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HOW TO CREATE A PERSONAL BRAND STRATEGY WITH JULIE HAMILTON

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Hey, everyone. It's so great to be back with you this week.

I just love doing this podcast. I love talking to my guests. I love talking about People Development. And I love talking to people about taking the career you have and making it the career you love.

This week has been amazing because I just got a call from a pretty big company and they asked me to put together a proposal to turn my membership program into a resource for their staff. I love that opportunity to put it all together. I'm so excited about it. And I will share with you where that ends up.

Also, I want to thank all of you who have reached out to me to wish me well on my weight loss journey and shared your struggles and your point of view on your weight loss journey. Last week on Episode 20, I started talking about how to take action and create habits for your career to maximize your potential and your success. It's really about first recognizing and deciding what patterns you want to break. Then I talked about how to go about starting to break those patterns.

I shared my own recurring pattern in my life, which was, of course, my weight loss. I always gain and lose the same 50 pounds my entire life. So I'm starting to apply the things I talked about in last week's podcast to my own weight loss journey and I'm starting to see real success. My mindset is really strong and clear. I want to thank everyone who reached out and wished me luck, I really appreciate that. And I'll let you know it's going great.

I don't have a scale where I am now because, for the next few months, I'm working out of home somewhere else remotely to get away from the winter. But when I get home, I'm excited to step on the scale and see what happens.

This week, I am talking to an amazing lady. Her name is Julie Hamilton. I used to work with her in my corporate days. I love her. Probably I love her because we're so much alike. I think it's more than that. But we do really connect on so many levels. Julie is a branding expert. That was her thing. When I worked with her, I was at McDonald's. She's been doing branding for 20-ish years. I don't want to say 20+ because I'm not totally sure. But she has since opened her own agency called *Intention*.

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I'm so excited for her because she is knocking it out of the park and she helps companies clarify their branding and get intentional about how they want to show up with their customers and what is in their brand territory. If you're listening, by the way, and your company is looking for a branding agency, then definitely reach out to Julie Hamilton. I'm going to put her coordinates in the show notes for you.

I wanted to talk to Julie about how to apply, essentially, the standard principles that agencies will use for corporate branding to branding an individual. Because branding is branding. The approach is so much the same. It's just the product, in this case, is not a company, it's a person. Since Julie is a branding expert, and she's passionate about branding and she's passionate about people, I thought this was the perfect person to speak to and you know what, it was.

We actually recorded this late October last year, so in 2019, I had to wait until now to air this because I was doing a lot of episodes around year-end performance, managing your performance development, review conversations, feedback, etc. Then the holidays got a bit distracting. I didn't want to bury this episode in the holidays because it's such a strong episode. Honestly, when I went back to listen to it when I was going to write this intro, I was so inspired by it.

Everyone is going to get something really powerful out of this episode because branding your personal brand is so important. But often, we don't think about the importance of the mark our brand leaves on those people who are around us. How we manage how we show up, how we manage our own brand reputation, if you will, throughout our careers. But it's something we should all be thinking about.

I'm telling you what I was working through my corporate career, I often didn't think I was acting on instinct, and I left marks all over the place, that in hindsight, I wish I hadn't left. Getting really purposeful or intentional about your brand is critical to your long-term success. Julie does an amazing job giving you five questions that you want to ask yourself when you're identifying your personal brand.

If you're a marketing person out there, you might think, I don't need to listen to this, I got this, I know what I'm doing. But you know what, I'm a lifelong branding and marketing person and I was inspired by what Julie had to say. Definitely, I recommend you listen to this episode. I will summarize the key takeaways in the show notes at thecareerreset.com/21. And I'll link to all the references we talked about in this episode.

But definitely, the texture that Julie provides really helps bring her points home and really helps embed what she's saying. Without further ado, here's Julie Hamilton and I talking about the importance of creating a personal brand.

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Mel Savage: Welcome, Julie. It's great to have you here. Thanks for joining me today.

Julie Hamilton: Thanks for having me. I am thrilled to be here.

Mel Savage: I'm so excited to have you here. You have been someone that I've admired for a long time. I love your energy. I love how you do things. I love how you think and I think you're going to add a lot of value to the audience today.

Julie Hamilton: Thank you. The feeling is mutual, obviously. Our timeline goes way back and our paths have crossed in multiple iterations, which I love. Likewise, you've always been somebody I've really respected and I loved partnering with you even as a client agency. So it's great to be here having this conversation.

Mel Savage: Thank you. Now, you have your own agency and I'm so excited for you. I know it's something that you've always wanted. I should actually have a podcast with you talking about how you made the leap. You took a chance. You said I don't want to do this anymore. I'm going to start my own thing. Talk to me a little bit about your branding agency, *Intention*. What it does and what was the impetus for it for you?

Julie Hamilton: *Intention* is a strategic branding and design studio. We're located in Chicago. We're a boutique shop and our focus is really on helping companies solve their complex business challenges through purposeful branded solutions. A lot of our work tends to focus on three different areas: brand strategy, designing brand identity, and developing brand communications.

For us, we're really about looking at a brand holistically, helping an organization really reveal what's at their core and harness that in a way that's going to allow them to maximize their opportunities for growth. We've been around for a little over two years. My life has been in the creative agency for 20 years. When my business partner and I decided to make the leap, we found ourselves continuing to work with clients who were spending all this money on programming, initiatives, and products, and things were never succeeding. There was so much inefficiency and nobody could ever figure out why.

For us, we just always felt like, if we could help organizations get clear about who they are and understand how to live that purposefully in every single thing that they do, not only will your visibility be elevated, but you're going to connect with your audience in a totally different way. And you're going to be so much more efficient because you're not reinventing the wheel every time. I care a lot about helping a brand get to the heart of who they are. My business partner is a designer by background and cares a lot about bringing high design to brands. From there, we just put our passions together and started the studio.

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Mel Savage: That's great. I love what you said, too, about the idea that helping a brand understand who they are is such a challenge. I know it's something that people struggle with and brands struggle with that's why they hire agencies to help them do it. Because it's hard to get to the root of who you are and what you stand for.

Julie Hamilton: Yes. Hell, it's hard for us to do and we do it for a living. For yourself, it's really hard to see the forest for the trees.

Mel Savage: When we first started talking, I didn't even know you were like, why do you want to talk to me about personal branding? And I'm like, well, branding is branding and that was something that I know that you believe. So talk to me a little bit about why is it important for someone or some brand, like a company to have intention with their brand.

Julie Hamilton: People define branding in all sorts of ways. For everyone out there that's publishing content about it, there's a different opinion. At *Intention*, we really believe that a brand is so much more than a name, a product, or a logo. It is something that's felt and it's something that's experienced. When you think about a brand that you love or a brand that you hate, you likely don't love or hate it just because of its logo, or just because of the product itself. There are likely some tangible and intangible things that you're associating with that brand, that are driving how you feel.

A lot of times, organizations think about a brand as their marketing. We need a name, we need a logo, we're going to do a website, we'll do some social media and develop some collateral and call it a day, there's our brand. We'll put this product out into the world and here we go. What organizations miss is that, from a consumer point of view, they're not thinking about it in a disparate manner.

Any interaction that they have with you is your brand, whether you decide that it is or not. If I love your product, and then I interact with a salesperson, and it feels really gross to me, that's part of your brand. That's not just an employee, that's your brand.

For us, it's so important, because, in every single one of those moments where someone is interacting with an organization, you have a chance to either build a deeper relationship and create a loyal fan for life or you are deteriorating that relationship every time that you are engaging with them. For us, there is no distinction between brand and business. Your brand is your business. People are making decisions about you based on your brand, whether you know it or not.

Mel Savage: Whether you're being conscious about it or not. I love that because that applies so much to people. Even if I decide I'm going to be the kind of career coach that speaks to corporations and is down to earth, honest, and real about what happens; if I'm not honest and real in every aspect of how I show up, then people aren't going to necessarily describe me that way. I always said this to you before.

In my mind, when I think about branding, especially personal branding, I always think about the quote from Jeff Bezos, so well known, *'Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room.'* Every interaction you make feeds into what people are going to say about you when you're not in the room.

Julie Hamilton: 100%. It is an impression. There's a really fascinating book out there called, *The Human Brand.* It talks about how, we as people, originally, our survival instincts taught us how to size people up. It was like, what

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do you want, what's your intention, and is it how do I feel about that? And there really isn't any distinction between how we do that with people and then how we do that with brands.

You feel when somebody's intentions, a company's intentions aren't good. You could feel that they actually care about what they're doing, the environment that they're doing it in, and their customers, etc. It's a totally different vibe. So, yes, the impression is 100% everything.

Mel Savage: When you think about personal branding, what do you think is the challenge out there for other people who are thinking about personal branding? How do they think they're describing their personal brand and what do they need to actually think about?

Julie Hamilton: I think the most common definition of personal branding out there is really this idea of how you market yourself in your career and that tends to live predominantly in the digital space like social media. It tends to drive a desire for engagement with an audience and attracting followers, etc. That's fine if you are an influencer. It's fine if you are someone whose business is completely online, and you need that presence and you need consistency and you need to build a following and engage with people in a certain way.

The problem is that people also talk about it as a way to attract employers. Of course, nowadays companies are looking at your digital footprint to see who you are and what you're up to when you're not in the interview. So there's something to be said for that. My challenge with it is, that personal branding may get you the job with this current definition, but it isn't what's going to help you succeed in it. For me, there's just this lack for us normal folks who are out there not trying to build a following and not trying to be influencers in the social media business.

Mel Savage: You were saying, too, and we talked about this, there is this digital footprint that you put out there. But just like when you're talking about your corporate brands, or your clients right now, it's, who are you? What do you stand for? Like getting underneath. Yes, sure, you can go put out these little articles that you write, and these ads you put out there digitally, or your LinkedIn profile, or how you write your resume. Great. The tone and manner are great. But it's not just about that. Who are you and how are you showing up?

Julie Hamilton: Yes. And for me, that is exactly what personal brand is. It really is so much bigger than footprints. It's exactly what you said. It's who you are, getting clear about that, and being able to use that so that you can successfully navigate the opportunities and challenges throughout your career.

I know for me, there were several moments throughout my career, where the only thing that could really help me was understanding who I am at my core. How do I confidently add to my work? How do I know that I'm clear about what I'm good at and where I add value to an organization or a team? How do I feel good about the value that I'm adding? Do I know that the kind of work I'm doing is tapping into like my *'genius zone"*? I feel like I'm being used and putting skills to use in the right way. What was it that I was going to lean on when I was in unfamiliar territory?

You get new opportunities, bigger projects, and promotions, and suddenly, just your skill set in your experience isn't enough. What are those things that you lean on to guide how you behave and how you show up in those things? You even talk about this all the time, how do I evaluate the opportunities and know which ones are right

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for me? To me, knowing who I am, my personal brand, at my core, is what has anchored me through all those kinds of challenges.

Mel Savage: Knowing who you are and what you want, even if it changes constantly, even if you have to revisit it, and even if you don't think of everything in one sitting, that's okay. But staying connected to that as opportunities come at you as you're expected to, and I'm saying this as you connect with people or ask for things or think about how you want to treat yourself or treat other people, these are all parts of your brand. Who are you in all those situations?

I like when you talked about your *genius zone* because it's about connecting with and optimizing your strengths. It's really leveraging that versus getting caught up in who you aren't. I know that for me, like when I was in corporate, I got caught up in fitting in the box. The irony was they hired me because I was slightly outside the box, my energy, and how I looked at things and they liked my personality.

But over time, there's like, *you have too much personality, maybe we're tired of your out-of-the-box style. Can you come back into the box?* And I was like, okay, I like this job and I want to do well so I'll come back in your box. I stopped being who I was, which ultimately didn't allow me to be successful because I didn't know how to not be who I was very well.

Julie Hamilton: It's funny, too because, in corporate America, I think there's this general sense that we need to leave who we are at the door when we walk into the office. Then the result is exactly what you said. We forget that our success is driven by who we are and that we get hired because of who we are. Yes, of course, because of our experience and our skill sets or whatever but by who we are.

Then we get into these roles and we think, okay, time to not be like that anymore. Time to be somebody else who would be successful and who fits into the *box*. It's such a struggle. I was the same way. I fell into my career so I always was keenly aware of my lack of experience.

Mel Savage: You're an imposter, I'm an imposter.

Julie Hamilton: Yes. So I dismissed all the traits that I had that were allowing me to be successful and I was very successful. Then started trying to figure out what game I needed to play. Who do I need to be like in order to be more successful? And it sucks. You feel so out of alignment. I felt so awkward. I never had any answers. I just felt like lost and I was always in turmoil.

Until you'd be like, you know what, that's not who I am. I'm not that kind of person. It's not my jam so that's not how I'm going to approach things. I'm going to approach things in the way that I know to be true for me and that I'm comfortable with.

Mel Savage: I think even as managers if you're a manager of people out there in the world, think about that, as you're not only being the kind of manager that you want to be but as you're managing people who are trying to figure out who they are. Help them. Don't put them in a box that they don't fit in because you're not going to get the results that you're looking for out of them.

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Julie Hamilton: In the book, *Made to Stick* that Chip and Dan Heath published several years ago, we talked about focusing on the bright spots. Exactly what you said, we get so caught up in *I got to work on this stuff that I'm not good at.* We beat ourselves up about that. Maybe you're just not good at that because you're good at these other things over here and we could build a team of people very purposefully, be clear about who's good at what around all those skills.

Mel Savage: Exactly. I think coming back to how that impacts your personal brand, being an ex-branding marketing person as well, niching down, it's okay to not be everything to everybody when you're a brand. Like a big brand, you're selling stuff. It's okay to do that when you're a human being as well. So talk a little bit about that. What are the benefits of niching down for your clients and how that can apply to people?

Julie Hamilton: It feels so counterintuitive because we always have this scarcity mindset as people and as organizations. We think if we're going to niche down, then we're going to be leaving opportunity on the table. What it actually does, and what we see happen with clients all the time is it opens up a world of opportunities. It inspires completely different ways of thinking about the opportunity and the growth at hand.

Because now you're so clear about who you are, and what it means to show up like that, that there's too much opportunity to even take advantage of because your vibe attracts your tribe. Once you're clear about that, then your people are going to find you and connect with you. So as organizations, I think that's so important and growth is inevitable when folks do that.

As I was thinking about this podcast, I was thinking about a couple of folks who have worked for me in the past. There's one in particular that worked for me for a long time. She's a great example of niching down. I thought she was my succession plan. She was a rockstar, everybody loved her. She was amazing and anything she touched, but she hated being put into the position that we were putting her in, where it was your lead, your driving strategy, you're going to be front and center. She kept stepping in and she kept doing great but she was in a bunch of turmoil the whole time.

It finally had to come to the point where she could say, this is not who I am. I'm not a number one, I'm actually a number two. I'm way okay with being a number two because I'm a damn good number two. I just want to do that. I don't want to stop pretending like I want number one because I actually don't. So with her ability to say that, we were able to create a role for her where she could thrive and she felt amazing about it. Everybody around her felt amazing because we were now getting like the full benefits of who she is and what she's great at because she wasn't caught up in all this noise and distraction about the stuff that didn't feel right for her.

Mel Savage: I guess that's a really good point, too. I just did a podcast last week about the big mistakes I made in my career. I actually use that language about number one and number two but in a different way. I was saying I always told myself I was a good number two, but that was because I was afraid to be number one and actually could have been number one if I had believed that I could have been number one.

But I think it's the opposite side of the same coin that we're talking about here is just being honest with yourself, whether it's being courageous to be honest with yourself about what you don't like doing, or being courageous with yourself, and honest with yourself about what you can do and not being afraid to do it.

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Julie Hamilton: Yes, and sometimes you need the right environment and the right people around you to give you permission to do that. I know for me, I do this for a living. I feel really passionate about being authentic and showing up as who you are but that doesn't mean I don't struggle with it. I have people in my life that have to remind me. I was just talking to a girlfriend the other day. I am a terribly unorganized person. I try really hard to pretend I'm organized, I am so not organized and beat myself up for not being organized.

When I was talking to her about it, she was like, that's not who you are, can you just stop pretending that that's who you are, you're an awesome person, you just happen to not be an organized person. I think part of it is about the clarity that we need, but then it's also about the accountability and the folks around us that can help us stay true to that and remember and give us permission to come back to that.

Mel Savage: Yes and not judge you for it. You're leaning into who you are. These are the boundaries that I live within. You said, I always forget who I am and I struggle with it and all that stuff. And it made me think about branding clients. When I was on the agency side, and then when I was on the client side, having clarity, like writing down who you are, and what your brand stands for is really important in working it out.

Because even as big brands, like I worked for McDonald's and it was like, oh, I have this great idea, we should do this thing. Well, you know what? Look at this brand thing, that's off-brand. Yes. With twenty years of experience and living in and working in the brand, you forget sometimes. So it's really normal to try to save yourself. I know who I am and I'm going to keep it in my head. And that's going to guide me. That would be a really hard thing for anyone to do, even trained executives. Never mind, just try to figure out who you are as a person.

Julie Hamilton: Yes. I think we all get out of alignment for one reason or another. We get busy, fear takes over, some insecurity takes over and we move away from what's true. Writing it down and having those thoughts that know you at your core to remind you to be that written word with skin to help you is so important.

Mel Savage: The touchpoints, we talked a little bit about this. This is what I trained in my course as well and something I actually want to help more people with than just the people who signed up for my course. But somehow, I haven't figured out how to do that yet. It's not like we said, it's not just about your LinkedIn profile, and who you are in social media, because if you're going to work for Julie, she's going to check your Facebook page, she's going to check your Instagram, she's going to see what you're all about. It's also about how you show up on the job and how you stay authentic.

I touched on that a little bit earlier, but I want to make sure that I drive this point home. It's about things like how you connect with people, what kind of listener you are, what kind of a leader you are, how you deal with conflict, how you treat yourself when you fail, or when you win, or deciding on how your brand shows up in these key circumstances of leadership, I guess. How does that play out when you're hiring someone or who you are as a brand?

Julie Hamilton: For me, it's such an important point because we all have worked with those people who say one thing and behave in a totally different way so nobody believes anything that they say. Real genuine, out in the open, and real not behind closed doors. I think if we're talking about when it comes to on the job, as a leader, being clear about who you are allows you to not only harness what you're best at, but it allows you to then build a team of folks that are better at things than you.

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It's when you're able to create some fabulous dynamics and an awesome culture when not only are you clear about who you are, but you are building a team of people that are also clear about who they are, and comfortable with that and it's celebrated. I think that that's super important. I think your question may be getting at what is it that you are looking for now.

For me, I have a couple of things that I always look for when I'm hiring. Because a brand is an impression, you don't need a lot of time to actually get the feel. People are hired on skill set to an extent, but more importantly, you're hired on potential. I think good leaders hire people on potential, not just because they have direct experience doing that. There were always questions I asked around three that allowed me to gauge three things.

One is your level of self-awareness. How clear are you about what you're great at and how clear are you about what you're not? I'm not talking about, oh, I need to work on my digital marketing skills. I'm talking about, what's the thing about you when you're in a room with people that you need to be working on. I always ask questions that help me gauge their level of emotional intelligence. How aware are they of everyone else and how are they adapting based on who they're interacting with?

Then my third thing was being a critical thinker. Are you a problem solver? I don't need you to be a strategist, I just need to be able to ask why. Why do we need to do it that way? What is the real problem we're solving here? I didn't care if you were two years out of college, or if I was hiring you to be a VP. Those are the three things I look for every time because everything else can be taught. Those three things to me, show me who you are. The way you talk about those things shows me who you are and then I know if you're going to be a good fit or not.

Mel Savage: It's so interesting that you said that because I always thought that it was more important to fit in and that sense of emotional intelligence and self-awareness was more important the more senior you became. Because once you're a leader, once you know how to lead people or get things done, it's just how are you doing it, not what are you doing.

But it's interesting that you're saying that you don't care if they're two years out of college or not. It's that sense of, can I teach you, are you teachable, how will you fit, how will you interact? It's getting more and more important, I think, in the world.

Julie Hamilton: Yes. Especially for me, the way I would coach folks on my team, it was very rarely about a skill set and very much about blocks that they have, like ideas they have in their head that are getting in their own way, or different ways of thinking about things themselves in the team or with clients. That's how I know how to help people be successful. And I needed to know that you were at least somewhat clear about who you are, what you're about, or that you're open to exploring more, and not evolving who you are, but growing as a person. Because if you can do that, you're going to be successful, whether it's in this job or somewhere else.

Mel Savage: Great. When someone's going to actually start thinking about, okay, I want to build my brand. What are some questions, maybe as they relate to even the questions you get your clients to answer? What are some questions that you think they should be answering?

Julie Hamilton: I have four or five and they're all questions that are exact questions we ask clients. If I just back up a second, when we're starting a branding project, we always do what we call an *intention brief*. We ask the owners, the executives, or key stakeholders a series of questions about their organization, how they view their

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position and their competitors, what they feel their values are, what makes them different, etc. And from that, we're able to extract the core DNA and begin to put the pieces together in different ways.

It's always sitting right out here, very obvious to us and not to anyone else. So these are a few of the questions that we ask in some form or fashion. The first one I actually stole from you because I love what you were talking about in your podcast a few weeks ago when you talked about what are your values. What is important to you? Whether you're an organization or a human being, what are those things that are most important to you, not just in your career, but in your life?

That's the first thing and we tend to ask that question a few different ways with organizations but we're ultimately trying to get at like those things that they believe, the things that are really important to them that go beyond the thing that they're doing, that they have a real commitment to. That'd be the first one. The second one is, who are you at your core? Define your why. I don't mean, why do we exist? It's more about, what is it that gets you excited and allows you to feel inspired. What is it that motivates you to try new things or not try new things?

When you think about the essence, the very core of who you are, think of a couple of words, maybe it's a phrase, something that if you said to someone else, they'd be, yep, that about sums you up. That's who you are. And a lot of times starting with something like that, what do you value type of exploration? You can even extract something from that. That becomes a bubble up from that.

Mel Savage: I agree. Sometimes, it's hard to answer a call. But once you dig into your values, it comes up. So if you're going to say, take someone like Steve Jobs. Everyone knows who he is, and what he was like. If you're going to say, what's his *why*, what would you say about him?

Julie Hamilton: His *why* was to challenge the conventional in thinking bigger. What I loved about the way that he set up Apple was, that they set out to reimagine things, not create products. I think he was very much the same way. He had a particular approach to how he challenged. He was a challenger and I wanted to live that out and everything that he did.

The second one is who are you at your core? The third one is what is your chosen tone, style, and manner of behaving? If I had to wrap it up, I'd say what's your vibe? Are you funny? Are you sarcastic? Are you always serious? Are you very honest? Are you direct? What are some of those things? Are you loud? Do you swear a lot like I do? Probably not.

Mel Savage: I do. Although I'm trying not to be too explicit. I'm the one who says things that everyone's thinking.

Julie Hamilton: Me too. I'm the one that for some reason, will say some things out loud that everyone's like, oh, my, I shouldn't say that here.

Mel Savage: Or I was going to say, I was thinking the same thing. I get that all the time.

Julie Hamilton: Yes, that's just part of the thing. For me, in this one, it's like, I'm a little loud, I'm a little unrefined, I'm a little edgy, I've got my nose pierced, and my hair is always different colors, and blah, blah, blah. That's all part of it, but I'm also super committed to doing what's right all the time. I may be a lot of these things but I also

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am very committed to behaving with integrity always. So what's your chosen tone, style, and manner of behaving?

Mel Savage: What's your vibe? I love it.

Julie Hamilton: What's your vibe? Then I would say, who are you at your best? Pick three words or phrases. Just think about moments that you feel really good about. What is it about those moments? Are you vulnerable? Are you honest? Are you approachable? Are you a leader? What are those things that you feel emerge when you look at those moments? Pick those things.

Then I would also say, how do you want people to feel when they engage with you? We asked this question a couple different ways. We're interviewing companies, but it's always around like, what do you want the nature of the relationship to be between you and your customers, or you and others? How do you want people to feel? Again, it's about the impression so when they walk away from engaging with you, what are you committed to having happen in that experience, no matter where or what?

So I think within those four or five areas, you start to get a clearer sense of the bigger ideas and principles that are guiding who you are. We talk about things like your core and your values. Those are the things that become like your Northstar. They're the things that you run all your decisions through. They're the things that guide you when you have no idea what the heck you're doing. They're the things that guide you in choosing a job or not. They're certainly the things that guided me when I chose to leave when things were out of alignment for me.

It's like, these are not my values, I'm not comfortable with this, I need to move on. For me, if you're able to at least get somewhat clear about those five things that allows you to then be more purposeful about the way that you're showing up.

Mel Savage: It's a great grounding starting place. Depending on who you are, you want to add texture, you want to make it bigger and get clear. Great. But just knowing those five things, and I think you articulated really well helps you start. I think I'm the last one too, I can't remember how you phrased it, but just getting really clear on how you show up with people. Because it's a personal brand as well, I would say not just a company brand, not just how you want people to feel, but how you want to feel about yourself, too.

I think that we forget so much about how we treat ourselves versus other people. We're really clear, we're really great to other people, and then we treat ourselves like crap.

Julie Hamilton: That is a great point.

Mel Savage: I'm going to add to the takeaway, as well. Think about how you treat yourself when you fail. How do you treat yourself when you're in those kinds of things? What do you do when you feel like an imposter and what does it mean to you? I was having massive imposter syndrome this week because I'm going to be teaching this thing next week. You always think, why are they asking me? There are way more capable people than me out there. It's like, if you don't feel imposter syndrome, you're not trying hard enough. And I love that.

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Julie Hamilton: Yes. That's how you know you're putting yourself out there. You know that you're living a good life because you are challenging the limits. I love that perspective, too.

Mel Savage: When I feel like an imposter, I'm like, okay, this means I have to be doing this. That's the trigger now for me, whenever I feel impostor syndrome. So one last question. We talked all around this, but let's just sum this up. Why you, as a leader of an agency and owner or founder of an agency, why do you appreciate people who live their brands?

Julie Hamilton: For so many reasons. Born out of experience, I've hired folks that are really great at knowing who they are and folks that are not. First and foremost, I want to hire people that are comfortable with who they are or are working on it. It's so much easier to coach folks to really help them flourish when they're in that kind of space.

Two, you're able to show up and focus on doing great work. If you aren't clear about your brand, or you're being inauthentic about it, there's going to be clutter and distraction. It's just extra noise and stuff that is getting in the way of you succeeding, getting in the way of the work, etc. It also deeply impacts team dynamics and company culture. A group of people who are clear about who they are, what they're good at, and how they add value is an amazing team. And if you can put those kinds of people together, everything is the sky is the limit, quite honestly.

I would say too, because at the end of the day, this is about trusting people. It is hard to trust people in their word if I don't believe that they're showing up authentically. If I feel like they're putting on a little bit of a show, I don't know what I'm going to get. And I don't know if you're going to follow through with what you say you're going to follow through with, and we make it harder to create relationships internally and externally.

There are a million reasons why I think it's so important to be clear about who you are. Also because I don't want somebody in the room selling themselves on a job that they hate, they know they're going to be terrible at and maybe they want to put on a good show in the room, and I am convinced. I don't want somebody to do that. I want people to go in and be able to pursue opportunities that they feel good about and they know that if they get the opportunity, they're going to be a rockstar. That's what I want to see when I'm hiring folks.

Mel Savage: I think you said it, too, about the gal that you had that you want it to be your succession plan. Having someone come to you as a manager and say, but this is what I'm good at. This is what I like to do. I don't want to do that and be confident about that. As a manager, I would love that. I don't know if every manager out there would love that but it doesn't matter. Because if you start doing what your manager wants you to do, if you don't love doing it, you're not going to be successful.

Julie Hamilton: I don't think it matters. Everybody has got to go about this in the way that they're comfortable. Everybody's got their own particular circumstances. You tell your manager to go to hell if they don't agree. But for your own personal well-being, the satisfaction of your life, your livelihood, you need to be able to be clear about that, even if you can only be clear about that with yourself so that you've got some direction, you can be perfect, and you can make choices.

If you're not clear about it, then you are just blown around and you're doing whatever everybody tells you to do and you don't know if you love it or not, you're just going with the flow. I think that that leaves much to be desired.

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Mel Savage: My experience, too, when I was starting to do things to please other people, I lost my confidence because I didn't know how to make decisions as this person that I wasn't. What did they want me to do in this situation? That's the question I would ask myself, which is ridiculous. The minute you start asking yourself, what do they want me to do? It's your loss because you cannot at all predict that.

Julie Hamilton: I feel you on that one. It's saying, I was super lost, I would get choked up in meetings. I don't know how to think like they think. It's terrible. I'm with you.

Mel Savage: So get clear. If you're feeling that way out there, like you don't fit in with what you're doing, don't make any rash decisions. Take some time to work through what you want your personal brand to be, what your values are, what you stand for, your why, your guideposts, and how you want to show up. Because sometimes, when you're clear about that, bringing that to the job you have now could be the solution that you're looking for. You may not have to change jobs, it might be you changing how you're showing up. That could be enough.

But it's also going to provide you clarity at that point to say, okay, now that I'm showing up in my authentic way, this works, this doesn't work, parts of this work. You're going to have a lot more clarity on what you need to do next when you know who you are.

Julie Hamilton: And you need to give a time for the dust to settle. Because while you may have a good handle on who you are as a brand, sometimes it'll look a little different as you let it percolate. It's the same thing but it just starts to take on a little bit of a different shape and you want to give that some time just to see what kind of doors that opens up for you.

Mel Savage: And just watch. I know its impact. Doing this is an empowering thing because even if you're in a situation where you're like, I can't take one more day of this, I feel so disconnected or I don't like my boss, or whatever's happening that's making you disengaged from your current job. Doing this work is empowering. It actually gets you through that time because you're like, okay, now I'm going to focus on me and what I want, and I'm going to watch what happens. Be aware of it.

Julie Hamilton: Quick story. My husband, who is in a completely opposite field than me, happened to find himself in some brand strategy work a few years ago and discovered archetypes. So we went through this process of really looking at what kind of archetype he was. When he got through the end of that process, getting clear about, in this case, using that framework, the archetype that he was, and he's a rebel changed the game for him and how he showed up at work.

He was always in turmoil about how much he should push things. He was the one that was in there to change things. He's a gunslinger. And when you get pushed back, you'd be like, oh, I'm not supposed to be like that. I need to not be like that anymore. And once he went through that exercise, he was like, you know what, this is who I am. It's where I add the most value and it's why companies hire me so I'm going to go and I'm going to be like that. I'm not going to be in a-hole about it but I'm going to push the limits because that's what I'm brought to do. Since then, he's so comfortable stepping into that now because that's who he is.

Mel Savage: Archetypes are a great way to do it. There are lots of great books out there, I'll link to some in the show notes. But you don't need to do it. You just need to get really clear on who you are, like your why, as you said. His is to be a rebel. Figure out what that is for you. It doesn't have to fit in someone else's archetype matrix

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framework. Figure out what it is for you. Well, thank you so much, Julie. This has been so great. I love talking to you. I think you've really helped me get clarity about what it means to have a personal brand.

Julie Hamilton: Well, thank you. It's been a ton of fun. I love talking about this subject and I've had a blast talking about it with you.

Mel Savage: Thanks, sister. Talk to you soon.

Big thanks to Julie. If you connected to Julie, and what Julie was saying, I am linking to her and her company in the show notes. I'm going to include those five questions that we just summarized at the end in the show notes as well. That's it for this week, my friends. I really love this episode. I hope you did, too. Let me know what you think. As always, let me know if there's something specific that you want me to address in this podcast.

I'll talk to you next week. Bye for now.

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