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THE THREE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES YOU NEED AT ANY LEVEL

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Hey there, welcome back. It's great to have you here. If this is your first time here, I want to say welcome to you.

My name is Mel Savage. I am the host of the Career Reset podcast. I'm also a certified career and performance coach. My focus is to help people take a leadership role in their careers and achieve the success they deserve.

For the past couple of weeks, I have been talking about performance development because it's that time of year when a lot of people are getting their performance reviews. I am not a big fan of the word 'review,' but a lot of places still call it that. People are getting their annual reviews and they are in a position to start thinking about their plans. What are their growth plans going to be? This stuff is right up my alley.

At the Career Reset, what I really focus on is career management, top-to-bottom career management, knowing what you want, figuring out what that means for your career, building a plan, and going and getting it. This part of building your plan is really understanding where you need to grow in order to achieve your career goals. Initially, I decided to dedicate four episodes to performance development turned into five episodes. And this is a third one.

A couple of weeks ago, I talked about feedback in terms of how to effectively give feedback to generate results from your people. I know the people listening here are not only just about building their own careers, but they're also managers of people, which you need to be good at if you want to be successful in any kind of company, but also, you're helping to grow future leaders. So learning to give effective feedback is critical.

If you haven't checked that episode out, check it out. I believe it's episode number 11. Because a lot of the time, we think we're being sensitive in giving great feedback, but we're not. I'm going to give a lot of examples in that podcast, you should go check it out.

Last week, I also talked to Linda Watt, Director of Training, Learning and Development, and a bunch of other things at the University of Guelph. She is an amazing lady. And she has completely revolutionized the performance development process at the University of Guelph. She shares her process on the podcast and we

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talk a lot about how people can take control of their own performance development and also help their people take control of theirs. So don't miss that.

Today, what I want to talk about is leadership competencies. Leadership competencies are, I guess, a fancy word if you've never heard of it before, but you probably have, just in case. Leadership competencies are a fancy terminology to bucket certain skill sets. Some of those skill sets are more functional skill sets, and some of them are more soft skills. There's a lot of them, there's a lot of aspects, skill sets, experience that you need to be a well-rounded leader.

Leadership is not just about leading people. Leadership is really about how you show up, how you work with others, how you think, how you inspire, how you lead other people, and how you grow their leaders. There are so many aspects to how you can be a leader in your own career and how you lead your own career development. Being a leader is multifaceted.

I'm going to talk a lot about leadership and what it means to be a great leader in future episodes of this podcast because it is one of the core pillars of what I focus on in my business. A big part of it is finding the career that's right for you, what makes you happy, going after it, and planning for it. Then, of course, performing well at it, which a lot of that is focused on leadership.

What I really want to talk about today are three leadership competencies that you need to have as a foundation for the kind of leader you are. These are three leadership competencies that you need to have no matter what level you are in the organization. If you're a new manager, I would start here with these three competencies. If you're at any level, and you're having challenges with your leadership style, I would check in and say, *How am I doing with the three leadership competencies that I'm going to talk about today?*

The three leadership competencies I'm going to talk about are **people management**, and **listening,** which is actually only one part of communication, which is a much larger leadership competency. But listening, I would say is the starting place of a good communicator. So I'm going to zero in on listening versus trying to do the entire bucket of communication today. So people management, listening, and the third one I want to talk about, which is not talked about very much, **success mindset**.

Those are the three leadership competencies that I'm going to deep dive into today. I want to do this because for a lot of people, and even a lot of new managers, we don't get a lot of leadership training within the companies that we work with. Some of us are really lucky, they have strong training departments within our organizations, but a lot of us had to learn it the hard way ad hoc by stepping into it over and over and over again.

Part of it is because we're making it up as we're going along and part of it is because we have really, really bad role models that are teaching us the wrong way of doing things. We don't know that when we're learning it. I remember I worked at an ad agency. That's where I started my career at an ad agency and I worked my way up honestly, from the mailroom.

It was like a Hallmark movie, where you move it, work your way up from the mailroom, and then I became a secretary. That's what we were called back in the 90s. Then eventually, I was promoted into account management, and I was always someone who was considered a rising star. I got things done quickly, accurately, and dependably. I anticipated issues. I went beyond expectations.

Then I got promoted into a position where I had to manage people and my leadership skills were less about functionally what I did and more focused on my soft skills, how I was interacting, and how I was leading people

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to become leaders. That's when my growth slowed down because I didn't know how to do that. That is a very tough skill, something that's a learned behavior, but it also helps, obviously, if you have some training.

I worked at an ad agency, and in those days, not saying it's the same today, but in those days, advertising agencies were about churn. They took 20-somethings and they churned them out. They wanted these young people with a lot of energy, who were willing to work 70 hours a week because they didn't have kids and all that stuff. Because it wasn't about retention, ad agencies did not invest a lot of money in training.

Not only did I not get training, but I was being trained by leaders who also had no training on how to be leaders. So I learned a lot of bad habits. I can't really, completely blame the ad industry, because I didn't go seek out books and there wasn't a podcast back in the 90s. But I didn't seek out other opportunities, I didn't pay for my own training. I was already working 70 hours a week so there wasn't a lot of time for it.

But if I had thought it was a priority, which I didn't, at the time, I could have found ways to get my own training. What ends up happening is that a lot of new managers will learn how to be leaders from other people who are also not great leaders. They don't necessarily know what it takes to be a great leader yet so they're following people who are also aren't trained and we're learning a lot of bad habits.

First, let me say it's incumbent upon everyone to take control of their careers, take the leadership role in their careers, and decide what kind of leader they want to be. Today, we want to talk about these three leadership competencies and give you some things to think about as you're thinking about your growth plans, as you're thinking about the kind of leader you want to be. Like I said, we're going to be really diving deep into people management, listening, and success mindset.

Let's start with people management. People management, I think is the most important and the most critical. Not only because you are a leader who's in charge of growing other leaders, that's a big responsibility, and one that I wish I had taken more seriously when I was younger. I wish I'd understood the gravitas of that responsibility. But also, if you are an amazing people manager, if you are someone who's known to be able to grow and inspire leaders, inspire action, someone that people really want to work for, I don't care what kind of other experience you have, that is going to take you far.

If you're not a great people manager, I recommend that you double down on this. I think the thing that you need to remember when you are a people manager is that it's not about you, it's about them. Them being the people who report to you. It's not about you showing that you can get the results, that you're on top of it, and that nothing goes wrong when you're in charge. It's not about that. It's about inspiring people to do work and learning to be accountable and responsible for getting the work done in a way that is consistently pushing them to be better.

You might be calling BS on this because I know that most corporate environments are fear-based leadership environments where you don't want to screw up and failure is not an option. If I screw up, it's going to look bad on me, I only get so many mistakes, all of that. I can't say that's not true. That's really an environment that's out there. But if you don't grow strong leaders, that's also going to look bad on you, and that's also going to inhibit your ability to be successful.

There is the day-to-day stuff, all the boxes that need ticking on a day-to-day basis. But to be truly successful, you need to grow strong leaders because that's going to come and bite you in the butt later as well when your team

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doesn't want to work for you and you can't get the results that you're looking for because the hammer approach isn't working for you as much as well anymore.

So it's worth it to take a little short-term pain with your team, training up your team members, giving them the time they need to do the job well, to being inspired to have those conversations that you need to have. It's worth it to take that short-term pain for the longer-term gain. There are ways to manage up while you're doing that, especially when you're training someone to manage up with your boss saying, *Here's how I'm working with so and so.* Manage expectations with your boss so they understand your approach to growing these people and growing these leaders.

In addition to the feedback podcast, I did a couple of weeks ago, which I think is really important, when you're people managing to learn to be able to give effective feedback. Go back and listen to that one.

I would say a few of the other critical aspects of being a great people manager is, the first thing you got to care about people. You have to care about them. You need to care about their success, and not necessarily just focus on what have you done for me lately. How are you making me look good? I know there's always going to be a little bit of that how is what they're doing reflecting on me?

But if you really care about them, if you put it out there, it's going to come back to you, it's going to come back to you in a good way. It's like when you do something nice for someone, they do it back for you. They want to do well in their jobs as well. It's like if you were holding the door for someone, and then you get to the next door and they hold it for you, that's not why you held it for them in the first place. But in the end, it benefited you in the end.

So the more time that you give to people to help them to think through their solutions, to have their back, to teach them, to help them find their own solutions, it's going to benefit you in the end. That's not why you should do it but that is what's going to happen. So there is no downside to investing in your people. Caring about people and making it about them is number one. Learning to give effective feedback, as I said, is number two. Go listen to that podcast.

I'd also say you want to be brave enough to let people make mistakes and learn. Meaning, they don't need to do it your way. You need to be brave enough to let people not only learn to do it but to do it their way. Give them the objective of what needs to get done and then let them figure out how to do it. It can still be on your guidance, you can have them check in with you as much as you like. How did it go today? How did it go tomorrow? All that kind of stuff.

That doesn't mean they have to do it your way. Give them the objective. Be brave enough to give them the objective and then work with them to let them figure it out their way. You might actually learn something from this because believe it or not, we don't all have all the answers. We're going to learn a lot by letting people do things their way. I think that the biggest myth, I'm going to call a myth about leadership is that it's about control. You're now leading, you're controlling, particularly when it comes to people management.

Leadership is about letting go of control, learning to let go of control, and letting people do things their way. That's how you grow great leaders. It's up to you to be able to do that while finding the balance of protecting the needs of the organization. So it's about managing up and it's about making sure that you understand how often someone needs to check in with you, how much you need to have their back, protect them, and know when to step in.

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But if your management style is all about, *I don't have time for this. It's easier for me to tell you what to do or do it myself than to work with you to figure it out on your own.* If that's the kind of manager you're going to be where you're not going to dedicate the time to people management, it is going to come back and bite you in the butt. So make sure that you're giving yourself, you're blocking in the time for effective people management. Really deep dive into how you and your organization with your own style can be the most effective people manager you can be.

Next, I want to talk about listening. Listening is the most important communication competency. I had a boss who always used to say that his mother told him that *God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. You should always be listening twice as much as you're talking.*

Listening is not just about hearing what people are saying. It's listening to understand what people are saying. Listening is such a nuanced skill. There's listening to what's actually being said, like a level-one type of listening. But then level two listening is really reading between the lines, listening for what's not being said. What are they trying to say? Watching their body language. Are they shrinking away? Are they upset? Are they pissed off? Are they disengaged? What's happening with their body as they're talking?

Listening for me is also really being curious and asking questions to get to the root of what's going on. I consider that part of listening because you're trying to understand. And anything that gets you to understand is to me a part of listening. Listen to what's being said, read between the lines, watch the body language, and then be curious and ask questions to really get to the root of what's being said. You could say, *Hey, I noticed in the meeting, you seemed a little disengaged. What's going on?*

Ask open-ended questions. Start throwing them with what or how. Try to avoid yes or no questions, meaning, *did you do this, are you okay,* and all that kind of stuff. Just try to ask open-ended questions that are going to help the person give you more detail. It's going to help you understand more what's going on. Because what you're trying to do is communicate in a way that you can really understand.

If someone's talking to you about something, you can say, *As you're telling me this, I'm noticing that you seem a little tense. What's going on? Why do you feel that way? What can I do to help? What are you worried about?* Really get underneath that and just ask what you're noticing. Watch the body language, listen for the tonality, listen for what's not being said, and really get underneath it.

The more people feel understood, the more they're going to relax, the more they're going to connect with you, and the better results you're going to get because everything's on the table. You know what to do next. You've talked about it. If you do it in a way that's not judgy, so it's not, *I notice you're a little tense. What's wrong with you?* It's not about that. It's, *Hey, I noticed that you looked a little stressed out when you were talking about this. What's going on?*

Be curious, be empathetic, understand, open up, help. You're going to get better results and people are going to want to communicate with you. So listening is critical to not only building relationships but also getting the results that you're looking for and minimizing the waste of time. There are so many great things that come from listening. People want to be heard so listen for understanding.

The third thing I want to cover here is the success mindset. I don't think in all of my time in corporate, anyone ever coached me on mindset, specifically. It was always about how we do things, not what we're thinking or how

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we're showing up. I did a podcast a little while ago about the three biggest mistakes I made in my career and one of them was, I would say, not believing in myself, which is a big part of a success mindset.

I'd say self-belief, believing you can do whatever is thrown your way, believing you can figure it out no matter what's thrown at you, that you're good enough, that is a big part that you belong there. Dealing with your imposter syndrome, pushing yourself out of your comfort zone to a point where maybe it makes you uncomfortable.

Maybe for a few moments, you're nervous, and you start questioning yourself, that's okay. But then, bouncing back, getting that resilience to bounce back and say, *I did it, I believe in myself. See, I'm awesome.* Having that success mindset that's really founded in believing in yourself.

I would say on top of that, learning how to make a failure means that you're not a failure. The fear of failure holds so many people back. It's held me back so many times from doing things in my life, let alone my career. Even everyday stuff, I'm constantly interrupting that pattern of getting anxious when I feel failure coming up and reminding myself, look, failure just means I'm going to learn something from this, even if it doesn't go the way I want it to. It doesn't mean that anything's wrong with me.

Finding the way for you to make failure mean that you're not a failure. The less you're afraid of failure, the more you're going to feel like you can take calculated risks that can push you out of your comfort zone. Because that's how we grow, pushing ourselves a little bit at a time out of our comfort zone. Deciding to make failure mean something that's not scary and not about you is critical in a success mindset.

Two more things on a success mindset are the ability to set long-term goals, and then not be attached to outcomes, which I know sounds weird. You're going to set goals and then not be attached to the goals. We need goals. We need a North Star to direct us to where we want to go. When we set those goals, we set them with intent, purpose, and understanding of how they align with us, etc. But then don't be so attached to how you get there.

Maybe you've set a path, that's great. It's always nice to say, *Today, I'm going to take this step.* But be flexible because opportunity is going to come into your path. You're going to learn things as you go. You don't have all the answers right now and how to get to that goal. So things are going to come up and you want to stay loose. You want to stay loose to be able to say, *I thought I was going to get there this way. But maybe there's another path forward. Maybe I have to take this way around or that way around. Maybe I thought my goal was this, but really, now that I've learned more, I'm going to tweak my goal a little bit.* That's okay. All of that is okay.

It's the ability with a success mindset to say, *I'm setting myself a goal, and I'm going to be fluid and organic with how I get there.* That doesn't mean just by the seat of your pants, either. It's finding that balance between planning out how you want to get there and then being okay if that plan needs to change. Being confident that no matter what happens, you can figure it out, and not get stuck if something doesn't work out exactly the way you hoped it would work out. Set goals, and then don't be attached to the path forward.

The last one, in terms of a success mindset, is really being open to growth, being open to opportunities. When you set a goal, when you are working towards something, opportunities are going to be coming in your path all the time. When you open your mind to it, you're going to see all these opportunities. They can be small or large. It might be an opportunity when you're in the elevator with someone that you don't normally get to talk to. Fantastic. How can you leverage that opportunity? It can be as simple as being in the elevator to being in a meeting with someone or getting invited to be in a meeting somewhere or getting a job opportunity or whatever.

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Look for the opportunities that are going to move you closer and closer to your goal, and then leverage the crap out of them. Don't be afraid to do that. Keep your eyes open. That's part of a success mindset.

Those are the three things, people management, helping people be great at their jobs, driving results their way, and taking the time to help them do that, making it all about them.

Listening. God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. Make sure you're listening for understanding and get underneath what's being said in any way you can. Be curious and not judgy.

Then, success mindset. Believe in yourself. No one is going to believe in you if you do not believe in yourself. So practice self-belief every day. Learn to make failure mean something that's not scary and that doesn't mean that you're a failure. Set goals, but don't be too attached to them, and be open to opportunities in your path.

If you do those three things at the foundation, nothing's going to stop you. Everything you do after that is going to be icing on the cake. Success, mindset, listening, people management, focus on those three things, and you're golden.

If you have any questions on that, please feel free to leave your comments in the show notes. I will definitely come back and answer any questions.

Next week, I have another guest joining us, Sharon Ramalho. She is the former Chief People Officer of McDonald's Canada. She has had the most amazing career. She's a mentor of mine, as well and she is the epitome of the kind of opportunities that you get when you're a great leader. Because Sharon does not have an HR background. She was a chief people officer, but she does not have an HR background. She has a background in McDonald's. But she grew up on the operations side of the business.

Because she was a strong leader, she got so many great opportunities thrown her way. And she's going to share her story with us. It's really inspirational, and what you can do when you set your mind to something. So I hope you'll join me next week.

Thank you so much for joining me this week. I hope you got something out of today. Let me know what it was. I'll talk to you next week. Bye for now.

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