



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

Proving Yourself: The Surprising Barrier To Effective Teamwork

Shannon Waller: Today, we're going to talk about the problem with proving yourself and how it actually doesn't work for teamwork. Stay tuned.

Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. I was working with one of my very, very valued team members last week, and I had an insight that I was really excited to share with you. It was like, mm, and then I told them I'm doing a podcast on this. They're like, oh, really? This is fun. It was a coaching conversation I had. It was a teamwork issue that we were resolving. And this person's insight was that they realized that they had been really trying to prove themselves. And that had actually proved to be an impediment to successful teamwork.

So, really, this is the problem with proving yourself. And it's interesting if you're new to a company or new to a role. And by the way, this is not only happen for team members, it also happens for team leaders, and it also happens for business owners. So this is something that applies to all of us when we're either in a new role, we feel like we haven't quite got it figured out yet, you think there are people out there who are assessing or judging you, which by the way, often they are, especially your results. So it's a natural thing that can happen, but it was amazing insight, again.

I clued in, it's like, wow, that actually was part of the problem. And it was interesting because this person has been blowing the results out of the water, like quadrupling the goal, accomplishing a big goal, much bigger than last year, halfway through the year. So it's really interesting because I think how we know whether or not we've proved ourselves, how do we receive that information? I know I've been giving praise, giving positive support, acknowledging all the progress, but somehow that didn't stick. And it was this person's realization that this is what they had been doing that was so amazing.

And here's my insight into why. When we are trying to prove ourselves to a situation, to a group of people, could even frankly be in your personal life, to a spouse, to a community, it's actually we're making it about us. We are not making it about the bigger picture. We are not making it about the results. We are making it about us. And the problem with that, I mean, some of your attention needs to be on you. Otherwise, you're not developing. But the problem is, when you're focused on you and your impact, it's almost like you've got blinders on. You're not paying attention to the bigger picture. You actually don't have the bandwidth to pick up nuances from over here, over here. Here's what might impact it.

You're so determined on your way of getting things done and making sure that you hit the targets that you have determined and that you're showing up the way that you want and you're looking for validation and for feedback on that. If you don't get it, you freak out. It's all about you. And if you think about it, really confident people that you know that you're like, oh, wow, they've got their act together, those people, they're the ones who don't make it about them. They're the ones who make it about other people. So when we can get kind of, my word is quiet. When we are calm and confident about ourselves, we don't need to make it about us.



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We have bandwidth. We have vision to take into account where other people are coming from, the bigger environment. We can be so much more agile.

They've even done brain studies. When people are afraid, what happens, they really narrow their focus. And when people are calm, when you've created psychological safety on your team, people get that much more creative. And I think this is a very similar dynamic when people are proving themselves because when people feel like they need to prove themselves, they're afraid that they are not going to be successful. They're afraid that they're not measuring up. They're afraid that they're going to get fired. They're afraid that they're not having the impact that they need to have. They're afraid that they're going to fail. And that fear is very constraining and very constricting, and again, an impediment to teamwork.

It's very difficult to take someone else's viewpoint into account when you are coming from being freaked out at whatever level, way, way, way back internally or externally, you know, it's very hard to actually appreciate other people's viewpoints because you're filtering it through your own fear and then how that impacts your ability to prove yourself. And you will discard incredibly valuable information where people are telling you how you can prove yourself. You'll screen it out because you're focused on your version of it. So I just want to stress that if you are new in any kind of a position or a role... I stepped into an additional role a year ago and trust me, I even felt this. Now, it's interesting though, I really tried to beat back that proving myself. I've had enough coaching in my life, and I've been around the planet long enough to go, hmm, I'm just going to make my best contribution that I can. I don't want to fail. If I got nervous about anything, it was spreadsheets and entering the information correctly. That was my bugaboo. Took me a long time to get confidence about Salesforce and reports and dashboards and spreadsheets. That's not the strongest point of me. But I didn't feel like I had to prove myself. I just had to feel like I had to meet minimum standard.

And do I have moments of needing to feel like I proved myself? Yes. And those are the ones where I'm most anxious and most afraid. So when we can back off that... First of all, I kind of just want you to take a deep breath if this is you or if you're coaching someone who is clearly in that proving themselves because they're in a new role, have a conversation with them about this. Say, "Hey, it looks like you're trying to prove yourself, and I want to just validate here's where you're being successful" and just really let them soak that in. Do, in Strategic Coach's language, a Positive Focus. Have them reflect on their progress and then ask them, "Is this sinking in? Do you feel like you have to prove yourself?" And have them explore it, like just have a really open, clear conversation.

Please do not have an agenda. Because you want them to relax. You want them to be confident because a confident person is calmer and, in my experience, more creative. Now, if they step over the line to the arrogance, no, there's no room for input either. So it's a different conversation. But often this perspective comes from fear. So if you can get them into trusting



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their progress, trusting their process, you will be a great leader because you'll just have really supported their growth and development. And then you'll probably get the teamwork that you are looking for.

And if you're freaking yourself out, thinking that you have to measure up, please have this conversation with yourself. I think it can be incredibly helpful to realize that you actually are being successful, track it, and recognize that you actually trying to prove yourself may actually be having the opposite impact. People might be frustrated with you as opposed to thrilled and excited to be working with you. So, had this insight, wanted to share it with you. As always, if you have any questions or comments, please let me know at questions@strategiccoach.com. And as always, here's to your team's success.