

Episode #31: What Is Essential?

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. Today I want to share three insights from the book *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*, by Greg McKeown.

I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I covered how you can apply Patrick Lencioni's new model, "The 6 Types of Working Genius" to your team.

I mentioned that, by definition, this model creates a sequential interdependency for accomplishing any type of work. Each type of genius receives and/or gives something to the adjacent types, creating a typical workflow found in most teams and groups of people trying to accomplish a specific project or task.

The model starts at the Ideation stage, composed of the genius of Wonder and Invention, then moves to Activation, where the Discernment and Galvanizing occurs, and finishes with Implementation by people with Enablement and Tenacity.

You and your team can increase your productivity, morale and likelihood of success by having each team member complete the online assessment, mapping out the team's geniuses, and identifying, discussing and addressing any serious individual and/or team shortfalls.

I outlined the problems that teams may face when they lack one of the areas of genius:

1. Teams underrepresented in the Genius of Wonder will often fail to identify serious issues or take advantage of major opportunities.
2. If Invention is missing, a team may find itself constantly reassessing the same problems and challenges.
3. When a team is light on the Genius of Discernment, it can find itself suffering high rates of failure in new initiatives.
4. If Galvanizing is inadequately represented, teams will often fail to act on initiatives that once seemed so promising.
5. When a team is weak in the Genius of Enablement, it will experience a lack of enthusiasm and solidarity, leaving programs and projects to fade.
6. Lastly, a team low on the Genius of Tenacity will often fail to complete projects according to the desired criteria, or they may not be completed at all.

If you and your team want to be transformed by using "The Six Types of Working Genius," I invited you to get started by taking the assessment at Lencioni's website: www.tablegroup.com. You can use the introductory promotional code ATTHETABLE, no spaces, in CAPS, at checkout, to get a 50% discount.

Switching now to today's topic, do you know what the difference is between an essentialist and a non-essentialist?

1. Essentialists think that only a few things matter, whereas everything is important for non-essentialists.
2. Essentialists say "no" to everything except to what really matters to them. Non-essentialists say "yes" as a reaction to what is most pressing at the time.
3. And Essentialists experience joy in their life-journey and feel in control. Conversely, non-essentialists feel overwhelmed, exhausted and out of control.

I'm going to share with you three take-aways that I think could help you, and I, thrive the most at work and in our personal life, building on the three-step method outlined by McKeown in his book *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*:

1. One of the book's suggestions that resonated with me was to discern the trivial many from the vital few. How? By generating spaces to concentrate and read.

This reminded me of two experiences I have personally had. One had to do with an ex-colleague in my early years in the corporate world. She was a mid-level manager who had developed a personal policy of no morning meetings. Unless a meeting was called by an executive senior to her, she saved the mornings for herself. As far as I could tell, she would use this time to concentrate on planning the future, working on her current priorities, reading important documents, and connecting with her direct reports.

Over the years I have adapted her no morning meetings policy, adjusting it to the first working hour of the day. During this first hour I plan my day. I choose the top three priorities I will tackle and decide what I won't touch that day until the top three are finished. I usually get started with the top priority during that first hour.

Could something similar work for you as well?

The second experience that came to my mind was around reading. I truly enjoy reading as a way to explore different concepts and learn more about areas of personal growth. However, only recently have I established a routine that is looking promising: I read for 30 minutes when I wake up and for another 30 minutes to an hour before falling asleep. I cannot yet claim victory, as the habits are not mature enough, but it's looking encouraging...

2. Another suggestion from the book is to eliminate by cutting out the trivial-many. McKeown writes about the importance of having clarity on what's most important to you. I found this congruent with writing a personal mission statement, a practice which I started three decades ago. You have to be crystal clear on what you want to accomplish in your life, and as McKeown suggests, eliminate all the peripheral activities that are not aligned with your mission.

This also applies to being clear on what you want to accomplish at work and learning to say NO to those requests that do not align with your professional objectives. It also applies to discontinuing those projects that are not producing the expected results. I'm not there yet, but I am working on it.

Worth trying for you as well?

3. The last suggestion I want to highlight from the book is to make implementation effortless... by removing obstacles. The concept that I found very applicable to me was to generate buffers at work.

In the early years of my coaching practice with leadership teams, I was too ambitious with the amount of information and exercises. I wanted to fit into the allocated amount of time. As a result of this, on more than one occasion, I had to adjust the content midway to make sure we ended on time. I did not have enough buffers built into the training agenda. After reading this book, I started to include "time cushions" throughout the program, which have translated into more "unstructured time" for the team members to discuss relevant topics that invariably come up during the sessions.

Can you spot an application of the buffer concept in your work?

Summarizing, you have a choice to make:

- Choose the non-essentialist's way of not making a choice and only reacting to what's thrown at you? or
- Apply one or more of the essentialist's elements shared today to your work and personal life, such as focusing on the few things that really matter to you?

What will it be?

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will share insights applicable to those of you in current or future leadership positions from the book *The Motive*, by Patrick Lencioni.

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This is coach Percy Cannon, working to help you *make the rest of your life...the best of your life*®.

Percy's BIO

Percy provides corporate managers and leadership teams with customized coaching programs that help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to significantly increase their business results through others and accelerate their career growth.

Percy is an "alumnus" from three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, with whom he spent close to three decades.

Since 2011 he has been helping corporate executives, managers and employees ***make the rest of their life...the best of their life®***.

Percy has worked in the United States and across several countries in Latin America as an Executive Coach, Leadership Team Consultant and Keynote Speaker, serving companies such as Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Tiffany & Avianca.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC" and certified as a "Go-Giver" speaker & coach.

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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