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ELEMENTS OF A CAREER PLAN (P.S. IT'S MORE THAN YOUR JOB)

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Hey there, my friends. Welcome back to the Career Reset podcast. I am your host, Mel Savage. And I'm so grateful that you're here.

The mission of this podcast is to really help you achieve your career goals, and achieve them with the minimal amount of drama. And also in the easiest way possible. I want you to go to work every day, even if it's just from your bedroom to your office or your desk, wherever that might be. I want you to go to work every day and have it be something that adds value to your life, versus sucks all the energy out of it.

Part of what I want to talk about today is how to think about your career differently. I talk a lot about a lot of different kinds of things around your career throughout this podcast and all the monthly trainings I do. But one of the things that I spent a lot of time on helping people when I first met them, or when I first talked to them is helping them understand the paradigm shift between what they think makes up their career and what actually makes up their career. That's why I want to talk to you today about the elements of a career plan.

Before I get into it, let me ask you this. How many of you think that throwing a dinner party is just about the food? It's not, right? It's not just about the food. It's what night of the week? Who are you inviting? What do you want to do? What's the point of the evening? There are a lot of things like the kind of cocktails. Are you going to serve if you're into that? There's a lot to it like what are you going to do after dinner? That sort of thing. There's a lot going into planning a dinner party like setting the table, and all that kind of stuff. There's a lot that goes into planning a dinner party beyond the food.

Here's another example. How many of you think that going on vacation is just about deciding where you're going? Of course, it's not. Because it's not just about where you're going. It's what you're going to do, where you're going to stay, what you want to eat, what kind of things you want to experience, what you're going to bring with you, what to hold the packing, how many pairs of shoes do you need to bring, what are you going to do on this holiday? So nothing is one thing. There are so many elements to any objective that you have.

Same in business when you're writing a business plan. You don't just have one strategy, you have multiple strategies when you're writing a business plan. When I worked at McDonald's, if we wanted to talk about the

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quality of our food, there would be how we talked in our day-to-day commercials about food in general. There is provenance. So where does the food come from? Making sure people understand it. And there's also about how we sexually serve the food in the restaurants. What's the operational process for actually preparing the food? When you're talking about food quality, it's not just about what it tastes like. There's a lot that goes into it.

It's the same with your career, of course. Yet, most people think that their career is about their job. They think that *if I do my job, then my career is going to move forward.* And that is not the case. A lot of people just spend like 10 hours a day showing up for their job. And they think, *that's me, I'm doing I'm showing up for my career.* But that's not the case because when your job goes sideways, when you get that bad boss, when you get reassigned to a project that you don't want to do all of a sudden, you're stuck because you had all your career eggs in your job basket. That is where so many people get stuck.

The bottom line that I want to share with you as part of this intro, which I know has been a bit long, is your career and your job are not the same thing. There's a lot more to your career than just your job.

Let's talk about how your career and your job are not the same things. I want you to think of it like a hierarchy. And your career is at the top of that hierarchy. It's like the top of the mountain is the career. And then you're going to have several buckets of strategies that you're going to have to help you fulfill your career goals, one of which is your job. It'd be just like a dinner party. One of the buckets is around food, one of the buckets is around the core, one of the buckets is going to be around attendees, and one of the buckets might be around activities. So there are lots of different things that you need to think about if you want to throw a really awesome dinner party.

Cleanup might be another bucket. I'm very pragmatic. Who's going to clean up this mess after the fact? Absolutely, the same thing with your career. We're going to talk about today all the different buckets that you need to consider, and all the different elements that you need to consider as part of your career development. And a lot of these buckets go beyond your job. So by the end of this, you're going to be really clear on how to maybe rebalance a little bit less from your job, a little bit less time on your job, and a little bit more on some of these other things that are going to help you have a really well-rounded career plan.

Now, one thing you have to start with, though, is a goal. This is always the first problem. Most people don't have one of these. But you have to set a career goal. This is going to be your North Star.

I know I did a podcast, I don't know what number. It is on the top of my head, but it's called *Serious Goal Setting* (Ep 44). You should go back and listen to that. I will put the link in the show notes or you can just look at all my podcasts, but the show notes are going to be at thecareerreset.com/55. You can check that out. And you can learn how to set goals through the podcast. So let's talk about the actual elements that make up a career plan.

The first one is a job. That is one of the elements. It's important that your job is important. It's how people think in whatever industry. What have you done, what jobs have you had, and how good were you at them? So those are all really important things They want to know where you worked. They want to know what you did there. They need to be able to contextualize what roles have you done so that they understand where to put you and for your sake, as well. There are some specific skill sets that you probably need to learn as part of your role.

Every job that you choose, every job that you take should be a job that is a stepping stone to your goal. Every job that you choose should be a stepping stone to your goal. Often, I hear people talking about, *I got this opportunity.*

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They just kind of jumped from shiny object to shiny object. I wasn't really looking. But this person came in and offered me this job. It just sounded too good to be true and I took it. Then you get there and it's a shit show. Or your job wasn't what you thought it was going to be. And all this kind of stuff.

You're not learning what you want to learn and all this kind of stuff. So you can't make that determination ahead of time. You can't really suss out if a job is right for you if you don't know where it is you're trying to go and what it is you need to learn to be able to get there. Your job is a tool. It's not just an opportunity for you to get paid, which it is. But it's more than that. It's a tool for you to learn the things that you need to learn to get to where you want to go. So you're going to get the experience that you need to get to where you want to go.

The question I always encourage people to ask themselves whether they're proactively going out to look for a job or something is presented to them, or if they get offered a position shift at work is, *How does this job get you to your career goal?* That's the question because you got to be married to your career goal. A lot of times people go, *I really wanted this career goal over here, but this job is so awesome. I just have to. It's so good. I just have to try it.*

I used to always say that marketing strategy is about knowing which good ideas to say no to. I'm not saying say flat-out no to every opportunity that's presented to you if it doesn't obviously, align with where you think you need to be next. Sometimes where you think you need to be next and what opportunities are presented to you don't align. But as long as this opportunity that's presented to you has some of the things that you need, whether they're an order or not, that's the important thing.

But if it's so far off in the left field, you need to sit down and really assess if you are willing to change your goal. And why are you willing to do that? Why are you willing to take this job and for how long? And what do you want to learn from it? So these are the kinds of things that we really need to think about? How do we use our jobs to get to our career goals? And even if you only have the job you have now because it pays well, and you actually don't want to move up necessarily, I think you still need a goal and a career plan.

Because nothing lasts forever. Things change, people change, bosses change, cultures change in organizations. Even if you always just wanted to be at a manager level your whole life, that's fine. There's nothing wrong with that and you have this pay that you want. You still need a plan to make sure that you're protected, that you are doing the things that you need to do to make sure that if things go sideways or things shift in a way that you don't like, you're able to make the jump to find a similar job in another place. So the job is just about every job you choose should be a job that is a stepping stone to your goal in some way. That's the job bucket. It pays the bills and helps me get to where I want to go. That's one.

The next bucket I want to talk about is relationships. Relationships are so important. And it's not just about relationships that you build to get the job done. The job is the job. But the relationships that you need to build are ones that are inside and outside your organization. You need to decide which relationships within your organization are going to be important for you to be able to build and nurture. Some of them are just going to be for fun because you like that person. Some of them are going to be to help you advance your awareness of yourself, help you get to where you want to go, clear a path, learn something specific from somebody, and build a strong peer relationship that you need to have to be able to help your team do what they need to do.

There are lots of reasons to build good relationships inside the organization. You need to maximize the ones you have. And you need to fix the ones that are broken. If there are ones that are broken inside your company, you

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need to address them so that they're not in the way of where you want to go in your career. So those are hard ones to fix. But that's something that I help people with all the time, you can't just let broken relationships lie. They always come back to bite you in the butt. You need to figure out what's going on with those ones. But the ones outside your organization are really important, too.

So often, we get so consumed with all the hours that we're spending at work just trying to keep up that we actually don't spend very much time looking outside our organizations into our industry or keeping our networks going so that we have this nurtured group of people who are going to be there to help us when we need support. Are there industry organizations that you want to be part of? Are there industry leaders that you want to know who you are? Are there people that you've worked with before that you want to make sure you're still connected with? These are very important things. Don't forget about all those people that were important in your life and that you cared about just because you don't work there anymore.

I remember when I left corporate, it was very telling for me the people who wanted to stay connected with me and the people who just sort of just never returned my phone calls. It's really interesting. But even for me, it's not like I need to talk to these people every week, but maybe three or four times a year. I just reach out and say, *Hey, how are you doing? I'm thinking about you. I missed when we used to do this together or something*. Or *How are you coping right now? Is everything okay with you*?

Whatever it is, demonstrating that you're thinking about something and someone and that you care about them. Like, *If the world ever lets us go out for a drink with friends anymore, maybe you want to do that sometimes.* You want to be nurturing relationships that are important to you. Again, some of them are just friend relationships. Some of them might be lucrative relationships in the future, but relationship building is so key to overall career planning. We've got our job, we got relationships.

I have four more things in here that I want to share with you. The next one is any special skills and achievements. So you do a job, whatever it is. let's say you're in finance, and you know how to do all the things that finance people at your level know how to do. Check. That's fine, that's part of the job. But what achievements or special skills or special opportunities can help differentiate you from all the other finance people out there? Can it be some sort of special task force? Can it be an industry function function? Can it be a speaking engagement? Can it be an award that you've won or a special project that you worked on that is really unique in the industry?

What are these things that you could do that can set you apart, knowing what they could be and having those things on your plan are going to help you keep your eyes wide open, either to leverage the opportunities when they're presented to you or to proactively go out and seek them in your industry? Look at them as development opportunities with your boss, for instance. Lots of things there. It's just about being proactive and understanding what special skills and achievements would help differentiate you from others you might be competing with to get to a specific career goal, especially if that career goal is about a specific job title or promotion.

Sometimes it can be about remuneration that is based on achievements. Maybe you want to actually shift fields a little bit and get out of working for a company and more be part of the industry support network. So there might be opportunities all around. Knowing that, knowing where you want to go, and knowing what your goal is, you'll be able to better identify which special skills and achievements you really want to leverage.

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Next, your brand. Your brand, and not the brand you work for. What is your brand? What do people say about you? What do you want to be known for? People might say, *Oh, that Mel. She's an amazing strategic thinker. She's an inspirational leader. She's someone who adds value to any team she works on.* I would love for people to say that about me when they talk about me, or maybe it's, *Oh, that Mel. She's a fixer. And she's super calm. And everybody loves working with her.* Or, *Oh, Mel. She gets it all done. She has fun all the time. And she doesn't have to work crazy hours. I don't know how she does it.*

What are the things that you want people to say about you? What are these things? They might be aspirational right now. They might be things that you haven't proven as a brand. But if you know what they are, then you can start either working towards them or demonstrating them more proactively and focusing on them and how you speak to your industry, and what you speak about. It's really important for you to know what your brand stands for.

Now, why is that? Because it's again, a differentiator for you. It differentiates you. Next time someone says, *I just need someone who could take complicated things, fix them, and not make it into a big honking drama all the time. Oh, that's Mel. She's a fixer. I know this gal, Mel. She's a fixer. She's always super calm. For whatever reason, people just love working for her. She can convince anyone to do anything.*

When people know you, when you have your own brand, and when you stand for something special, people remember that and they remember you and what you're like, and sometimes you have to help them along the way. Know that about you and that can be very subtle. Putting that all together and figuring out how to continuously first decide what you want your brand to be, and then continuously planting seeds, and working towards being that person is so important. And then sometimes, with your brand, you have to overcome old tape, like maybe, *Yeah, Mel can fix everything. But she used to freak out all the time.*

Now, you want to be super calm. You've evolved to be super calm, but people still think about you as the person who freaks out all the time or doesn't work well with others, or whatever it is. You might have to overcome some old tape. That's what I call old tape, like just old perceptions that have evolved. But people know that about you. And they're always looking for you to go backwards versus forwards. That's human behavior. What can I tell you, we're all assholes sometimes.

So you need to, as part of your brand, know how you're going to be addressing that old tape. You can't just sit there and pout and go, *Well, I've done all these great things. And everybody still thinks I can't get along with everyone else.* So what? You got to do it? How are you addressing that old tape and managing that change and perception? And sometimes it's slow and steady, and you have to get people on your side one at a time. But sometimes you can get the right people on your side to be able to see that and spread the word.

So we got job relationships, special skills, and achievements, your brand. And then another couple of buckets left. One is a support network. Do you have a support network and are you nurturing it? I'm not just talking about people relationships, but these are purposeful people relationships that you are leveraging for specific reasons. And this isn't slimy or anything. This is just about making sure that you're asking for help in the areas where you have gaps.

Sometimes it's just having friends who are going to help give you confidence, like a wingman to go to a networking event, for instance, or somebody to go to a training with. If you're a little lacking a bit of confidence or

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unsure about something, or you need to vent to somebody, and you don't want it to be someone at work, we can ask for help in those areas from people that we trust. Sometimes we find a mentor, like, when we have a skill gap, we have a leadership gap, or a development gap, where we need a mentor to help us.

Maybe we've been assigned a project that we've never worked on before. We have a mentor who's going to help us. Who are your advocates? Who are your influencers? Meaning people who will advocate for you when the time comes. Who are the critics? And how are you dealing with them? And then, of course, do you have a coach? Oh, my goodness, I know that it's a bit self-serving to say this, but I wish I had a coach 10 years ago, 15 years ago. It would have changed my life. It would have been the best investment I ever made.

A coach, a good one, will help you get past all of the mindset blocks that are getting in your way. They're going to help you get out of your own way. And the best thing about a coach is, they don't judge. They're going to give it to you straight. If you have a good coach, they're going to give it to you straight. They're going to listen and they're going to say, *Here's where you're getting in your way. Why are you doing that?* And then you can work through that.

So that's a really important piece. It's making sure you have a strong support network in place. You don't have to do it all at once. You can build that up over time. But if you have a plan for your support network, you know who you want, who you need, all of that kind of stuff, what you need them for, it's important to have them as part of your plan.

And then the last piece is mindset management. Now, I just talked about the coach thing, so I'm not going to repeat myself, but a good coach is going to help you manage this. But coach or no coach, whether you just read books, listen to podcasts, journal, and all that kind of stuff, fine. But you have to learn to manage your mind minimizing the drama that you're creating for yourself. What are you worried about that you don't need to worry about? Are you afraid of failure, self-sabotage, imposter syndrome? These are a lot of the things that I hear all the time. *Being stuck, I don't know what I want to do.* This is all mindset management stuff.

I think I want to change careers, but I'm not sure. I'm not getting along with my boss. These are all mindset management challenges that you need to focus on. Maybe you're afraid to do something. *I don't want to fail. I'm, I'm a terrible presenter. I don't know what to do about it. I just can't do these things.* These are all mindset management challenges. A lot of the time, people think it's experiential challenges that they need to work on. No. Everything I just mentioned is a mindset management challenge. Leadership behaviors and managing people are all mindset management challenges.

I'm telling you it's a big deal and something we don't spend enough time on. So the whole how are you managing your mindset bucket is critical, because I always say, it's not just about knowing what to do to reach your goal, it's about staying emotionally and mentally focused to actually do it. I know, I know. But that's where the magic is. That is the most amazing part. How many of us have set a goal and gone out and bought all the things and the tools and got it organized or whatever, set everything up? And then we quit the goal. It's the mindset management part that keeps you stuck to the goal. Perfectionism, procrastination, all mindset management challenges.

I encourage you to not minimize the importance of managing your mind through all of this. And if you're listening to me, then you know that that's a big part of what I talk about. And there are so many tools out there to help you

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develop the muscle in your brain to really get aware of what you're thinking and what you're thinking is causing a lot of the drama in your life. So those are, I'd say the six major strategies that are part of your career plan.

So your job is one strategy. Your job is not your career. I think I've made that so clear. Your job is just one strategy. Relationships, special skills and achievements, your personal brand, your support network and your mindset management strategy. Those are all things that you need to think about as part of your career development. And you need to integrate all of these things into your daily life. And when I say that, I mean, you don't have to do these things, all of these things every single day, but they need to be integrated into your day-to-day if that makes sense.

Some of you will be thinking, *Who has time for all of that?* Of course, you think that because you spent all of your time on one strategy. You need to rebalance what's going on. And if you think you're not in control of your time, come talk to me, honey, because you are in control of your time. There are so many ways that you can manage your time more effectively. But when you have a plan, and you know the things that you want to achieve and each of those strategies that I talked about, you can actually leverage a lot of the things that you're already doing on a day-to-day basis.

You just get a better return on some of the things that you're already doing. You don't have to always spend tons of extra hours. Sometimes it's extra hours to set up your plan and be clear about your goals. But usually, once you get going, it's fine. You get the momentum that you need to have. It's totally possible. You need to do this. If you aren't sure how to go about it, then you need to come and talk to me.

Having a clear plan is the foundation for maximizing and getting a really good return on your investment of time and energy that you put into your career because nobody should be going to work hating their job every day. That is no way to live, my friends. You deserve better than that. Your life deserves better than that. And you got to take some control and bring you what your life deserves.

That is all I have for you today. I hope you learned something from this. It's so important to put all this together. Make the most of your career with the least amount of drama in the easiest way possible. That's all I have for you. Good luck this week.

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

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