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ASK THE COACHES – MAY 2019

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

TOM HENSCHEL
MAY 2019

This month's coaching conversation is between Tom Henschel and Mindy Danna who answer questions from our audience. Tom and Mindy have grown up together professionally. He runs Essential Communications where Mindy is a coach. She also works with the cutting-edge global consulting firm Cultivating Leadership.

NOTE: This transcript was heavily edited to fit this format. The unedited conversation can be heard on the podcast.

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FROM JESSE:

I'm an assistant manager at Walmart. I reached the salaried level but feel I still have that hourly mindset. I want to be more professional and more proficient in my management style. I need to learn how not to be so nice.

Also, I need to learn how to manage through my people so I can have a day off. My last day off was in September and still no end in sight because if I'm not there, nothing will be completed to my standards.

Do you have any tips for me to grow as a successful manager?

MINDY DANNA: You've identified the real crux of this issue, saying 'I need to change my mindset.' That's actually one of the most foundational things to moving from a doer role to a management role.

The first tip I would say is to have patience and compassion for yourself as you make that transition because it really is an identity shift.

You mentioned 'I need to not be so nice.' That really resonates with me because I remember my first manager job where I thought 'I need to be nice for them to do things that I want them to do.' You actually don't have control over their behavior. What you do have control over is creating the conditions for them to develop and thrive.

What do you think Tom?

TOM HENSCHEL: I picked up on the same two pieces.

Jesse, you're thinking about being more proficient in management. That means you're taking on a different kind of responsibility. I applaud that. Good for you.

This idea of being nice – I wonder if Jesse is scared of giving feedback. 'I'm going to hurt their feelings. They won't like me.' That connects to the idea of 'I can't take a day off because if I do nothing will get done to my standards.'

Jesse, when you're gone, things may not go exactly the way they would you were there. That's true. But that's appropriate. That's how you develop your people.

Make your expectations clear before you go. Understand that when you come back, some things will have gone well and you'll give feedback on those. And some things won't have gone well, and you'll give feedback on those.

MINDY: There are so many books about management. One I have found really useful, and I think I mentioned it in our last podcast together, Tom, is a book called *Being The Boss.* It's written by Linda Hill and Kent Lineback. It's a great foundational book about moving from individual performer to manager. I recommend it highly.

TOM: In closing, Jesse, this journey from being 'nice' to being 'effective' – Oh, my! Have I been on that journey! I've watched Mindy on that journey and so many of my clients. You're not alone in this. I think it's great you're on it. Keep going!

FROM TOMAS:
I have the chance to convert into a full time job. My supervisor is very smart and has a lot of influence in the company, but he's also highly critical and negative.

I have worked hard on taking things off his plate. I believe that I've contributed positively, however, I feel that sometimes I miss his expectations. I collect his opinion and guidance before I act in my responsibilities. That being said, I have the impression my work isn't adding much value.

Proper feedback will be given soon but I think there might be other things I could do to improve the situation.

TOM: Tomas, I want to reflect on the last sentence you write about 'proper feedback will be given soon.' To which I ask, why are you waiting? Ok, you think this boss is critical, negative, whatever, but you need the feedback.

If you have a concern that you're not adding much value, the only way to find out is to ask.

MINDY: What comes to mind, Tomas, is another resource. This is one of my other 'go to' books. It's called *Thanks For The Feedback* by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone. It's fantastic.

The premise of the book is, well, we spend a lot of time teaching people how to *give* feedback, but what about how we *receive* it? Because our relationship with how we receive feedback impacts how we give it.

They talk about three kinds of feedback. The first is evaluation. That's just what it sounds like: you want to know how you've stacked up against a certain standard.

The second is coaching. 'I want to get better. I want to develop in a certain way.' That's a different kind of conversation.

The last one is appreciation. ‘I want to know if I’m doing a good job.’

When you ask for feedback, Tomas, be clear what it is you’re looking for.

TOM: If Tomas is concerned he’s not adding value, which kind of feedback do you think he’s asking for?

MINDY: I think it has to do with intention and what he’s looking for.

If I were in his shoes, I might want to hear a little appreciation. ‘I’ve really seen you working hard to take things off my plate and I really appreciate that.’ That probably would feel really good.

TOM: But if his boss is critical and negative, he’s probably not going to do that.

MINDY: Maybe not, but that may be because his boss thinks, ‘Hey, my role is to give Tomas a sense of how he can get better at doing this, so I’m going to let him know how he is or is not meeting the standard.’

TOM: One last piece we haven’t touched on yet. Tomas, you wrote, ‘I’ve worked hard on taking things off his plate.’ I want to say, yes, that’s your job. That’s all of our jobs: take work off our bosses’ plates.

I talk about this in an episode called Managing Up. Your boss may not acknowledge that, but good for you for doing it.

FROM LYNETTE:

How can I have a difficult conversation with an equal colleague who does great work, however always needs to be heard without giving others the chance to be heard? She also thinks she’s an expert on everything therefore she becomes the only voice being heard.

I would love to know how to have a conversation about the importance of others’ feelings, like they’re valuable members of the team, and how it’s important to make room for others to be heard too.

MINDY: The first question I want to ask is what's the hardest part about this for you, Lynette?

Is it that you feel she's hogging all the space and you don't have any space to offer your value? Or is it that you really see she's getting in the way of the development of the team? Or the group communication?

I would invite you to 'step to the balcony' for a moment. That is, zoom out and reflect on what's really going on in that situation. Ask yourself, 'Why am I getting triggered by this? Is it really that I want to help her be a more effective communicator in a group setting?'

If you decide you actually want to help her, I would start from a place of empathy. Do you notice any patterns as to when she is chronically and serially taking up a lot of space? Do you think it's a situation where she feels like, 'Oh my gosh, this is high stakes. I need to add value. I'm not sure I have a seat at the table here. I'm not sure I deserve to be at the table.'

Create a sense of caring and connection, then ask if she wants the feedback.

TOM: I have a little different take on this. It's formed from my experience in theater as a professional actor where, let's say I'm on stage in a scene with you, Mindy. I just know that you're missing a beat – like if you would do that line differently then I could do my line differently.

Well, it's none of my business. It is not my job to direct the scene. It is not my job to shape your performance.

That's one of the problems with peers. Peers are often the people who annoy the hell out of us, but we're not responsible for their performance and often they do not welcome our feedback.

Given that you see this woman as needy – needing to be an expert, taking up all the air in the room – I think she is not going to change. The question I have for you, Lynette, is how do you want to show up?

You could go to your boss and complain. You could go to this woman and tell her she's making a mistake. Or you could talk to other peers and complain. You could do all that, but I don't think it's a good moment for you.

So how do you want to show up in the face of this person who sounds annoying?

MINDY: To build on that, I'm struck by what we know about team performance. I mentioned in our last podcast, Tom, the study that came out of Google called The Aristotle Study about high performing teams and what's the x-factor that makes high performing teams just that. Something we know, and I don't think this is going to be a shock to anybody, is that high levels of trust and psychological safety are really key to high team performance.

If I want to be a part of a high performing team, I feel a sense of responsibility for contributing to a culture and a set of norms around psychological safety, in which case I think we're all on the hook, we're helping each other get better.

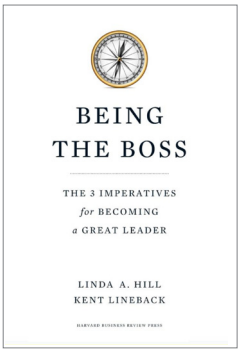
TOM: If that's the way the team works, great.

It's funny, I was just talking with a team leader about this recently. My concern was that everybody in the team was coming to her as the point person. I was saying to her, 'No, no, no, you want them talking to each other.' It's like a mom who always has to mediate between the siblings. I say, 'Mom, get yourself out of there! That's not a good place to be. Let the siblings work it out.'

If the team leader has created that culture, great, but my spidey-sense says that is not what's happening on this team. Good luck, Lynnette. I can't wait to hear how this goes.

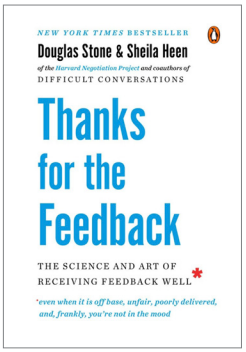
That's it for this episode of Ask The Coaches and *The Look & Sound of Leadership!*

Resources:



Being The Boss

by Linda A. Hill
& Kent Lineback



Thanks For The Feedback

by Douglas Stone
& Sheila Heen

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