this?" Is there anything that's looming in your mind?

Shannon Waller: In my little box, I've got important and urgent, important, not urgent.

Deirdre Van Nest: Correct.

Shannon Waller: Important and urgent, that's basically you by the end of the day.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes.

Shannon Waller: Important, not urgent, scheduled three to five days, still you, but it pertains to the long-term part of the company.

Deirdre Van Nest: Correct.

Shannon Waller: Then there's neither of those things, right?



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Deirdre Van Nest: Not important, not urgent. Yep.

Shannon Waller: Exactly, which is kind of more optional, friendly updates.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. Yes.

Shannon Waller: All the things. It's not delete.

Deirdre Van Nest: There might be FYI stuff in there. She'll put FYI. You need to know this happened, but you don't need to do anything. That might be in there.

Shannon Waller: Exactly. Then you have shouldn't have come into your inbox at all, which is really the delegate.

Deirdre Van Nest: Exactly.

Shannon Waller: And then Lilian's responsible for triaging it to the right person.

Deirdre Van Nest: Correct.

Shannon Waller: Now, what about urgent but not important? Does that make sense? I presume that would actually go to the team.

Deirdre Van Nest: I think urgent... Gosh, you know what? They don't characterize it that way. I feel like they're saying if it's urgent, it is assumed to be important. We could do semantics with this, but it's important because of the fact that it's urgent. Does that make sense? And it also might be truly important and urgent.

Shannon Waller: Sometimes somebody just needs an answer so that you're not the bottleneck and they can keep working.

Deirdre Van Nest: That's exactly right. That's exactly right. Yes.

Shannon Waller: Okay, cool. I love this.

Deirdre Van Nest: So then what we did, so we have these categories. Now, I do want to say, I want to give a little picture, I actually no longer do email at all. I just want to say that because I'm going to show you how this has progressed. It went from several hours a day, at least two hours a day. And that's what I said in the meeting too. I was like, I just got back like 25% of my day. I went from two hours a day down to 15 minutes. And now, I mean, I don't do it. I don't do it.



Shannon Waller: Which magic wand did you grab?

Deirdre Van Nest: Okay, yes, this is a progression though. This is a progression. The first magic wand was introducing the Eisenhower Matrix. Lillian got trained on how to use this. Basically what it was was the first couple of weeks were kind of clunky. We'd have these categories, and then she would assign what she thought they should be, and then I would go behind her and I would agree or not agree.

I might be like, "You know what, Lil? That actually should have been in this category, not that category and this is why." Your first couple of weeks, you're going to put in maybe a little more time because you have to train them to think like you.

Shannon Waller: Yes. And now did you create folders? Is that how she would dump them in?

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. Yes. But even better than that, there's a piece that's even better. I'll go there in a moment, but yes. In my email inbox, there's folders for each one, and then she would pull them in there. But here is the thing, if you take the matrix and you don't do this, it's like you're powering on 25% of the power. The real power is that your assistant, for us it was by 4:00 p.m. Central, has to send you an executive report of everything in the folders. I would get a report every day by 4:00, and that was one of her key performance metrics. Did the thing get in by 4:00 to me?

Shannon Waller: Interesting.

Deirdre Van Nest: What she would do is she would have executive summary for the date, and we had different colors. Urgent and important was green. Important not urgent, yellow. Delegate was purple, and not important, not urgent was red. I don't know why. That's just what she decided on color. There's no rhyme. So then what she would do is she would have numbers, so urgent and important, and usually our goal was there should not be more than three urgent and important.

She'd say, number one, she'd be like, I'm making this up, let's just pretend it's you, Shannon Waller has a speech tomorrow and she is totally stuck, needs help with an opening line because she's freaking out, which did not happen, by the way, but I'm giving you an example of what might be urgent and important.

Shannon Waller: It totally could. Just saying.

Deirdre Van Nest: And then usually what she would do is she would actually ping me on Teams as soon as those came in so that I knew and didn't wait until the end of the day, because maybe I don't have time at the end of the day. So then I'd be like, okay, on it. And



then I would call you and be like, "All right, what's going on? Let's get your opening line." We'd have those. Then we would have the next category. She'd have a list, one through five let's say of important, not urgent. Your speaking demo video came back.

The final edition is done and ready for your review. That would be an example in my world. Then we would have delegate. Let's see, StealthSeminar email is asking for an update on payment information. I'm reading this. I sent this to PVN. That's the person on our team who handles invoices to deal with.

Shannon Waller: Nice.

Deirdre Van Nest: Direct pay support, sent an email about your request. I sent this to PVN. And then we would have not important, not urgent. Sarah sent an email thanking you and giving you an update on Mark. What else is here that I can actually share? Lilian's email with investment news, slides included. Does that help sort of?

Shannon Waller: Yep.

Deirdre Van Nest: Okay. This means, and this is part of her job, she'd have to read every email, but then I'm not, which is beautiful. I'm not doing that. You are hiring someone to do that, which I would say is the best thing an entrepreneur can do for themselves. I think that is bar none.

Shannon Waller: Yes. And just to put a little more punch to that, if you think about your value as an entrepreneur to the business to bring in new business, to create and maintain those powerful relationships that bring new business in that help grow your company, to create content, whatever it is that you're doing, look at what that is worth. A highly skilled executive assistant, I call them support partner, is worth a lot.

Don't get me wrong. It's still an exponentially different amount. If you are doing that work, and a couple people have said this, including Gino Wickman, why are you doing \$20 an hour work when you're charging whatever you're charging? It just doesn't make sense. My favorite expression, which unfortunately I can't take credit for, if you don't have a strategic assistant, you are one.

Deirdre Van Nest: And that's it. I didn't realize that. I have to really credit my business manager at the time, Ali. She was like, "Deirdre, you are really operating for a quarter of the day as the executive assistant." Yes, yes. Lilian and I have been together for so long and it was the two of us for so long that that's just how we operated. And then once the teams started growing a little bit bigger, it was like, oh, we didn't really notice that dynamic. It took a third person looking into going, this doesn't make sense at all.



That's when this changed. If there's an entrepreneur who's newer in their business, if I were to give one piece of advice, I wish that I had done this in the beginning of my entrepreneurial career. I've been an entrepreneur for 23 years, but I started bringing on other people into my business, I don't know, maybe it was like 2010 or something like that. This should have been the first thing I did. I shouldn't have waited 13 years.

Shannon Waller: Hindsight's always 20/20, but we all do. There are other things that we have patterns that we just never thought to question them because they were how we always did things, right?

Deirdre Van Nest: Exactly. Yes.

Shannon Waller: But that's normal, so everyone forgive themselves, but there is a smarter, better, more effective way. You literally don't read email.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. We're getting there. Let me get to that. But there's another piece of this, again, if you don't do this. Between the matrix and the folders and the executive report, you're now powered at 75%. Let me give you the last 25% because a piece to this that's super important. The last 25% is you as the entrepreneur do not want to be figuring out when you're going to respond to the important but not urgent. Remember I told you those are scheduled?

Shannon Waller: Three to five.

Deirdre Van Nest: What you want to have your assistant do is you want to have a response block on your calendar every day. My response block on my calendar was like 4:00 to 4:30 I think every day. She would schedule in what I was doing when and told me where to find that information, and then would put links if there's things I needed access to. She might say, I just had a new demo video created of my keynote, so that would go under important but not urgent, Speaker Lab sent in your new demo video. They need you to review it.

What is today, Shannon? We're recording this on a Thursday. If we're going by the three to five days, she would use her discrimination on should this be sooner rather than later, and she would probably look for a spot next week on Monday or Tuesday for me to review it and respond back. So then she would say, "Respond to Speaker Lab. Here's the link to the demo video. Here's the email." I had a schedule. All I had to do is click that response box and everything I had to do is right there. I didn't have to think.

Shannon Waller: Okay, there's so many things I love about this, because this is actually how my brain works and doesn't work. I am fast and efficient and effective if I have all the things in front of me. I am the opposite of those three things.



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Deirdre Van Nest: Yes, me too.

Shannon Waller: If I have to go and find it, I am a slow finder.

Deirdre Van Nest: Me too.

Shannon Waller: I've found that people with much longer Fact Finder, Follow Thrus in the Kolbe system are highly skilled. In fact, I was about to go into a meeting. I had literally five minutes that I wanted to prep some information. It was about someone's profile information. I messaged Katrina, my brilliant support partner. I'm like, "Can you please find this? I'm doing a crappy job of it." She had it to me in seconds.

And then I pulled the information together and it was a brilliant meeting. Because I know what I'm looking for once it's there. I need the links. I need it pulled together for me. If you think I have the mental energy to do that, I'm intelligent enough, that's not the problem, it's the mental energy component to do it, you are dreaming or smoking something.

Deirdre Van Nest: Totally, particularly by the end of the day. For me, I am a six on Fact Finder, but that starts waning as the day goes on.

Shannon Waller: Your Follow Thru is well-used up. You're a four.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes, exactly.

Shannon Waller: But if it's all put together, we're really good.

Deirdre Van Nest: Really good.

Shannon Waller: To have someone who knows that and who can organize that for... Oh, I love. That actually applies to more than just email as far as I'm concerned. Any kind of project stuff. I'm pulling together this coaching event for a team, and the pieces are everywhere and all over the place and past stuff and example from Strategic Coach. I'm tired thinking about it. When it's all in one place, I'll get it done by tomorrow at 10:00.

Deirdre Van Nest: Totally. It's awesome.

Shannon Waller: Right?

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes.

Shannon Waller: But until it's all pulled together, I'm a lost puppy.



Deirdre Van Nest: Right. You don't want to have to be sifting through those emails each day. Okay, which one should I answer? Which one came in first? I don't know. When do I want to do this? What do I have the energy for? No, it's just scheduled.

Shannon Waller: Let's talk about what difference has it made. Now you're basically just doing scheduled work.

Deirdre Van Nest: No, I'm not doing that either. I haven't gotten yet to the end.

Shannon Waller: There's more.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes, there's more. But wait, there's more. That was the evolution to going from two hours a day to 15 minutes. That whole process that I just outlined is what got us there. It didn't take that long in the scheme of things. I would say it probably took us maybe a month to just get the whole thing going. That was really great. By the time I went to my quarterly, I was like, oh yeah, this is great. Then I took a sabbatical in April and Lilian had to deal with all my email without me.

Unless there was a true urgent, urgent, urgent that she absolutely could not answer, she had total permission and I had the confidence in her that she could handle anything that came up, and she did. When I came off my sabbatical in May, I said, "So you handled everything in April?" I think she had to reach out maybe once. I was like, "There's no reason why that shouldn't continue, is there?"

Shannon Waller: How did she feel about that?

Deirdre Van Nest: She was like, "No, you're right." I'm like, yeah. Part of it for her was just having the confidence that I was going to be okay with however she answered. I mean, that was really a big part of it.

Shannon Waller: That's a great point.

Deirdre Van Nest: It's really empowering her and saying, "Nope, I totally trust you. Do it. You don't have to do it in my words and my way. Yes." For the things that I need to weigh in on, I'll do it. The way that it works now, Shannon, is she handles all email. After this lovely, you and I will be together for two and a half hours today, I have an L10 meeting, and then I'm done.

I don't have to be like, oh my gosh, it's 4:30. Now I get to do all this email. She's handling it throughout the day. The only time I deal with email is she will ping me on Teams and say if there's something urgent in there that needs my attention, and then I'll go in and I'll just deal with that one, maybe two things and that's it. That's it.



Shannon Waller: Oh my God. This is going to sound like a bit of a silly question, but it's not, what difference has this made to you?

Deirdre Van Nest: Oh, I'm not even sure. It's hard to put into words. I don't spend time hating two hours of my day, whichever workday, is 20% for an entrepreneur, maybe it's 10%. But you know what I'm saying. I don't spend a good portion literally hating what I'm doing. Not only is that a time freedom, for me, it's even more of an energy freedom.

Shannon Waller: That's what I was thinking. There's an emotional win because anything you hate, anything we don't love doing, even if we're good at it, to be perfectly honest, and I'm sure you were good, it's like that emotional drain on you is huge. Not only do you get two hours back a day, you get all of that emotional and mental energy back to do something more creative and useful.

Deirdre Van Nest: And that's it. Decision fatigue is a real thing. It lessens decision fatigue because you're not having to make decisions about these things. As we all know, email tends to be a reactive type of thing, not a proactive. You're not at the, what's the word I'm looking for, the whim of someone else's emotion or their request, and there's someone to filter it.

I mean, sometimes people send emails that maybe they don't mean to have a tone, but there's a tone and then that is upsetting. Now you don't even have to deal with that. Lilian will be like, "Hey, so-and-so needs what. Great." You don't have to read into things.

Shannon Waller: You're not triggered at all.

Deirdre Van Nest: You're not triggered. Exactly. Not that that would happen a lot, but there's always potential for that. Now I just don't do it and it is amazing, and I will never do it again. I mean, I'll never do it again. We still have things like... Here's an example. I'm not saying I never. Sometimes I'll just look at the inbox and be like, oh, and I noticed you sent last week instructions for the podcast, which was a great overview, and then it disappeared from the inbox. I had to say to Lilian yesterday, I was waiting to see if she was going to tell me you sent it, I said, "Oh, Lilian, what are we doing? Shannon sent me an email with all the instructions. But if I didn't see it in the inbox, I wouldn't have known it was there. What are we doing with those?" We still have some things where we're trying to figure it out. She's like, "Oh well, I attached it to the calendar invite." I was like, "Oh, but I wouldn't have known that if we didn't just have this conversation and I wouldn't have thought to ask you if I didn't see her email." I'm not checking calendar invites for information.

Yesterday we're like, "Okay, well, how do we negotiate this?" She's like, "All right, so what I'll do from now on is when someone sends you email about information for something that you



need, I'll just let you know it's on the calendar invite so you know to look there." I'm like, "Perfect."

Shannon Waller: I have to say, that actually is one of the things that Katrina and I have worked out too, because I'm not someone who lives by email, but I do live by my calendar. And as a two in Follow Thru, I appear to be unique in this way because no one else I know lives by their calendar as much as I do, so we finally figured out that is the one place I will always go.

Deirdre Van Nest: That's great.

Shannon Waller: I have a little extra note section beside the calendar invite for our conversation today with notes about you.

Deirdre Van Nest: Oh, I have everything in here too. I have everything that you sent. Exactly. Maybe what I should do is I should just go there more naturally, then she wouldn't necessarily have to tell me if I just assume it's there because she's great about putting it there.

Shannon Waller: But there's new training. You just have to train both of yourselves. The cool thing is, and I love this, my previous Strategic Support Partner, Nicole, has trained me. I'm so much of a better person entrepreneur now because I've been trained by Strategic Assistants on how to do things. Where would I go? Would I go to the Trello board? No, half the time I'd forget. Would I go to the email? No. God knows I can't find anything anyway. Where would I consistently go? Whoever you are, find the place that someone can count to find you there and put the information there.

Deirdre Van Nest: I love that.

Shannon Waller: If it's starred emails or colored, and I color code my calendar, so that makes a huge difference. We figured out that part of it. We just haven't figured out the other part of it. Just saying. There's obviously work to do, but Katrina's been listening to these podcasts and she started summarizing emails for me when I've been away, which is really interesting.

Deirdre Van Nest: Then you could just...

Shannon Waller: Once I read them once, I didn't...

Deirdre Van Nest: She's like, thanks.

Shannon Waller: I kind of need something blocked so I read the darn email. The other thing I do, which is unusual that reminds me of this, is I don't what I call Buffer alone. If I have a lot of emails to respond to, because I'm not as set up the way you are yet, because I can go squirrel,



more extreme Kolbe than you have, I find it very helpful, especially if I've got someone to say, "Hey, does this sound all right?"

I'll share my screen. She'll be working away doing her stuff. We'll both be on Zoom. I'll be doing my email. I'm like, "Does this sound okay?" She goes, "Yeah, that sounds great." Hit send. Otherwise, I'm like, I'm overthinking it.

Deirdre Van Nest: I know. And you know what? Lilian and I will do that too sometimes. I mean, if there's stuff I do need to respond to, I'll just call her and we'll talk it through and she'll just do it. I do like that. I like talking it through and verbalizing it. It's like, I call it parallel play when you're just sitting working with someone, you're working on your own stuff, but you have that support, particularly if you're a verbal processor. I'm a verbal processor. I think you probably are too. That's really helpful to have.

Shannon Waller: It also takes the pressure off of thinking that you as the entrepreneur need to have all the answers.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes.

Shannon Waller: Because guess what? I don't know. I'm so excited about Dan's new book coming out. It's called "Geometry" of Staying Cool and Calm. It's based on Euclidean, that's where geometry comes from, Principles are all stacked on one another. The first one though is everything's made up

Deirdre Van Nest: Interesting.

Shannon Waller: The second is nobody's in charge. Third is life's not fair.

Deirdre Van Nest: I love everything's made up. It's so good.

Shannon Waller: I know. You're like, oh yeah, I'm making it up. You're making it up. We're making it up. There's just this lightening up that happens when you realize totally things isn't supposed to be a certain way. We are creating it.

Deirdre Van Nest: This is the thing, this was the final freedom for me, and hopefully this helps the entrepreneurs listening, is that I finally had to get okay with the fact that people are not... How do I say this? I always had a little bit in the back of my mind, oh, I'm going to look arrogant, do you know what I'm saying, because I'm not answering my emails. I have this thing. You know me, connected is one of my main... I love connected, and it's in my PRINT, and that's a big thing for me. It was like, well, I need to be the one to do it.



And finally, I realized me being in email actually disconnects me from the important people in my life. It disconnects me from my important clients. It actually disconnects me more than it connects me. You know what? If someone is annoyed or doesn't want to work with me because my assistant answers on my behalf, then we're not the right fit. I've told certain people, I'm like, just so you know, you will never hear from me. It will never be me. I love you, but it's never going to be me. It just isn't.

I don't know what to tell you if you don't like it. You know what I mean? Sometimes Lillian, I'll tell her what to say and she will respond as me, and other times, it's a lot of times, Lillian responding on behalf as Deirdre, or it's just Lillian. But I had to give up this made up idea that it has to be the entrepreneur themselves answering. Otherwise, you didn't care about people. You weren't really committed to people. You are not a nice person. You are arrogant. You are above people. I was like, no, this is actually making my life miserable.

It's keeping me disconnected from the important people in my life. I'd rather spend time with my family and my kids than doing this. I pay someone to do this who actually is good at it and enjoys it. The person recipient can deal with the fact that it's not me answering and get exactly what they need faster.

Shannon Waller: More to get out of your own way. People would much prefer a fast, timely response than one that you labored over and hated sending. It's like speed is the name of the game. Some people are much better written processors of information. I stress over emails, which is funny. I'm totally fine in conversation.

Deirdre Van Nest: Right. Well, it's because you and I don't like writing. I mean, we've talked about this. We do not enjoy writing.

Shannon Waller: No, I mean, I can. I'm not terrible, but I don't love it. I love that. Last question I can think of for the moment is, did anyone have... Two things actually. One is I think living and responding as Lillian is awesome because then you're setting expectations. She's not trying to fake being you, all that weird stuff. I love that. Or Deirdre and I have talked about this, here's the deal, which actually makes people feel important. Did anyone have a negative reaction to you? Was there any pushback or fallback?

Deirdre Van Nest: No. I had one. This is funny. I was in a Coach workshop. I had one person who is interested in working with me for story creation, who after I shared my email thing was like, "I expect to talk to you." I was like, I find this funny that we're sitting in the same workshop and you're thinking this, because this is not what you teach in Coach. You're teaching us to leverage ourselves. I was like, wow, are we listening to the same content because I think this is odd? I was newer in this and I didn't have the resolve that I have now.



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I was like, okay. Guess what? I spent all this time answering him. He never even became a client and even answered half my email, Shannon. I'm like, this is ridiculous. The only person who actually cared, I wasted my time, didn't respond back, never went anywhere. I was like, you know what? He can be disappointed in me and everyone else like him can be disappointed, but that was the only person. Everyone else is like, good for you, tell me how you're doing it.

Shannon Waller: Right.

Deirdre Van Nest: Right?

Shannon Waller: Yeah. If people want you, there are ways to do that that don't require email.

Deirdre Van Nest: Exactly. Exactly. Yes.

Shannon Waller: You know what, this actually might be a great filtering strategy in our concept of always be the buyer. If this is going to dissuade someone, great. Easy, not stressful way of going bye. Totally fine.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. Yes. Exactly.

Shannon Waller: Congratulations on your new freedom.

Deirdre Van Nest: Thank you.

Shannon Waller: Thank you for walking through the process. They just said, oh, it's great to get a break of email, and no one tells you how. I really appreciate that. But also I think the part for me that is really going to stick is just getting your two hours back a day and getting those two hours that had been painful back and happy and more creative and productive and efficient.

Deirdre Van Nest: Yes. I wish you could measure energy. I don't know how you measure energy, you really can't, but I feel like that's 10x. Talking about 10x, that's 10x in energy.

Shannon Waller: Perfect. Oh my gosh, Deirdre, you are a wealth of wisdom and knowledge as always. I am super excited for people to hear the email strategy. I know also team members listen to this, so they're going to be taking notes too. This is probably going to cascade way beyond the entrepreneurial level, which is great. Again, if you're superb with email, please lend your talents to those of us that are not.



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If this is your jam, we love you, we appreciate you. It's not that email itself is bad, but sometimes the people doing it are not the people who should be doing it. Finding a Unique Ability solution is always the 10x in my realm, in my world, in what I see. I love hearing that. Congratulations for coming up and building that strategy and doing the conversations in the coaching with Lillian. I'm sure she's coached you too a little bit.

Deirdre Van Nest: Oh, for sure.

Shannon Waller: I love every second of it. Thank you so much for sharing.

Deirdre Van Nest: Thank you for having me on.

Shannon Waller: You're welcome. If someone wants to reach you, they're intrigued by the different aspects of your business, how can they reach Lillian?

Deirdre Van Nest: Oh yeah, exactly, exactly, exactly. I'd say if they want to check us out, we have two websites. The first is deirdre-speaks.com, and it's actually Deirdre with a hyphen speaks.com, so deirdre-speaks.com. That's the keynote speaking and corporate training website. If you have a company you want to consider bringing me in for an event or a training, that's a good spot. And then crazygoodtalks.com is about the storytelling creation and the speech coaching. Either one of those.

Shannon Waller: Great. I hope people get to see you. I hope people get to experience you because it's so much more of a fun type of speech to listen to, that for me it just transformed my whole idea of speaking.

Deirdre Van Nest: Thank you so much.

Shannon Waller: For that, I'm grateful and I hope other people get to benefit from that too. And I can't wait for our next conversation. Thank you, Deirdre.

Deirdre Van Nest: Thank you.