

Episode #32: Why Do You Lead?

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

Hello. Today I will share with you five questions that will help you reflect on why you lead.

I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I shared three suggestions 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 Greg McKeown in his book *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*:

1. The first one was to discern the trivial many from the vital few. How? By generating spaces to concentrate and read.
2. The second suggestion was 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.
3. And the third suggestion was to make implementation effortless by removing obstacles. The concept that I had found very applicable to me was to generate buffers at work. In my case it was in the form of building some buffer time for unplanned but relevant discussions within the agenda of my training workshops.

I closed the last episode inviting you to choose from two alternative ways to approach your work and personal life:

- Choose the non-essentialist's way of not making a choice and only reacting to what's thrown at you?
- Or embrace one or more of the essentialist's elements shared in that episode, such as focusing on the few things that really matter to you?

Today I want to help you reflect on WHY you lead. Whether you lead a company, an organization, or a small number of entry level employees, is it because you mostly see it as a reward for your past accomplishments? Or is it because you feel a responsibility to make a positive impact on the business and on the lives of those people you lead?

My aim today is to provide sufficient arguments to support the second reason for your leadership philosophy. Although much has been written about leadership, I found the approach taken by Patrick Lencioni in his latest book, *The Motive*, particularly applicable. Rather than attempting to define what makes a good leader, Lencioni took a different approach. He listed five areas of responsibility that leaders, whom he labels "reward-centered," tend to delegate or overlook.

As I cover each of these five areas, I invite you to reflect on where you stand on them today and where you see an opportunity to grow:

1. **The first area of responsibility for leaders is to develop their Leadership Team.** Based on my close to four decades of experience working internally and externally with corporations, I continue to see a lot of upside for leaders in this area. I allocated a full podcast to cover the best advice I received when I was first promoted to General Manager: to focus on my leadership team. I elaborated on this advice by suggesting that all team members should not only be subject-matter experts, but also capable of working together.

Unfortunately, too many leaders confuse offsite activities, labeled “teambuilding,” with addressing opportunities to truly work more effectively as a team. And when it comes to addressing any dysfunctional behaviors the team may have, some leaders may see this as a “soft-skill” task and delegate it to Human Resources.

By avoiding this responsibility, leaders are leaving money on the table. Team members who behave as lone rangers will put their group at a disadvantage versus competitors who have learned to operate as high performing teams.

2. **The second area is managing subordinates and making sure they manage theirs.** As leaders move up in the organizational chart, some become better and more engaged in managing their people, while others move in the opposite direction. Some see the value of coaching and providing feedback directly to their employees, while others find these tasks uncomfortable or time consuming and either delegate them to somebody else or flat out abdicate doing them.

Granted, this is not necessarily easy and fun to do, but skipping these responsibilities is not a good business practice. Worse yet, managers underneath these leaders will likely imitate this behavior, effectively making it part of the culture to relinquish these important responsibilities.

3. **Next comes having difficult and uncomfortable conversations.** This one is related to the previous point, and I must confess that it took me a while to learn how to manage difficult conversations with people who reported to me. In fact, I don’t think I ever got to the point where I felt 100% comfortable holding these talks.

However, the fact that it may not be easy or pleasant to carry these conversations does not justify skipping them or delegating this to somebody else.

A piece of advice I received in my early manager days was to focus the conversations on behaviors observed and business results delivered, versus speaking about the employees themselves. In other words, depersonalize the feedback and focus on what you see and perceive from the employee.

Later in my corporate career I learned to be open AND respectful. Make sure the message gets communicated as clearly as possible, and do it in a constructive, polite, humane, and professional way. This advice is even more relevant today considering most people continue to work remotely.

4. **The fourth area of responsibility is to run great team meetings.** Although I cannot see you right now, I can imagine you are rolling your eyes after hearing me speak about

meetings.... If you are like most leaders, you probably despise meetings, right? You find them boring, long, and mostly ineffective, correct? In fact, they're one of the worst activities that you have to endure, aren't they?

I must confess one more time that I used to share most of these concerns when I was inside the corporate world.

Although this will be a subject for our next podcast, I want to pass on to you a piece of advice I heard from Lencioni that made me change my paradigm about meetings: they are a crucial part of your role as a leader. It's the leader's responsibility to make meetings engaging and effective. How? By ensuring that leaders see themselves as movie directors, with complete involvement in every moment of the meeting: no delegation, no multitasking, no distractions. 100% engagement.

Good meetings deliver good decisions. Bad meetings... you guessed right, result in bad decisions.

5. **The last area of responsibility is to over-communicate to the organization.** Lencioni advocates having leaders see themselves as "Chief Reminding Officers." An important message needs to be repeated several times before it is fully digested by employees.

How many times have you listened to a set of messages during a kick-off session at the beginning of the year, and then you did not hear back about it until the next kick-off? A few too many leaders get bored with listening to their same message, so they start adding "the flavor of the month" to make themselves more entertaining.

Others, probably a minority, stick to the same message and repeat it over and over and over....

Summarizing, there are five areas where leaders are tempted to abdicate or delegate. This list can help you determine why you lead and how you can become a better leader. They are:

1. Developing your leadership team
2. Managing your subordinates
3. Having difficult conversations
4. Running great meetings, and
5. Over-communicating to the organization

Although this is not a binary thing where you are or are not a completely responsible leader, I invite you to pick the one area on this list where you think you have the biggest room for growth. Make a commitment to yourself, or to a coach, a mentor, or a trusted person to focus on it for the next few months. Develop a list of two or three specific actions you will undertake to move that area in the right direction.

Count on my help as needed.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will go deeper into how you can run high quality meetings that produce high quality decisions.

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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 has been helping hundreds of corporate executives and their teams boost their leadership and teamwork capabilities over the past ten years.

Before this, Percy spent close to three decades working for three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, in the United States and across several countries in Latin America.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC", a Certified Go-Giver Speaker & Coach, and a practitioner of several methodologies from best-seller author Patrick Lencioni (e.g., "The Ideal Team Player", "The 6 Types of Working Genius", "Organizational Health" and others).

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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