

Welcome to the show folks. We are glad that you are joining us. And again, I say us, because welcome back to the show, Heather Locurto.

Thank you. Why, thank you.

You're welcome. Welcome back to the show Joel Fortner.

Glad to be here.

So good to have you guys back as we are on our second episode of raising up leaders and it is so funny, we put this episode together. We're not even close, we're just scratching the surface. There's a lot of information. And the thing that we left off on last time is if your identity is stuck, if your worth is stuck in you being able to solve problems for your team, you being the one who has all the answers, then one of the big things is you're never going to be able to lead great leaders. You're never going to raise up great leaders. It's just impossible. If that's where you are stuck. And today we're going to jump into a whole lot of stuff; trust, we're going to talk a lot about killing the leadership crazy cycle. What that was like, more great stuff on you guys being raised up as leaders on this journey. So we're going to hit all that stuff, when we come back right after this. Welcome to the Chris LoCurto show, where we discuss leadership and life, and discover that business is what you do, not who you are.

Alright, we are back. And the end of the last show, Joel, you raised a fantastic question for our listeners. And what you said- well, just say what you said.

Well we were talking about one of the things in terms of mindset and belief is that if you're needing to be led on something, if you're leading me on something, whether it's say, a failure that's happened, you know, something on the team's not going well or whatever, is ask yourself the question, why did I need to be led on that? Because it's a personality- or it's a personal responsibility driven question.

Yeah. And then Heather, we talked about how a great time early on in your leadership on the team is you brought something up, and I looked at you and Joel just said, "You know what he's going to ask you next, which was just so funny. We all laughed about that. We talked about that on the last show, but we ended the show and you went on with some gold. So bring up the stuff that you're talking about when we ended the show.

Yeah, so I was just saying when Joel had brought that up, that, that question to question yourself, hey, why did I need to be led in that? I remember him telling me that. And it was such a powerful moment for me because it brought about that awareness, you know? And you can't change unless you're aware of what's going on. And so it was it's key, I think, into changing your leadership or growing as a leader. At least it was for me.

So here's what I want to hit now. Cause I think there's so many things, we might have to even do another episode here. It's so much good stuff. Let's talk about trust. I mean, you guys are my best friends, right? At least one of you better be.

Yeah, I am Chris don't worry about it.

Yes it is you joel.

I commit publicly here.

So let's talk about trust because that is huge for us. I mean, we all know it's so funny. Um, I think it was Aaron West who brought this up. No, no, no, no. It was stuff that I read somewhere. I don't even remember, but forever, you know, we're the type of people would say, you know, I would take a bullet for you guys. I know you guys will take a bullet for me. Um, Heather, you probably want it in the leg or something on the arm. Some would you take it on the chest for me?

Mehhhh.

Yeah. Okay. You know, we're the kind of folks that would do anything for each other. And then I don't remember where I saw it, but what I read is it's one thing to say that you would die for somebody, it's a whole other thing to say that you would live for them. And I think that was so profound for us as we were talking through, gosh, that is huge. And one of the things that I feel like I can say is I feel like this team, we do live for each other, you know not completely, but faith walk, what we do here. We're here for each other. We'll do whatever for each other. We'll make whatever happen. So I wanted to kind of hit that trust factor with you guys. What is trust like on our leadership team? What does it like on the rest of our team? How did we get here? What is vulnerability like? Speak to all that stuff.

Yeah. It really all comes back to that. Because without trust you really have nothing. You'll get only get 25% out of your relationships and out of your performance when there's just a lack of trust. And that's something we've invested a lot in over the years is building up trust. Because we all have to work through self protection. We all have to work through root system. We all have to work through this stuff that we all have to work through, contributing to conflict in conversations that can erode trust. But we just spend a lot of time together. Gosh, Chris, I mean, we got started in our relationship because of my wife. I mean, of course we met and then we become friends and we start building this relationship, but on a leadership team it takes a while for that trust to be built up, especially if you're self protective.

Oh my gosh. Or if you struggle with things like victim mentality, which tells you, nope, you can't trust that person. Because they're out to get you. Like Heather, you talked about stuff that especially when you came onto the team. And then in myself as well, of like all this self sabotage that's there. And we've had to work through that stuff becoming healthier people. And as we individually become healthier people, we build more trusting relationships where we spend time together. We talked about the leadership lunch that we do and we pour into each other. And I think consistency is key, because I consistently experience you two to be the way that you are. It's not a, "Oh, there was that one time you were nice to me. But now these other times, I really am scared of you because I can't anticipate." There is consistency because I just know Chris and Heather.

Yeah. How about you? I have something in my mind, so please feel free, jump in on the trust side.

Yeah. I would say that the consistency, like Joel said, consistency is key. I knew you coming into the business, but it was different. I didn't know, Joel very well. And so it was just a different dynamic and me learning and understanding and being able to anticipate, Hey, you really do have my best interest at heart. Hey, this leadership team really does care. And the more and more you, you learn to trust that team, the more vulnerable you become.

If we look back in root system and stuff like that, that's probably been a thing that has been a bigger struggle for you, is past not being able to trust, is that correct? And being vulnerable.

Very much so. Very much so. And it was that self protection and that I don't trust anyone because everybody's out to get me type of mindset. And once you get past that, once you build that trust and build those relationships, then you can let down that wall and you can become vulnerable. And then you become interesting enough teachable and moldable.

Right? Yes. Isn't that crazy?

Who would've thought that?

So talk about vulnerability. What has that been like? Because man, I've asked you guys to be incredibly vulnerable in many situations, obviously in your leadership, vulnerable with me. So what has that been like being vulnerable at this business?

There's been a lot of growth there of getting past my own self protection and being able to be more vulnerable, especially when it comes to failure. It's just getting very comfortable with failure and being like, okay, we just failed. We messed that up. We're going to go solve it. We know how this is going to go. I hate it more than anyone. Possibly more than you guys at times. I'm like, I don't like it. I don't like when it occurs because I'm like, we're better than that. When we miss something and we're better than that. But we go fix it. And so it's getting past your own stuff of your own self protection that helps you become more vulnerable. Also I want to share like watching you guys over the years, especially you Heather, there was a point in time where there was a huge shift. Because all of a sudden Chris is like pressing in on things, and holding you accountable to things, and you all of a sudden we were like, yep. That's right. You're exactly right. Where a long time prior, it possibly would have ended up in a fight, because of all the stuff you've already shared that we've talked about already. And there was this shift of just personal responsibility. But I recognize the shift in myself as well, that I remember times we would have conversations in the past that looking back on them are like, Joel Fortner. And my kids love when I call myself Joel Fortner, that's what they call me with daddy messes something up. Joel Fortner. And it's so funny.

Yeah. I look back on myself and I can see it's like, dude, you were just totally, totally self-sabotaging in that place, but now you can see it back then I couldn't.

I think that's such a great thing. I mean there's times I can look back on my life and I am so thankful that God drops that in there of going. Yep. I sucked there. Yeah. I didn't treat that leader well. Yeah. I could have done a better job there and I didn't do that one with excellence or I hurt people with that situation or whatever. And like you say, that fight that battle of "Oh crap. I'm losing worth. This cannot happen. I must battle. I must argue. I've got gotta fight. I gotta push." On the person that I feel like I'm losing worth to, and we still to this day will see that.

Sure I will say that there have been key tough conversations that you and I have had that you didn't shy away from having it. I mean, there were times when in the beginning side you were like, Hey man, I've actually seen this like building and I've been watching it for a little while, but we need to talk about this and address this because you're seeing stuff build. But I'll tell you that it's the tough conversations that we had that they weren't just leadership changing, they were life changing. Because it was like, let's look at all this. And it was hard, and it was painful, and it was tough to see, but the growth out of it was massive. And I attribute so much of my growth to

those tough conversations. So if you're a leader struggling to have tough conversations, commit to learning that skillset because it could change the lives of the people around you.

And so let me ask this because I think it's very important for people to hear this. What was my intention?

It was to help me. You recognize Joel, struggling with control. You know, that there was a time when Heather and I, in a Poimen group Stratplan we were doing on ourself that you left, and I picked up the ball and started running with it. And I was controlling, I was out of control. I was just not good. And then afterwards it led to a, you went and got some perspective from others to see how things went, because you heard something and fast forward, it ended up in a conversation between you and I, that I didn't see all that I was struggling with and that it was conversations like that because of how poorly I was treating Heather in our communication, that was like this isn't normal, Joel, if I'm that way, some sense going down and you'll recognize it, and press in, and lead me effectively in the conversation. Because think about if we had not had those conversations and never been addressed, and things would have left just moving in the course they were, where would we be today?

Oh my gosh. Unresolved conflict between the two of you, the inability for you guys to be vulnerable with each other. And we're so tight, not only is as a team, but also as friends. Yeah, you're absolutely correct. That would have been terrible. And the amazing thing is, and that's the thing I want people to hear, is that there's not a, I want to take you down a notch. Like you pointed out on the last show, Heather, that there's those people in your past and I've got them in my past. Oh my gosh, I have them today, for doing what I do for a living. I don't know if we've ever talked about, I don't know if you ever get that, but doing what I do for a living, there are people that want to try and take me down a notch.

They're just there. It's just the, Hey, let me see if I can't be controlling with Chris or zing something out that's going to hurt him, and praise God, we do what we do. And we use the tools that we use. Because that kind of sucks. You know, that kind of hurts in that those situations. And again, for a lot of people don't understand, I'm still a very high S and high I. People think because of my confidence that I must be a high D, which I'm not, I'm 25 natural, 40 adaptive, I believe. But that hurts. Those situations hurt. And so if you have somebody as a leader who is feeling out of control, then their response can be one of; let me hurt you to get you back in line, get you back in control, so I feel good about myself and man, you've just really destroyed relationship. You've really affected relationship in a bad way. How about you, Heather? Being vulnerable, what has that been like for you and how have you gotten there being here?

Yeah, I think going back to what Joel had said that there was this switch that happened in my leadership, and in our conversations and communication. I think coming back from Israel, when I finally took a look at where I was getting my worth from, and made that switch to not looking to you to get approval, or to fill that need and to looking to God instead, it gave me that ability to step back and just have conversations with you about stuff. And it wasn't a personal thing.

So I guess we probably should say this. The three of us went to Israel a couple of years ago. We also had a gal that was working here, Deb, that went out there as well, big group on a big Bible study tour. And before that, you and I had wanted to be in a relationship for a very, very long time. But we both had struggles coming out of past relationships and things, but one of the big things is I was the most important thing in your life at the time, safe to say?

I wanted that pause there.

I was like, well, hello.

No, yes, very accurate to say.

Is it for me, the worst possible thing. God must be the most important thing. And going there, God worked on you and wrecked you. He wrecked us all in different ways, but there was a specific situation where God just wrecked your world and showed you that he was not your most important thing. And what the profound effect that that had on your life. And I think two days later I knew, yep. We will be getting married. We will eventually be in a relationship and getting married. So just powerful, powerful thing when you're putting your worth in human beings. You know, we talked at the front of the show, the end of last show, if your identity and your worth is coming from your role, your ability to answer questions, your ability to solve problems, your ability to be the head honcho.

Then what you're missing out on is all of the gifts and talents that God has put in you to do more; like lead. And so, so much of that lack of vulnerability that you experienced in the past, held you back from your leadership. And I think that's one of the things I have loved watching, is you have gotten to this place where, you know, like Joel said in the past, there would be this battle, this fight, don't lose worth, get in there, fight, fight, fight instead of the what's going on? And now there is such a shift for years now that has happened in your leadership where you go after it. High C high S who goes after it. Yep. That's something I've got to do. Yep. That's something I've got to solve yep. There's a situation I must address. Yep. There's a thing that's not working right, I've got to go after that. What's that been like for you?

Yeah, for me it's been fun. And not to say that I don't still struggle with the work cause I notice whenever I get defensive in our conversations or whenever that tendency pops up, I know that I'm losing worth in that moment. But it did, it held me back from so much growth, so much deeper conversations as a leadership team because I was operating in that protection and that, you know, looking for that approval. Now it's been fun. It's been looking for, Hey, how do I grow in this moment? Instead of going, Oh, shoot, I'm failing again. It just changes the way that you look at leading.

I know for me personally, you guys are the two that I come to when I'm struggling. You two are the ones that I come to when I've got to go to battle the lies with the truths and all that kind of stuff like we teach in Next Level Life. And I can think of times where I've just come to you guys and said, Hey, I'm struggling. This is the line that I'm telling myself. Or even the, you know, here's where I am. Here's what's happened. Here's my situation. And just the ability to be vulnerable with you guys and say, I'm sucking. And Joel, there's been so many times where you just very quickly, "What's the thing you're saying?" "Well, this here, well, you know this to be true."

I mean, within 30 seconds. I mean, I can think of multiple times where it's been in a 30 seconds, maybe a minute of just pop, pop, pop, pop. Yup. You're right. Fantastic. That's exactly what I needed to hear. And that ability to come to you guys. And of course, obviously you're my wife, so I better be able to be vulnerable on everything with you, but just being able to be the type of team where we can talk about anything, that there isn't anything that we can't talk about. And again, we've had leaders come into the team, we've had leaders not make it on the team. We've

had folks that have not been, you know, long lasting and it's interesting. They, you always see the same thing. You see that the inability to be vulnerable, the inability to stop self protecting all that kind of fun stuff. And it just affects that cohesiveness. So for me, how did we get here? Time. There's so many leaders that we help out that have been together as a "leadership team", as I do my air quotes, for years. And have no trust, have no vulnerability, have terrible communication, have no accountability in the process. So what's different about the time that we spend together compared to what we see in so many other businesses?

Well, I think the fact that we actually spend time together is a huge deal because it's not just, hey, I see the leaders at the obligatory standard leadership meeting that I have on Monday.

Thank you for volunteering to show up at the mandatory meetings.

That's actually, it's not like that. No, we're forming a team here. And that's a radical thought. That's a new thought for some people, because my experience has been within an organization is you have leaders who lead their team, Hey, you run ops, you run IT, you run staff services, you run whatever, and businesses of that way as well. But the leaders don't look at themselves as this is my team. I also have my team that I lead. And so when you look at I'm forming a team here, a leadership team, well, what are the things you have to do to build a successful team? And we do those things rather than, okay, here, let's go to our leadership meeting, let me protect my team the whole time and then go back to just protecting and working on my team when I get back.

And, oh, hey, this is something Chris wants us to focus on. So let's just do better with that, you know? That's not what we do, there's intentional hours spent, but we also have personal relationships. So I think about even if we weren't who we are, I think we would still invest in, we should still get together. We should still do things. I think we're a little unique in terms of the depth of our relationships, but nothing we do can't be done by other people. It's just, are we going to commit to, okay, we're trying to build a leadership team here, trust and unity are a must, high levels of quality communication, peer-to-peer accountability, vulnerability are keys, so we have to go after that stuff.

Yeah. We do life together. I mean, it's so much more than leadership. And I think you have to be intentional. You can't just slot an hour meeting once a week and think that your leadership team can trust you. You have to be intentional and we spend time together. We spend time with MaryBeth. We spend time with the kids. We spend time outside of here, knowing and learning and growing, together. And I think it just builds on that trust. And then we become warriors together here at the office.

That's the only reason I have you guys over for my kid's birthday parties is just because I want a better leadership team.

Oh, yeah, that's it. Totally, absolutely. It grows us. You know, it's so funny because a couple of years ago you walked in the door and you said, "Hey, I'm going to Israel, Marybeth isn't ready to leave the kids on a trip like this for two weeks, I need a roommate. You want to be my roommate?" And I went, "Yes." And later on we talked to Deb, we talked to Heather, and they're like, "Yep, wanna go." We were able to take our top leadership out of the business for two weeks. And the business ran incredibly. There was literally, I think we talked about it between the three of us, we had four emails that we handled over two weeks. That's how well the team

ran. I loved it when we got back, people are like, tell me about all the fires she had to put out. I was like zero. We had lots of emails, no fires. But because we've spent so much time together, because we spend time doing life together because we spent on growing in God together, you know, bringing our belief systems together, bringing our integrity, the characteristics of our attributes together. We could go on something like that, and we just grew immensely. As individuals and as a leadership team, I think it was so powerful for our company.

But again, that time piece, like you said, if you're not spending time, like, you know, Heather slotting in one hour a week for the most efficient meeting, hitting the topics and-that does not grow. What that does is it tends to create probably more instability, more lack of trust, because what happens? Well, here's the problem. Well, how'd you handle that? What'd you do with that? Why did that happen? And instead of it being a, hey, let's work on this together. You know, we spend so much time of me pushing back on you guys, what would you do? How would you do this? How should you do this? What should you say here? What is this person going to think? When you say that? Me thinking ahead and walking you guys through and vice versa, and you guys with each other as well, that has just made us so tight as a team. And the ability for us to be vulnerable, to seek each other out when, Hey, I'm struggling with something or, Hey, here's a problem. Or, Hey, I need it to have a tough conversation with you, or, Hey, let me speak to something that you're experiencing right now. It's just crazy powerful. So yeah, we've got so much to hit, and we're going to come back and talk about what you guys have done as far as being able to lead your team, instead of being stuck in the crazy leadership cycle when we come back right after this.

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Let's talk about one of the biggest things that we discuss here for leaders is, if you do not kill the leadership crazy cycle, it ain't happening. You're not leading people. The goal is not for you to have your identity in how many tasks you do in a day. We have coached a ton of leaders and especially some older leaders that come from the older generation, where their identity was being a leader. Or many business owners where their identity was being a business owner. And the number of things that they did in a day was the thing that made them feel good about themselves. The problem with this concept is as a leader, you can pay people to do tons of tasks. We have people on the team that are doers that do tons of tasks.

That do great job knocking things out. They love that. They're happy about that. But we can't make them great, if we're all bogged down in tasks. And that's one of the things that we teach a lot in killing the leadership crazy cycle, the leadership crazy cycle being that you are overwhelmed, that you don't even know what all you did in that day. And that's what we call the leadership crazy cycle. So let's kind of speak to this. What has it been like leading here, doing everything we can to make sure that we don't get stuck in the leadership crazy cycle, it's not that

you get rid of it, we kind of go in and out of it. As you continue to grow, the goal is to not be in it for any decent amount of time. So let's speak to that.

Yeah, I'll go. And one is that we're always looking out for it. That's a key part of how we're leading here. So, it's a small business, that Heather, and especially you and I, we have a lot on our plates where like a lot of the time we're part time, this, this, this, this, and this. And there's a lot of things going on. And I'll speak to my role that I'm a VP of leadership development. I've got my team, I'm also coaching a lot of clients. I'm responsible for all sales. But it's always looking through a lens of what can go? What can leave your plate? What can be delegated? Because how do we spend more time leading other people to be successful and live in that to gift or talent or maximize that, while you're still needing to be successful selling stuff?

Oh, by the way, I'm in Next Level Life Thursday and Friday. And so you have to be very on top of your time, and very organized and very focused on key results, in order to be as productive and successful as you can be, because you're constantly challenging; what am I doing? Why am I doing this? Who can I give this to? Who would be better? But it's a constant, repetitive, consistent thing. So there's a lot of clients I coach and say that you don't just check the box on killing a leadership crazy cycle. You're forever doing it. You get the foundation side of you. It becomes DNA in your decision making, and you never stop.

Yeah It'd be different if all we did was create the same widgets, sell the same widgets to the same people all the time, then you could check the box-that doesn't happen. Business is constantly growing. What's it been like for you to stay out of it, dip your toe in the leadership crazy cycle from time to time by being overwhelmed? Because here's one thing that has happened to you multiple times. A lot of times you run so much of the operational side of the business, you're over that, well your team does, but since you're over that, if anything happens, stuff comes back to your plate. You know, if a team member leaves, or if we adjust things, or we've had some big issues where like one of our software processes is just sucking wind. We got to change it. We've got to do something about it, you know, change vendors or whatever. And that ends up dumping stuff back to your plate. I mean, it's happened, gosh, probably 10 times, 12 times since you've been here. Right?

Yeah. I've seen me do this process really well. And I've seen me do this process really bad. And I think the big key for me is making sure when I am looking at those things and my priorities are always changing. And like you said, ebbs and flows. When my hands are in a lot of the little things that are happening around here. And I have to make sure that if I'm delegating it, that I'm delegating it properly. And that's where I can easily mess up, is quick, get this off my plate, because I have all these things on my plate, and not work that process. So it's a constant moving target that I have to keep my priorities straight. And like Joel said, be looking into the future on what's coming. What can I get off my plate? What can I delegate? To keep moving, because it's just a matter of time before something's going to flow back in.

Yeah. And I think it's interesting because personality style. So if we look at your personality style, Joel, you have more high I, but you have a ton of maturity. You have a ton of confidence. There is a level of if something's going to happen, it's like, well, we've got to fix this. Let's figure this thing out. Let's fix this thing. Early days, you probably would have been more, let me take on as many things as I can, worth as in that, all of that kind of fun stuff. Definitely not where you are now, Heather, for you, when Steph loads back up, you can get into that place of, you're not

the person who looks to add more to your plate. You are looking for more consistency. You like being able to delegate stuff and get it off your plate. But when things do pile back on, because something happens, how does that impact you in your sanity? Your leading people, your stress levels, all that.

Yeah. Again, I don't like change. I like that consistency and that structure. And so it's not always easy for me when things are changing. And the big thing that we keep going back to as a leadership team that you guys have walked me through numerous times is, let's take a look at the priorities, what are the priorities that need to stay on your plate, and what can you get rid of? And I just have to look through those. Otherwise it can be overwhelming. And then I think, Oh, I need to do it all myself, because it's gotta be done right. And nobody else knows how to handle this software. And it's so easy to get caught up in, Oh, I just need to keep it on. Nobody else can take it, instead of going well, is that truth? Could you train somebody to do that? What are your options?

So I think one of the things that brings up another question, I love this conversation because it just keeps bringing up more fantastic stuff. Let's talk about excellence. I want to get to where successful leaders spend their time, but let's talk about excellence. What does that look like here? What does that look like leading people to excellence? What happens when they're not being excellent?

You know, first of all, you asked, how do we do that? Where does that start? Versus that it does come from you. You're clear in your mind what excellence looks like. And hopefully that's a key takeaway for all who are listening is you have to define what's up. You have to define your culture, your excellence, so that you have standards, and you can set right expectations in your team, otherwise, how can you ever expect people to achieve that? And then they don't. We get frustrated. And then we just fire people, right? And we're just like, Oh, I'm so done with this person. And you end up gossiping to your spouse about how you're frustrated with this team member all day long. So you have to define it. And you have to lead people to it. And paint the path, show people how to do it, hold people accountable to it, because you've now defined it.

You set that up. So for us, it's looking for, are we excellent in our communication? Do we have excellent accountability? Where are KRA's? Are right expectations in place? Are we taking massive personal responsibility as leaders? We're driving toward clarity on the team. Otherwise, it's really hard to be excellent, right? You can't lead without all that clarity, but we focus so much heavily on that. About where are we going as a company? What's the vision? What's the strategy? Is in Asana, you know, down to small things. I mean, you guys tell the story better than I do, but like the whole olive oil story, of discovering like, wait a second, something's not right here. You guys tell the story but it's excellence all the time. Constant. It's such a core part of our culture.

I'm so glad you brought that up. Because it is one of those things that you would think is so small and yet it impacts things. So one of the things that we do here for events, we always do food. We always have food, we have wine, we do stuff. We love making a phenomenal experience for the client. That's something I felt like God said to do when I started this business is bringing that in. That's a passion of mine. I love food. I love wine. And so we always do stuff. We do our bison ribeye's. We're well known for that. We do all kinds of stuff, but there's this one

dish. So when we do Stratplans we do one to two a month of those, depending upon what's going on, we try not to do two a month, but sometimes that happens.

But there's a thing that we do with these roasted brussel sprouts. And man, I tell you what, I've hated brussel sprouts my whole life, until I had him one time. And I'm like, I can recreate that. I can do something with it. I think I can make it better. And man, we make some great brussel sprouts. They are fantastic. And so for somebody who doesn't like them, I'm always eating those, right? And so there's a specific way that we do it. And we have a specific olive oil that we use with it and all this stuff that we do to prepare it. And then we roast them. So we had a team member who was in the role and we would do Stratplan again, like I say, we're only having these brussel sprouts once to twice a month.

So it's not like it's something that we do everyday. You know, we do Next Level Lives, almost every single Thursday and Friday, we hit a lot of the same meals. We could find something much faster. So I would have these opening dinners. And so I'm spending a lot of time with the team, and I'm finishing cooking a lot of stuff, but I have a team member preparing this stuff. And when I would eat those brussels sprouts, I'm like, something is just wrong. These are super bitter, there's something wrong. And everybody else was like, oh, well, they're fine. They don't know. They've never had them before. And I'm like, something's wrong. And so I would go back to Heather and I would say, something's wrong with those Brussels sprouts. I don't know what it is, but something's very bitter about this. And she's like, well let me find out. And she went and talked to the team member and the team members like, well, I'm doing exactly the way you guys say. And so this happened like three events. And I don't remember what it was, but at one point we looked over and we have on the counter, we have these multiple different olive oils. And we were out of one, I think, is that correct? What was it? Were we out of one or something?

I stayed one night for the Stratplan.

Oh that's what it was. You wanted to watch and see what happened. So you take it from there.

Yeah. So we have two different kinds of olive oils that are sitting right next to the stove. And so I'm here during Stratplan and I'm watching the process cause we can't figure it out. And I'm like, dang, I've trained on this. We've got a checklist for this. It's a no brainer, right? Like where am I failing? And so I remember standing there and I watched the team member reach for the lemon olive oil.

The lemon infused olive oil.

Instead of plain olive oil. And so it was the "aha!"

There it is. And when you asked, she said, Oh, I thought that was the fancy olive oil. She's like, I saw you guys use this. We used it on salads. And she goes, so I figured you were putting the fancy olive oil on your salads. And I figured that was the fancy one. And we're like, Oh no, no, no, no, nope, nope. That's got a whole bunch of lemon juice in it. So thus the excellence was, you know, we were able to discover what it was, but I'm glad you brought that up because so many times people just go, well, whatever. Nobody's complaining about it, nobody's saying anything about it. So whatever. And that's just not good enough for us.

Again, but take it back to my leadership in that process of me training her, you know, where did I fail in that process of use the fancy olive oil? And just assuming-

Yeah. It's like what does that mean?

Right.

It's not like you went over and-obviously you would have done this with the right olive oil-but not saying, Hey, by the way, never use this. This has got lemon in it. Or saying, Hey, here's the different oils. And here's what we use them for. And explaining that process. The great piece is, is that you stayed to find out what's happening with my team member. Something's not right. The team member feels probably like, you know, she's a total dork because Chris keeps saying something's wrong, and nothing can be wrong. She's following the process. So by staying, you discover the issue.

Yeah you got to get in, and inspect, and see what's going on.

And that made her feel much better because she doesn't feel like a failure because Chris knows something is wrong, but Chris can't put his finger on it. Or whoever the person is, whoever's leading the process. So what's that been like for you outside of that story?

There's the difference between excellence, and Oh, well, Chris, you're just wrong or, it's fine. It's good enough.

It's good enough. Yes. Because that's what we were hearing from the clients. Yeah. No, that's fine. No, that's good enough. And I'm like, nah, it's not. It's not the way it can be. So what has that been like for you on the excellent side of Heather?

Yeah. I came from a culture of excellence. So I knew coming into this business, what excellence looked like.

You must have had a great leader back then.

I don't remember his name. Yeah. Anyways. But it's one thing to operate in a state of excellence, but how do you lead your team to excellence? And that's been the growth process for me again, that's where-

Going from a team member in excellence to a leader leading excellence.

Right. And that's where I've had to learn that, hey, they don't always know what, you know. Don't just assume that they know this is the fancy olive oil or this is the olive oil that you're supposed to use, you know? And so it's been a learning process for me too, how do I teach excellence? And then being able to go back to that person and how do you hold accountability to what we expect and what excellence looks like? And how do you get that team member to want excellence?

Right. Yeah. That's a good thing because you've seen both, you've had both on your team, you can't interview out everything. It's impossible to know the character of a person. It's impossible to know the choices of a person, but you've had people that have been on your team. I think both of you have actually that the standard of excellence around here was not something that was desired by the team member. What is that like? How frustrating is it? What did you guys do about it? What's that been like?

Yeah that's tough because I mean your standards becomes personal. Meaning like our core values become personal. You believe in them, you know, they're not just a, let me put my leadership hat on when I come to work and now I've got to, okay, let me now follow these core values. If you're really committed, and you love what you do and where you're at, you will take

them on personally. So you see, it's tough to see people that don't adopt it like you do. And you try to lead them to be successful in all the things that we teach, in terms of like embody these because they drive your decision making. Well, man, if you're a person who really doesn't want to do that, how hard is it going to be to work anywhere that really leads culture, and leads, this is how we do it here? And so it is challenging, but you know, the team ebbs and flows and it's like, I love the team that we have, and there's nothing better as a leader than seeing your team members take massive responsibility for their role. As a leader there's nothing more. But to your point, we can't always hire out everything. So we have to train that we have to lead that.

What's that been like for you because like I say, I know you've had in the past some that didn't rise up to the level of experience and you've seen some victim mentality in there. What's that been like?

Yeah. I think like Joel said, it's hard because we love what we do and we believe in what we do and we want that excellence. We want to provide our clients with that excellence. And so it's hard to see a team member. Who's falling short of desiring that, or even wanting that, it's one thing if you want it and you're just missing some pieces, you know? That's teachable and we can work with that. But when you don't desire it, it makes it pretty tough to lead that person to excellence. And I think the big thing for me is if I am expecting excellence than I need to be walking in excellence too. Because your team is watching you. And so what does that look like? And are you holding yourself to those standards? You know, I have to ask that question. Am I holding myself to the standards that I expect for my team? Because if I'm not, then you know, how can I expect or lead or teach them to be excellent in those areas when I'm not?

Yeah. And it's not that we are excellent on 100% of the stuff. There are times when this is good enough. The areas that we were probably the most excellent in is A, our integrity. That is a big thing for us. Just even little things. You called something out, where it was like, hey, we just need to make sure that that doesn't look like a lack of integrity. Which there wasn't any lack of integrity, it just could come across that way. So I think we're excellent there. I think we really try to have great character, as individuals here, but I think if it's client facing, that's one of the things that is just big for us. You know, people have always mocked me for how, when you come into one of our events, things are straight. Tables are aligned. You know, bottles of water.

You can stand at the end of the room and look down the rows and see stuff is aligned. Like when we do stuff at hotels, they don't like us when we get to the table set, because we're like, these have to align. And they're like, are you serious?

"They brought their own tape measure. What's going on?"

We brought our own tape measure. We bring string to go through rows. And people like, "You're spending an hour getting these things?" "Yes." "Why?" Because when people walk in the door, they're going to see excellence and they're going to think, "Oh wow. I want to learn from them." Do we screw stuff up? Oh my gosh, we screw stuff up. We're the people that say, listen, you know, this business is based on mistakes, and how to overcome mistakes.

Yes, we screw up and we better screw up because if we don't screw up, we're not trying. So that's a very important piece. We're running out of time. One last thing on this, we were going to need to in the future come back and hit some more leadership questions and stuff. So we teach after killing a leadership crazy cycle we talk about where successful leaders spend their time.

Where do you guys spend your time? Where does successful leaders spend their time? Where do I, where do we, what does that look like?

When it comes to this topic, the overwhelming majority of my time is spent making my guys successful. It's making my team successful. We aren't talking about stuff just to talk about it. We're not really wasting time. We are about, okay, what is my team doing? How can I help them? How can I give them better direction? How can I help solve problems? Lynee and I had a conversation just recently about that she's a high S, C. And she was struggling with overwhelm and fear of failure. And she wasn't sure even what I was seeing, did I think she was doing a good job, because she thought as a high S, C, she was really kind of tearing into herself. And can be so much harder on herself.

So we talked about a lot of it. And one of the things it was just me encouraging her and be like, you want me to be honest with you? I think you're doing a phenomenal job. I said, there are these small things that were here that you could improve on, but look at your KRA. I mean, you're doing phenomenal in your role. Sometimes that's where I need to spend time. But if I'm task saturated and stuck in the leadership crazy cycle, I'm never going to take the time to do that. I'm not going to take the time to dig in and find out what's going on with my team member. And the whole tone shifted because that's what she needed. Is that if I'm stuck in myself, if my worth is coming from my tasks and like, okay, hey, I got to cancel this meeting. And the next week, hey, I've got to cancel that meeting. And then I've got to cancel that meeting. I never get around to knowing my team member. I can never spend enough time to build trust with my team and then actually making them higher priority.

Yeah where does it leave them?

Exactly. Struggling. And looking to leadership or just knowing that they're struggling, and just staying in a place of fearing failure, because we're not intentionally making sure, do you have the bandwidth to lead people to be successful in their role and get out of your own way?

Yeah. How about you? Where do successful leaders spend their time?

Yeah, this is for me an area that I'm actually growing in right now. I think as I'm getting more of the delegation process, getting things off my plate, I've been able to take a harder look at strategy. And like Joel said, just spending more time, bigger picture leading the team, on what's needed and how can they better operate in their role. Yeah. I think that's where I've seen it the most. It's more strategic now and less task.

Absolutely. For me I spend most of my time in either events, doing stuff like this, creating products, the show the stuff that we put out, leading the team, leading you guys, you guys leading the team. Working on strategy for the business, what does it look like for growth? All that kind of fun stuff. The level of admin, I still have admin. There's still some things I've got to do. It's just the things that only I can do in the business, and it's overwhelming if I don't have time to do it. Which I have to constantly make sure that I have time to accomplish those pieces so I don't get stuck in that as well. And then we push very hard, make people successful. Make people successful. Take a look at your team, see where they're falling apart, see where they're not doing so well.

See where they're not meeting expectations. See where they're not spending the right time, see where their priorities are. And one of the things we do is we have the team members email you

guys at the beginning of the week, what their priorities are, and asking the questions of if there's anything that they need help on, but so that you guys can make sure that their priorities are what they need to be. So that you guys can go in if you need to reset, move stuff around, they know what to be working on because man, it sucks. Especially in a time like COVID where so many businesses have taken a hit, and you're still spending money on people. And if their priorities are not correct, and you watch money just going out the door, because the things they're working on aren't the things that are bringing in money during this time.

They were doing great before, but now not so much. Being able to get in there and just set those priorities is just a powerful piece to make sure that you're utilizing your team, your resources all the best that you possibly can. Man. We got to stop. We've got to end. Last stuff. Anything you guys want to throw out to the folks listening?

I think my piece of advice is that if you're hearing this and you're like, man, I really gotta make raising up leaders a priority. Solve the stuff that's holding you back. Kill the leadership crazy cycle. I mean, I will very confidently make a plug for our programs. I mean, I'm serious guys, if you're really looking to be like, okay, enough is enough. I need to solve stuff that's holding me back as a leader so that I can grow this business better.

Duplicate myself and other leaders, just go to our website and inquire. We have coaching programs for this reason to help you experience a better business, a better life, become a better leader, but get the help that you need. I mean power into 2021. Like, you know, I'm going to make some change, but I'll tell you no one who is truly successful in business and leadership does it alone. People have coaches and mentors, and I'll just very plug. Like this is what we do, reach out and get help.

Absolutely. Heather?

I have a question for you, Chris. I would love to know, and I'm sure that our listeners would love to know too. We've talked so much about leading leaders. What do you see or what have you seen in our leadership or in the leadership process?

Ooh, gosh. That's like Aaron's question. I think the thing that I love the most is, if I don't spend the time leading you guys, then you only grow to the ability of-it's not that you can't grow into great roles, but where are you going to get the information? Where are you going to get the growth? Where are you going to get the accountability? Where are you going to get the pieces that grow you as leaders? So for me, the thing that I love is because we've spent so much time together, I wholly trust you guys. This is the team that I fight for, right? I don't struggle worrying. I'm not thinking about things aren't getting done or I need to worry about you guys, or I need to worry about, you know, is something falling off the rails. I trust you guys.

And I think that's the thing that I love is that, it allows me to focus on bigger things. The more that you guys grow, the more that I grow, the more that your teams grow, then the more than I can accomplish things. I don't know if that's the question you're asking, but that's how I see it. Alright. Well folks, hopefully this has been helpful to you. Again, this is what we do. We live what we teach. I was thinking about that earlier where you know, people have asked us over and over again or made comments of man, when we talk about a failure, they go, oh my gosh, good, at least you guys fail. And it's like, what are you kidding? We fail all the time. We just try not to fail at the same thing.

Yeah. I'm pretty dumb.

You know we fail at all kinds of stuff. That's what we do, we just fix it. We learn how to fix it. And we do stuff with it. We learn how to grow and grow the team and use it as phenomenal examples. So. Alright, folks, well, we hope this was helpful for you. You know people that need to hear this, help people. Help people share this, go like us on iTunes, tell people where we are so we can help other folks as well. And as always take this information, change your leadership, change your business, change your life, and join us on the next episode.