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BUILDING A LEADERSHIP BRAND

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.

Hi, leaders. Welcome back to the podcast. Today we are talking about the importance of building a leadership brand and how to do it. This is something that all of my clients are interested in doing and they get so excited doing it because it provides structure, guidance, a process, if you will for how to go from where you are now to being the leader that you want to be. Today, I want to actually share with you how I do this with my clients and give you an inside peek at a little bit of a process because I really believe this is the most valuable thing that you can do for yourself.

Building a leadership brand is very different from your personal development plan (PDP) at work. Your PDP at work is a combination of objectives and KPIs specific to your organization. So things like projects, etc. that you actually need to work on and execute against. And then, of course, there are some specific personal developments things. In your leadership, maybe it's something to do with how you lead people, influence the organization or your president as an executive, or whatever it might be that you need to do to develop.

But it basically just says, *we need you to become more of an influencer with this specific audience, or develop these kinds of relationships, or create these kinds of results through your team*, that kind of thing. And so it just kind of gives you the objective, it doesn't talk about how to do that, or what that might look like for you and the steps you're going to take, etc. It just throws it out there. And then you have to figure out how to get from where you are now to where you want to be.

I want to offer this, it doesn't even really create space for you to decide whether you want to do that or not. I want to just reiterate this, and I say this all the time, this is kind of a sidebar, your PDP at work, your development plan at work is about what the company needs you to do. It is not always what you want to do. And I want to remind you that your career is higher order to your job. Your job is just one of the tools you are using to achieve your career goals. So the PDP at your job is really just a job plan, it's not a career plan.

Your career plan should include your job but have more to it than that. You get to decide what kind of leader you want to be. You kind of use your job as a tick boxing exercise, like *what can I get out of this job to help me get to where I want to go long term? What will I learn here? How will I develop here? How will I use the resources here to get to where I want to go?* And when that job stops becoming useful to you, then you need to go on to the next thing. You need to plan for it to be the next thing, just like your company is doing with you, by the way.

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Don't get me wrong. I know that people care about each other and there are a lot of great companies out there who care about their people. But at some point, when you stop becoming useful to them, they're going to have to make the hard decision and the same thing for you. You get to do the same thing. When your company stops being useful to you, you get to make the hard decision. So you are in charge of yourself, and no one else. A little bit of a sidebar there, a little bit of a soapbox, but I hope you find that little nugget useful.

To help you really figure out how to use your job to become the person that you want to be, we need to have a plan to get there. That's what I'm covering today. I'm going to talk about the elements of how I teach creating and utilizing a leadership brand plan. Creating and utilizing are two different things. Creating and utilizing a leadership brand plan. I'm going to go through a piece of my framework that I actually share with my clients, and how you can use it to grow your brand.

When I do this with my clients, we kind of go through step-by-step. They have some ideas, they throw things down, I brainstorm with them, and I add value to them based on my own experience. I created this one so I have a vision for what it can do to help you. But also, I have used this with lots and lots of clients. I know I have lots of ideas for how to make it stronger for you. That's how we use it with my clients to create a structure. And then we coach against that structure. We use this brand plan to coach against so that we can bring it to life with the client.

What I'm going to share with you today is that brand plan, the framework. If you think you can take this and use it on your own, then I want you to be able to do that. Of course, I do. It's always going to be easier when you use it with someone else who has experience but you can also try and start it on your own. I want you to be able to do that and that's why I'm giving it to you today.

Here are the three things that I see happen when people don't have a plan. The first thing that happens is people want to figure it out as they go, which is very inefficient and probably the reason you keep getting the same feedback over and over and over again. Because work is hectic, and there's a lot coming at you and unless you're being intentional, you're going with your reactive default reactions to things. So if you're someone who micromanages, or you're someone who doesn't listen very well to others, doesn't collaborate very well, whatever it is that you're struggling with; maybe you're someone who doesn't spend a lot of time influencing the opinions of stakeholders, or whatever it is that you're working on as a leader, that's your default behavior.

Whatever it is that you're working on, is your default behavior. So unless you're being intentional with what you're trying to do, at all times, you're going to default to your default behavior. When work gets hectic and starts coming at you at a million miles an hour, we stop getting intentional, and we start going into our default behavior, which is normal. But what ends up happening is you have sort of a very uneven type of execution against what you're trying to develop, versus having a more consistent approach.

When you have an uneven approach, one, you're not shifting the minds of the people around you. They sometimes see you behaving one way and sometimes see behaving another way, and you're not getting enough momentum behind what you're trying to achieve so the process is slower for you. It's just inefficient when you have no plan and you're just going with the flow type of mentality or growing with the flow type of mentality, as I call it sometimes. It just takes longer, and you may not even get there. But if you do get there, it just takes longer. And it's a bit messier.

The second thing that I see happen when people have no plan is the changes that you create in yourself become forced like you force yourself to work on something. So let's just take micromanaging again. You sort of like, *I*

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want to micromanage this person, but I'm going to pretend that I don't. I'm going to really force myself to ask them a question or let them do it their way. But it feels really inauthentic. Same as if you're trying to build a relationship with someone, then your mind is like, *I don't like this person, I don't like the way they behave, I don't think they have the same integrity as me*, whatever it is that you're having a problem with like you don't trust them, or whatever. And you're fake getting along with them and you're forcing yourself to do it. You can only do that for so long.

Because when you force yourself into behavior, it takes so much energy out of you. Again, when life happens, when work happens and things are coming at you a million miles an hour, and you get really stressed out or you're really focused on getting this work done, you don't have the energy to put towards forcing yourself and so you dropped back into the default behavior, which is like micromanaging or being annoyed with someone or fake collaboration or whatever you want to call it right now.

So you either are just really inefficient when you don't have a plan, or you force yourself, which is also inefficient and temporary and really exhausting, or you just avoid the thing altogether because you're not sure about it, it scares you, you keep failing and keep falling on your face. It's not working. And so you just end up thinking, *Maybe I'm just not cut out for this, maybe that's just not who I am, maybe being what I thought I was always going to be in my life is actually not authentically me. And perhaps I'm not even capable of it.* You start questioning that you're not cut out for something over time, because you just avoid it, and it keeps coming back to bite you.

Having a plan fixes all that. It's when you don't have a plan, I guess, what I'm trying to say, bottom line is, you're just wasting a lot of time, and you're not capitalizing on the failures. And you might even quit trying. You might actually cut yourself off from opportunities that you actually could achieve if you had a plan to achieve them. I want you to start thinking about it like every other project that you work on. You would not work on a project unless you understood what the objective was unless you had a strategy for success that was aligned within the organization. You wouldn't just randomly try to do stuff.

If the company said to you, "*Hey, we need to grow sales by 5%,*" you wouldn't just randomly come up with ideas to grow sales by 5%. You would have a strategy, you have an approach, you have parameters for success, you have alignment on those things, and you keep showing up every day against those strategies. And you know what tactical ideas don't fit in those strategies so you don't do them. Of course, this is how we work. This is how we create anything at work. But we don't tend to do that for ourselves.

One of the most important skills we can develop is leadership, who we are as leaders. We don't have a framework or a strategy for that. So obviously, when you're doing an ad hoc and random, you're not getting momentum. But when you have a strategy for your leadership style, you become a top-performing leader faster. People see you more consistently behaving in a certain way. And you're directing yourself to the way you want to behave, not the way you think you should behave, or someone told you to behave like you are redirecting yourself constantly to stay on the path. You're working towards a specific thing versus everything all at once.

A plan is everything, always, for all parts of the business, including your career, including your leadership style. What I want to take you through now, is something that I call my *POWER Brand Framework* and POWER is an acronym. There are lots of different parts to this, I'm going to take you through one part of it today. But it took a couple of sessions with my clients at the beginning and we worked through this. We started, they work on it, we come back, we refine it. And then we use that basically as something that we will coach against and grow towards.

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At the very end when we're done, meaning once we've built the plan, I created it so simply that it's small enough to be put on a sticky. I want this power brand framework to be something so simple in the end, that you can carry it around with you, you can stick it to your computer, put it in your notebook, and do whatever so that you can consistently reground yourself every morning before key meetings, before you have interactions with the key audiences that you've identified in this framework.

We're going to go through this and like I said, the word POWER for *POWER Brand Framework* is an acronym. Before I tell you what the acronym stands for and then we'll go into detail about it, I want to give you a sense of how I put this together. I think that for every plan, we need a target audience, we need to know who we're talking to, and we need to know what goal we're trying to create.

To the audience that we have, what is it that we're trying to create, ultimately? Then in order to create that, what tools do I have at my disposal? What are my key skill sets to help me create that? What are the key emotions that I will utilize to use those skills? For instance, I want to be a calm person in how I use my skills. And then what are the key thoughts like what is the exceptional thinking that you have, your go-to thoughts to drive the emotions that you're looking for?

If you know anything about me, if you've listened to me, or if you know anything about cognitive behavioral coaching, it's really grounded in the idea that your thoughts drive your feelings drive your actions. What we're essentially saying here is that to a specific audience, what are the things you want to think about, the energies you want to have, and the actions that you want to take in order to create a reliable result? That is the essence of what we're trying to do here in the simplest way possible.

We're going to start with the P, and then I'm actually going to go to the R, and then we're going to fill in the O, W, and E. That's how it's going to work here. So let's start with the P. What P stands for is your ***priority people***. Obviously, as a leader, you've got lots of different audiences you need to serve. You have your boss, you have your senior stakeholders, you have your reports, you have your peers, you have clients, you have vendors, you have a lot of yada yada, yada, on and on and on, like your salesforce, whatever it is, your customers, who knows? You have lots of different priority people in your audience.

But as a good marketer, which I am, that's my background, our goal is to choose a specific audience to target. When you choose a specific audience to target, it can be a group of people like your peers, or it can be a specific person. I've had clients who have picked one of their reports, or one of their peers, or a category of reports or a category of peers. You can break it any way you want. But I would suggest the maximum size of the audience should be a group with similar needs, like your executive team, your peers, and your reports. That would be the maximum size and of course, the minimum size is one person. The one report that you want to work on, the one peer that you want to build that relationship with like the boss, that sort of thing.

If you don't have a great relationship with your boss, your boss is a great one to choose because your boss is someone who can enable or create more hurdles towards your success. They either enable your success faster or create hurdles for it. If you can develop a great relationship with your boss, I highly recommend it. So you want to pick one person. Even though we're practicing on one group of people or one person, that doesn't mean that what you're working on here won't, by osmosis starts to spread out to other people.

Once you start creating new habits, they start to show up in other places. But in order to create new habits, we need to create the smallest focus possible, which is why I'm suggesting picking a specific audience. And don't worry, your reach will go beyond that audience. But you're going to focus on really targeting a specific one. And

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by targeting, what I mean to say is you're going to get intentional with a specific audience. You're going to show up, make sure that you're showing up as your best self with this audience as much as possible.

If you're picking one specific person, every time you have a meeting with that person, a conversation with that person, sending an email to that person, whatever it is, you are grounding yourself in your power brand framework first because you always want to show up in a certain way. That's why we want to focus because you can't do this with everybody all the time. But the more you do it with a certain group of people or one person, the more you do with that person, the more you start doing it in other places, too. So you're going to pick this one person.

Before we go to the O, W, and E, I want to go to the R, which is your ***reliable result***. P is your priority people, and R is your reliable result. Your reliable result is really about your leadership goal for this audience. Let's just pretend that you picked a specific report. And you want to ask yourself, *what is the reliable result that I want to create with this report?* I want to remind you that a reliable result is really about how you're going to be a goal for yourself.

And a lot of the time people will pick something like, *I want our relationship to be better. I want them to improve in x, y, zed way.* But in both of those cases, you're picking a result that you cannot control. You cannot control how they feel about you, you cannot control if they get better, and you cannot control the overall quality of the relationship. You can control how you show up for the relationship, what you think about the relationship, and how you show up for their growth.

So your leadership goal needs to be about you, not about them or you two collaboratively. It's about who you're going to be with this person. For instance, let's say this person is an emerging talent. They haven't quite become a rockstar or a superstar yet so you want to get them there. Who are you going to be to enable that as much as you can? Maybe your goal becomes something like, *I always see potential in this person.* Because a lot of the time when we have someone who's not developing as we think they're supposed to be developing, we look for what's wrong in them, not for what's right in them.

So maybe the result that you want to be is to always be someone who's looking for their potential. Or maybe the result you want to create is *I meet people where they are,* which, for me means something like, *I don't expect people to be where I need them to be, I meet them where they are, and then help them grow from there.* You want to think about who you are being. You want to create an R for yourself based on your priority audience. *For this audience, my goal is to be this kind of person.*

Once you have that, then you can go back to the O. The O is what I call your ***outstanding superpowers***. I could call it your outstanding actions as well, but I think superpowers transcend just actions that you take. What I mean by that is, this isn't your ability to do the functional role of your job, like, *I'm a great planner* or something like that. But it's bigger than that, like, *I can figure out anything, I have the ability to create innovative thinking and make it happen,* something like that. What are these great superpowers that you have that you're so amazing at?

I want to offer you that when you pick these superpowers, in order to drive these results, you're picking things that maybe you have right now, or maybe are aspirational for you. Maybe you're not this person yet but it's something that you're going to work on. That's really where the growth is. I could say right now, *I can figure anything out, I can solve any problem.* But maybe one of the things that you're working on is being more effective with your time. So a superpower aspirationally becomes something like, *I always use my time effectively*, or *I'm always in control of how I use my time*.

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When we put all this in the context of your chosen priority person, and the reliable result you're trying to create, so if you've picked a specific report, and you want to be someone who sees the potential in them always, what are some outstanding superpowers that you want to rely on to create this for yourself? You might be, *I always listen with the intent to understand… I am an excellent leadership coach… I am a coach leader…*, or something like that. Some of these things might be aspirational to you but it is something that you're going to be working on. So what are those outstanding superpowers that will help you create that reliable result?

In order to create those outstanding superpowers and do them naturally and genuinely without force, you need to understand what kind of emotions you need to ground yourself in. So W and E stands for **world-class energy**. Your O is your outstanding superpowers and your W is your world-class energy. And by that I mean, what are the dominant emotional energies that you want to consistently ground yourself in?

To be able to be someone who was an active listener all the time, how would you need to feel to automatically be able to become an active listener, for instance? I might say patience and understanding are some emotional energies. Calm and curiosity might be some emotional energies that would automatically make it easier for you to be an active listener. What are two or three emotional energies that you want to have based on the number of superpowers that you want to be able to focus on?

How many superpowers should you have? The fewer the better. Maybe three, maybe four, that you're really going to be focused on with this person. Maybe two, maybe three different kinds of emotional energies that you really focus on. If you can get it down to one emotional energy, and two or three superpowers, great. Because the less you have to focus on, the faster you're going to be able to become this person.

Let's say you picked the emotions of curiosity and patience that you're going to be working on first and foremost, what are things that you already believe about this person, and situations that you're in with this person that will help you generate this emotion of patience, this emotion of curiosity?

One of the things I will always say to myself to be patient with someone is, *I want to hear what they're saying.* The minute I start thinking, *I want to hear what someone is saying, I want to hear what they're saying,* I shut up, and I focus and I become patient. Or if I want to jump into curiosity, the thought that I have is *I want to understand where they're coming from.* Or *I want to see if they have the answers inside of them*. Or I might say to myself, *I know they have the answers inside of them.* And that will help me drop into curiosity. Or I might think, *It's my job to help them find the answers inside of them.* And that's going to help me drop into curiosity, just more naturally.

Because what we think helps us feel something. If you're thinking to yourself, *they should already have the answer,* or *they're not smart enough to have the answer*; then you're going to be frustrated, you're going to be judgmental, you're going to be impatient if that's what you're thinking when someone comes to talk to you. *They shouldn't be acting this way…*, that's going to make you angry, that's going to make you righteous, that's going to make you frustrated.

When you're frustrated and angry, there is no way that you're going to be an active listener. There is no way that you're going to meet this person where they are because you're so focused on them needing to meet you where you are. And that's the purpose of having something like this. Once you are able to pick one audience, two or three superpowers, one or two emotions, maybe three different thoughts that really work for you to help you drop into those emotions and you have your reliable result; once you have that, that can easily fit on a sticky.

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That can easily fit on a sticky and you can read it every morning or before every interaction with a specific person or a specific group of people. You can gauge your performance against it. You know what you're focused on. And you do this one audience at a time. One audience at a time–your priority people, your outstanding superpower, your world-class energy, your exceptional thinking that generates your reliable result. Take a stab at it, see what you think, and just try.

Working through this, it's always nice to have a really great sounding board and that's what I do with my clients. We kind of dig, they'd do a draft, we talk about it, and based on what I know of them, I'll suggest things to them. Like we've been talking about x, y, ed, or even saying this is where you want to grow, what if we did something like this? And that's where it becomes a collaborative process. But if you aren't working with a coach, then try it on your own. Any kind of plan is going to help you get to where you're going faster than where you are right now.

So give it a shot and like I said, the best way to use this and put this into action is you read it in the morning. You engage with it before any kind of communication touch point with this person, even if it's sending them an email or before text, you reground yourself in it. Then you assess what's working, what's not working, and what you will do differently tomorrow, how do you want to change your approach to all of this? That's it. That's so simple.

Sometimes we think, *Changing my behavior or changing how I do things is so hard*. Well, it's not really hard. It's just tedious. It takes a bit of time. It takes a bit of practice. I wouldn't say it's easy. It's simple, but it's certainly so much simpler and so much easier than the struggle and the pain and the emotional drama that you're putting yourself through now, in the situations where you keep beating your head against the wall, and you're not seeing the traction and growth that you want to. Certainly not at the speed that you want to get it or with the amount of consistency of growth that you want to have.

It's like when you know you want to get somewhere but you don't know how to get there and you're trying to get there without a map. It takes a lot longer to get there, a lot more guessing, and a lot more wrong turns. But when you have a map to get to where you're going, which this is, is basically a roadmap, it's so much easier to get there. You know when you've made a wrong turn, you know how you're supposed to be driving the car, and you know the direction that you're headed in. It's so much easier, so much faster, and it makes so much sense but we don't do it for ourselves.

Take what I've given you today, get started on it, and of course, always, if you're looking for a coach to not only help build this with you but help you practice it and show up for it, you know who to call, my friends. You guys have a great week and I'll talk to you soon. 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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