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5 THOUGHTS TOP LEADERS THINK TO NATURALLY CREATE SUCCESS

Welcome to The Highly Valued Leader podcast where I make it simple for leaders at all levels to amplify their value. My name is Mel Savage and I went from working in the mailroom at a small ad agency to making multiple six figures in senior management at McDonald's, to running my own multiple six-figure executive coaching business. I've had huge successes in my career and epic failures. All of it taught me the world-class leadership, mind and skill sets that I simplify for my clients and share with you on this podcast. I'll help you reset your leadership style, demystify the politics, and help you become the highly valued leader everyone wants on their team. Get ready for the most honest, direct and revolutionary leadership coaching you've ever heard. Let's simplify leadership together.

Welcome back, leaders. Great to have you. Today's podcast is a little bit for everyone. That's really what I'm trying to do today. I'm going to be sharing five beliefs top leaders have that allow them to be naturally successful. I think that the key today that I want to talk about is how to make it natural and easy. Something that you're not forcing yourself to do every day, or to fake it till you make it or all that stuff. I really want to help you adopt some belief systems that are going to make it easy for you to be successful.

You might be asking yourself, *what's the big deal about beliefs? Shouldn't you just be telling me what to do? Give me some quick tips and tricks and all that kind of stuff.* Even my clients are *can you give me some quick tips and tricks?* And sometimes, of course, there are some great strategies that we can rely on to make things work. But the foundation of everything, if you haven't heard this from me even before, which I'm assuming you have, if you've been listening to me for a while, comes from your thinking.

What you believe in your mind will always come out of your mouth in some way, shape, or form. Meaning, maybe it's not the exact words, but it could be the tone, the body language, or whatever. If you're someone who is told, *we can read what you're thinking on your face,* you may not be saying anything, but what you believe in your mind comes out of your mouth. You're communicating it in some way, shape, or form. And it also shows up in how you make decisions, maybe even micro decisions.

For instance, if there's someone on your team that you think should be doing better than they actually are; when you think about them or when you want to go talk to them, there are little micro-decisions you make about how patient you're going to be, or how frustrated you might be, or how helpful you might be with that person who you think should be doing something differently than they actually doing. So when you believe that about them, it makes it harder for you to show up as your best leader.

You have to force yourself, you have to keep grounding yourself, and you have to use up so much more energy to be your best leader in those situations versus just naturally showing up as the leader that you want to be. Whatever you believe in your mind, you communicate in some way, shape or form. It could come out of your mouth. It could be body language. And it also shows up in how you make decisions.

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Let me give you some more examples. I heard this from someone the other day in a consult session. They said, *"I don't have time to sugarcoat things for people."* If that's your belief, and sometimes I used to have that belief about how patient are you going to be when someone doesn't understand or when someone's not aligned with your recommendation. In this person's mind, sugarcoating things meant being *salesy* or saying things in a flowery way to get people on board.

But actually, if you take yourself out of that mindset, *sugar coating*, if you want to call it that is really about understanding what's stopping people from getting on board. What is it between them and the idea that's making them hesitant to align with you? When you understand people's motivations, and where they're coming from, then you're able to help them by positioning things in a way where they understand the benefits to them by aligning with you. That's not *salesy*. That's not manipulative.

That's actually seeking to understand where people are coming from, and then maybe even adapting your ideas to help people get aligned. That's your job. But when you're telling yourself, *I don't have time to sugarcoat things for people*, you don't even have access to that part of your brain, that might come up with a creative solution to actually seek to understand where people are coming from.

I was in a session with someone the other day who was having trouble with a similar situation to this. And I said, Look if someone's not aligning with your idea, it's because they don't feel safe for some reason. And your job as a leader is to understand why they don't feel safe, and then to help create safety with them. But when you're telling yourself, *I don't have time to sugarcoat things for people*, you're not even thinking about them or their safety or thinking about you and what you have time for.

So in this case, the belief system is so important. I have tons of examples of this and I'm going to take up the whole podcast with examples. I want to get to the five thoughts. But the other thing I want to say before I get to the strategies is something that might be going through your head. It's like, *I can fake it. I can fake my thinking. I'm really good at faking it.* And you know what? Sometimes I'm going to say it. Here we go. We got to fake it.

If you're in a situation–maybe you're in a room full of people, you disagree on something, and you haven't had time to manage your thinking, you're like, *I don't want to blow things up, or rock the boat, or whatever until I've had time to really digest what's going on here.* So sometimes you just got to fake it in those moments. And I think that's okay to get you out of a sticky situation.

But when you operate from faking it all the time, that is so exhausting and the minute you feel stressed out and tired, your brain goes back to whatever it naturally thinks–the thing that you're trying to hide. So what you think will naturally come out of your mouth. So if you're thinking, *"This person is an idiot, but I can make them feel understood. I can make them feel like they're smart and important."* Yes, you probably can in a pinch. But it's going to be really hard to do that when the shit's hitting the fan. Or if you're thinking like, "*I don't want to be here, but I'm going to feign interest or I'm going to feign like I'm so happy to be working here."* You can in small doses, but it's really hard and exhausting to be doing that all day, every day.

What you want to be able to do is get your mind in the right place. Because if you actually do a little bit of work on your mindset, then everything else becomes easier. That's because it becomes natural. And I think that the most important thing here is to be as natural as you can be. Because that's when you have access to all of the greatness inside of you. When you're trying to fake it till you make it, you are actually blocking yourself from your best thinking.

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I'm going to cover five beliefs that I'm going to offer that you practice integrating into your belief system and adopting into your belief system so that you can naturally create success in your career, day-to-day on the job. This is like on-the-job practicing. I'm going to talk to you as well about what each belief brings to your career and your team, the skills these beliefs might generate for you, and why these beliefs are more effective than what you actually might be thinking right now.

As leaders, we spend way too much time focusing on doing versus creating a leading mindset. Meaning, managing your thinking and managing your mindset. We focus on actions versus beliefs. And I understand that for sure, but leadership is much more of an EQ gig versus an IQ gig. I'm going to say that again. Leadership is way more of an EQ role job versus an IQ job. And when you're not taking control of your thinking, you're not operating in an EQ-oriented way.

I wish we spent way more time on this at the beginning of our lives. Like in school as we're being educated in university, we should be talking so much more about our thinking versus trying to accumulate information. That's honestly what makes us our best selves; when we're able to manage our minds and have awareness of what our thinking is doing, what our thinking is creating, and the results that our thinking is creating in our lives, in our careers, and in the lives of our people that we're managing.

When you're able to do this, I honestly believe that great leaders can lead any subject matter. You might be a marketing person, an IT person, or a science person, and all different kinds of things. You might have a specific subject matter that you're an expert in. But sooner or later, it's really just about your ability to lead. And I think a great leader can lead on any subject matter. So everything I'm giving you today is going to help you maintain access to your most productive, creative strategic thinking. And it's going to help you stay connected to the best version of you as a leader.

Let's start with belief system number one. It's not going to surprise you what I'm about to say because I say it in every single podcast and this is the belief that you want to practice. ***I create the environment for results to happen.*** I think that some leaders think that they're supposed to be the ones creating the results. And I want you to think about that. You're not meant to create the results. Your job is to create the environment for results to happen.

Some leaders are just caught up on getting the results out and they think, *"I need it to be done in the fastest way possible. And the fastest way is the best way. And my way is the best way."* So they often do it themselves, or they solve problems themselves, or they're working late doing projects themselves. They think, *"I don't have time to teach someone this… They can't do it as well as I do… It's going to be faster if I do it this way…"* because somehow they think fast is good.

When you're in that mindset, you stop asking people what they think. When you think *I need to get it done in the fastest way possible*, if that's what you're thinking, then you know that's leading you to all the other thoughts, which are *"I can do this better myself… It's faster if I do it myself… They're not going to be as good as good as me… What's taking so long?"* You stop asking people what they think and you start solving problems for your people. And this doesn't just show up with your reports, it shows up with your peer group as well.

You get really impatient with them because *we're not going fast enough*. You see the solution, why don't they? These are all thoughts I'm telling you right now. *"I see this solution, why are they seeing it? This is a really good idea."* And when you're like that, you get closed off from accessing your creative thinking, which is your leadership

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thinking. You get closed off from your confidence, from open-mindedness, and from your ability to support other people.

You just end up focused on yourself and what's good for you at the moment because just want to get it done, versus what's good for the whole. When you are patient, when you're thinking like, *"My job is to create the environment for results to happen,"* then you're like, *"How can I create the environment for my team? How can I create this environment with my peers?* And when you access your creative thinking, you feel more confident. You're more open-minded, and you don't feel like you have to solve all the problems, which is what leadership is all about.

But when you're in the other place, *I've just got it out and get it done. And I'm really impatient.* That's the opposite of leadership. It's like that example I gave you at the very beginning of the podcast where the person was like, *I don't have time to share code things for people.* When you're impatient in that mindset and you're just focused on getting things done quickly, you don't make time to ask your stakeholders what they think. You don't make time to create alignment on recommendations. You don't make time to go and connect with people ahead of time or ahead of meetings.

Because you think it's not as important as just getting it done. You're too busy creating your own results versus creating the environment for results to happen, which is really about orchestrating results. But when you believe that it's your job to create the environment for results to happen, then you start getting really focused on getting good at that because you're all here in your roles because you like being good at your job. And you just defined your job the wrong way.

You think your job is about getting the results out and I'm asking you to think your job is about creating environments for results. Just making that little tweak gets you to think differently. *Oh, it's my job to create the environment* that makes you more curious about the environment that you're creating. You take a step back, you survey the situation, you think about, *how can I create the right environment for this person to get results, for this team to get results, for me and my peers to get results, for my boss even to get results?*

How can I create the environment for my boss to get results? You take it out of what you need and you take it about you. You make it about the environment that everyone else needs to get results. So when someone comes to you on your team and asks you, or comes with a problem, or asks you to solve a problem for them, you solving it for them is not creating an environment. You solving it for them is you creating the results. But if you're like, *how can I create an environment here for results to happen?* Then you might slow down and go and help them find their own solution.

What I want to offer you is a question that you can keep asking yourself, which is, *what would I need to do right now in this situation to create an environment for results to happen?* So when someone comes to you with a problem, you ask yourself, *what would I need to do to create an environment for results to happen?* When you need someone to get on board with a recommendation, what would you need to do to create the environment for results to happen? And it applies to you too.

If you're looking to get promoted, what would you need to do to create an environment for results to happen? Because it's not your decision in this case. For the promotion, someone else ultimately gets to make that decision. So what would you need to do to create an environment for that result to happen? It works for everything. That's thought number one. I create environments for results to happen.

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Thought number two is ***my priority is people*** *(not problems)*. My priority is people, not problems. This really builds on the thought that your job is to create the environment for results to happen, but it kind of digs deeper into your people. If your priority is people, your job is to grow those people. Your job is to build critical thinkers on your team with your peers and even with your boss to some degree. Your job is not about solving problems and having all the answers anymore. It's about teaching your team to think for themselves.

Because when you're focused on the problem, you're not focused on people. And your job is to focus on people now. You're a leader so don't focus on the problem. Focus on the person and let the person focus on fixing the problem. This can also apply to how you manage your own people when you have employees who aren't necessarily delivering as well as you would want them to deliver. When you think to yourself, *my priority is people,* then that's going to help you try and understand what's blocking them and what their motivations are.

What's going on with them, where they feel unsafe or unable to do the work? And you can be empathetic, and you can help create safety for them so that they can talk to you. But when you think your priority is the problem or driving results, then you get impatient. You don't actually dig to that level. And you might say, *"Well, I tried that and it didn't work."* Okay. But when you think your priority is your people, you keep trying and you keep digging, especially in these areas where your report feels unsafe.

They're not going to tell you the truth at the outset. It might take a few times to actually get to the bottom of it and start to see progress. But when you think your priority is people and not problems, then you don't mind giving them your time. Because that's actually your job, to create an environment for success to happen, to focus on your people, whoever they are, reports or peers or your boss.

When you don't think people are your job, then you bury yourself in meetings all day and projects you have to do. You don't make space in your calendar for your people. You get impatient when they need your help. You expedite situations by solving problems for them or whatever and you don't create space to allow them to grow.

One of the things that I work with my clients on, especially the ones who are having trouble managing people is changing what their calendar looks like. I have a client right now who's just diving headfirst into this and seeing so much success, that she is really rejigging her calendar to make time for her people. She's taking down the percentage of meetings she's in week after week. She's delegating everything and then dedicating the time that she was in meetings, to actually being there for her people to help them through these things that she's delegated to them.

And she's taken all the projects off her plate and she's delegated those too. So all the time she was spending on doing projects was also time she was giving to her people. Because some of these projects are over their head. And that's okay. She is there to make sure that they don't drown, not by telling them what to do, but by practicing, and helping them think through what they should do. And that doesn't mean you never tell your team what to do but you offer it to them as an idea. And help them think through why that idea might be good in this situation.

Always use every conversation as an opportunity to help your people grow. Because when you think *my people are my priority*, that just comes naturally when you're like, *"I'm going to clear my calendar for my people. I'm going to make every conversation useful to my people and make sure that I understand what my people need to be able to bring the best versions of themselves to the job."* That's number two. My priority is people, and in parentheses, not problems.

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So then number three. The number three thought I want to offer you is ***I am already valuable*** *(I have nothing to prove)*. I am already valuable. I think that is such a powerful thought to work on believing. I am already valuable. I see so many people trying to prove their value day in and day out. And that is so exhausting. The very first thing I want to offer you here is separating proving yourself from doing your job well. You can do a really good job because, by the way, you're already great at what you do.

You can do a really good job and not have that proving yourself energy coming along for the ride. You can just believe in your ability to be successful. Successful leaders aren't hustling around to prove themselves all the time because they know they're going to reach their goals. No matter what, they're going to reach their job goal, or their project goal, or whatever is going to happen. It just may not be the way they thought it was going to be. It might be a little bit more complicated.

There might be more fires or whatever, but they're going to deal with it. They know how to do it. It's fine. But the thoughts that get in the way are thoughts like, *I want people to think I'm valuable*. *People are looking to see if they made the right decision. I need to show them that they did*. Basically, those are the thoughts that get in the way. And let's be honest, people are going to be looking to see how you perform. We cannot control that they're going to hire you for the job. And then they're going to see if they made the right decision. They may even be looking for you to prove yourself. They may even say to you, *"This is going to be the chance for you to prove yourself,"* which is terrible.

Please, if you're a boss out there, don't say that. Just because they're looking doesn't mean you need to go in there with this prove-yourself energy. Because prove yourself energy is basically grounded in the idea that you're not good enough as you are. That you need to be somehow your best in that moment. And it's not coming naturally somehow versus just going in there and doing what you do. When you think, *I'm already valuable. Everything I say has value. I know what I'm doing,* so you don't need to prove yourself. You just need to go in there and do your job.

But when you think, *I need to prove myself*, then you lose access to your highest level of strategic thinking. You have this sort of frenetic, nervous energy, worried, and you've become overworked because you're saying yes to everything. You don't want to rock the boat. You want to show everybody that you're committed. And you sort of get to this place where you end up being less and less valuable because you're putting yourself through this prove yourself phase. And I want to say just skip it. I don't care what anyone says. I don't care what anyone's looking for. You actually are good enough.

And when you believe *I am already valuable*, then you can skip over the prove yourself stuff and just show up and be valuable all the time as your best leader. And even if you make a mistake, it doesn't have to mean that you're not good at your job. How you handle the mistake is valuable as well. Obviously, you're going to make some. I promise you, you will make some mistakes. Just accept it right now. And it doesn't have to be a big deal. It's not a personal shortcoming. You don't have to make yourself less valuable.

When you make a mistake, you just have to be like, *"Okay, let's keep going. How are we going to deal with this mistake?"* That's what leaders do because they know mistakes are inevitable. And they know that they are valuable enough to manage the mistakes. *I am already valuable* as a thought creates an energy that makes you more valuable naturally, without force, without worry, and without keeping you up at night. You're calm, you're pragmatic, you're open, you're in self-belief, which is the best look for a leader. So that's *I am already valuable*.

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Thought number four is… get ready for this. ***Knowing people's motivations is how I do my job***. I talked about this at the very first thought. Your job as a leader is to make it easy for people to align on strategies. That strategy could be a vision, it could be the strategy for a project, it could be your culture, it could be a key sea change in the organization, it could be the strategy around a conflict, or whatever it is. Your job as a leader, in some cases, is to come up with the vision or the sea change or whatever. But equally, it's to get people aligned on strategies.

If I said to you, what's your job? You'd be like, *my job is to come up with a vision or innovative project or idea*, whatever. And I'd say, yes, it's your job to orchestrate that big idea; not necessarily come up with it yourself. By the way, your job was to orchestrate the vision, the culture, and the sea change. But equally, it's your job to create alignment behind the big idea. I'll give you an example.

Back when I was at McDonald's, we wanted to create a huge sea change in the organization about how we funded marketing. And before we even had one meeting about it, with the group at large, with the franchisees, etc., I'd already written the deck. I had the whole story. I had done all the research. I've written the deck on the solution, how it should happen, and all of the things. I'll tell you that by the end of when we actually were able to implement this, that deck that I had written 18 months earlier, maybe changed 10% by the end.

But if I had gone out with that deck on day one and said, *"Hey, everybody, here's what we're doing. Here's the brilliant solution to what we're doing,"* there would have been so much blowback. The deck would never have made it out of the first meeting. Our job is to understand what we're trying to create, and the result we're trying to create, and then get people aligned step by step as we go so that we can actually create the change we intend to create.

Otherwise, we're just going to get frustrated, like that guy I was talking about before, which is *I don't sugarcoat things*. Then you're not going to actually get any of your projects implemented. So have a nice day, right? We just need to make sure that not only do we have the strategy for what we want to do, but the strategy for actually helping people get on board. And that is really about knowing people's motivations.

With the project that I'm talking to you about, there were some people who were motivated by that by money. For some people, this was going to have a huge impact on their P&L. How are we going to help make them whole? How are we going to bring them around? For some people, they were motivated by fairness because they were paying more than other people and they were sick of it. For some people, they were motivated by sales opportunities because if we had more money, then we could drive more business, which is obviously more money for everybody too but they were more invested in the overall sales growth. For some people, it was about process. Like how is this going to happen? What's this going to mean for my job?

There were so many different kinds of stakeholders who had different kinds of motivations. It was important to understand what were the motivations, what were the main motivational issues in general, and the motivations of the squeakiest wheels, and then get those groups or those specific people on board ahead of time before you walk into the room and present the idea. You already know what those squeaky wheels are going to say. Those people with the most angst have already been solved for. That's how you do your job. That's how you make the innovative ideas a reality.

Because when you think *knowing people's motivation is how I do my job*, then you make the time. This isn't about getting to the end in the fastest way possible. This is about getting to the end in the most effective way possible. So you make the time to understand. You get naturally curious. If you think *my job is to know people's*

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motivations, guess what? You get curious about their motivations, you get empathetic, and you have compassion for where they're coming from, versus judging them.

And when you understand them and have compassion for them, then you come up with alternative solutions. You get them on board, you ask questions, and you listen. And once you know what motivates them, then you can motivate them to get on board. That's the whole thing.

I have another client who's doing this right now. She's got a big project she's implementing in a government organization so they are a bit set in their ways in the government organization. There's just one stakeholder she's dealing with right now, where she took the time to do what I'm telling you here. And people are coming up to her going, *"How did you get that person on board? Why is she so easy on you? Why does she agree with everything you say? How come she never fights you like she fights me?"* It's because you take time to understand someone, and their motivations, and make it easy for them to get on board. So *knowing people's motivations is how I do my job*.

And the number five is, and this is really for you. ***I am deliberate about my success***. The fifth belief is *I am deliberate about my success*. Up until now, and I hear this all the time, so many people well into their leadership lives are just kind of going with the flow. They go from job to job, not necessarily having a strategy for themselves. And letting that strategy actually permeate and be a thread, not only for the job you have now but how you get jobs in the future.

I'll give you an example. I have a client. His goal, overall, in his career is to be the CEO of a Fortune 1000 organization. Now, obviously, we flesh it out a bit more than that. But what he's doing now is he's using that strategy to understand how he makes decisions in his current job, like, *"How would my Fortune 1000 CEO version of me deal with this situation? How would they deal with where I am in my career? What would they need to learn from the current job that I have? What would need to be the next job that I get in order to move me closer to that goal?"* They're very deliberate about their success.

The projects they take on, the relationships that they build, and the decisions that they make all go through a filter of what their goals overall are, and what their growth opportunities are to get to that goal. I always say they no longer grow with the flow, they grow with intention. They have these clear goals, and they're consistently managing their path to get there. Here's something I want to just make sure that you are all very clear on–the work that you're doing right now, your job is there to serve your purpose; not the other way around.

You're not there to serve the company's purpose. The job you're doing right now is there to serve your purpose. Your career is in higher order than your job. Your job is just one of the tools you're using to grow your career success. You're going to suck all the juice out of that job and suck all the juice out of that company and keep trying to get some juice from the company until they're like, *"No, there's no more juice to give here."* And you're like, *"Great. Okay, fine. Next company, more juice."* That's what you need to do.

That's how you use your job deliberately. You do this on the job all the time. You have a strategy and you use that strategy to filter your decisions, what you want in your career, how you'll use your current role to get it, how every situation you're in; every meeting, every project you take on, and every position you take is filtered through that goal. It also helps you to not be blindly loyal to an organization just because you are afraid to go out there and get another job.

If that happens, which it might happen; it happens to everyone and happened to me, at least you can then say, *"I'm obviously very nervous to go there. But if I stay here, I've sucked all the juice out of this job. And now I need to*

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leave. I need to get some help to get my mindset clear so I can keep moving forward." Then you just solve that problem. Your career is a series of problems to solve to get to where you want it to go.

If you are feeling blindly loyal, I feel like being blindly loyal to a job is compared to being codependent in a relationship where you don't think you're as good without the other person. You don't think you'd be as great if you didn't have this company or weren't working for this company? Some people will say to me, *"I stayed there for a long time because they really valued me and it was great. It was safe and I wasn't sure that I knew I had enough skills to go work somewhere else."* You absolutely do. Don't cut yourself short.

I think the key thing here is that you are deliberate about your success and that's going to help you put some strategies in place that you can use every day on the job as a step towards an overall goal, versus just growing with the flow, which will create growth, but not efficiently, not effectively, not strategically.

Let's go through these five thoughts very quickly here. Number one, *I create the environment for results*. Number two, *my priority is people*. Number three, *I am already valuable*. Number four, *knowing people's motivations is how I do my job*. And number five, *I am deliberate about my success*. I hope that you notice that there is nothing earth-shattering about these five thoughts. And in some cases, you probably already believe these thoughts. It's just about practicing and bringing them to the forefront of your mind more often so that you can operate naturally from these thoughts.

If none of these thoughts are currently something that you are focused on, on a day-to-day basis, my suggestion to you is just to pick one. Pick one of these thoughts and just ground yourself in it every day, between every situation. So if it's *my priority is people*, then every time you see a person, let that be the trigger for that thought. And then you can just practice that. Practice it for a month, you'll see it starts to embed. Then practice the next thought, and practice the next thought. There is no rush. I've given you five thoughts. If you spend a month every day on each one, six months from now, you're going to be a totally different leader. Okay.

I guess the last thing I want to leave you with the last thought is, that when you learn to think like a leader, you will naturally begin to act like one. And you can decide what the thoughts are that you want to learn to think like a leader. They may not be thoughts that you believe right now, but when you know what those thoughts are and you practice them and you learn to think like that version of yourself, you're going to naturally begin to act like that version of you too.

That's what I have for you this week, my leader friends. I will talk to you next week. Bye for now.

Hey, if you want to simplify leadership while amplifying your value, then you need to get your hands on my free training. Head over to melsavage.com/simple for instant access to the training and get a taste of how I help my clients lead with ease and make more money in the process. I'll see you there.

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