

066: Grow Your People to Grow Your Business

With Amy Lafko

Kelly Lawson 0:05

Making the move from solopreneur to team-preneur can be daunting, and frankly, a little terrifying, and if I know you I know you're probably trying to do all the things by yourself because you think it's just easier that way. Maybe you are even listening to this podcast as you juggle five other tasks, no judgment there my friend, it is part of what makes you so amazing to be honest, and today's guest. Amy Lafko is here to offer her best tips and tricks to make the move to hire and help business owners and leaders dedicate their time where it is most needed. Amy brings the secrets of the people first paradigm to companies, everywhere, working with clients to transform their organization and their leadership, Amy's mission is to shift the way business owners and leaders view the lifecycle of their employees and team members. If you are thinking of expanding your human resources or onboarding new talent. This is the episode that you don't want to miss. Let's dig in.

Intro Voice 1:13

You're listening to the workshop weekly podcast, the show where no dream is too big, and no topic is too small. Around here, we believe that taking imperfect action rules, so we're creating space for you to dive in and fast track your success, one workshop at a time. Now, refill your coffee cup, grab your notebook, and get ready to join in on your weekly training, listen to meaningful conversation, and learn from industry experts, here's your host, Kelly Lawson.

Kelly Lawson 1:43

Hello Amy. Welcome to the show I am so excited to chat with you today how are you

Amy Lafko 1:48

I'm doing really well Kelly, thank you so much for having me on.

Kelly Lawson 1:52

So we have a really exciting topic today to discuss, and it's all about onboarding staff, delegating tasks, all of the things that I'm sure that our listeners are very keen to learn more about because if I know that they're doing all of the things and they really need to hear what you have to say here today so why don't we start with the most foundational question, How did you come to be sort of the Human Resources guru that you are today.

Amy Lafko 2:21

You know it's interesting, I'm a physical therapist by background which doesn't seem to translate, and yet it's so well does, and I served in healthcare operations in leadership roles for over 20 years. And the way that I came to this recognition of how important it is to focus on your people is because I blew it as a leader, and I had to learn all these lessons the hard way. And so my goal became to take those lessons apply them in my own work as a leader, and once I was able to do that multiple times and really see the practices blew, because we were putting people first. I started to realize I wanted to do that with others and so I started my consulting company

as a way to help business owners and leaders realize that if you dedicate the time and attention to the people that you are supporting and that's a key thing when you move from solopreneur, to having a team, whether they are subcontractors full time. You have to remember that your job is to support them. And we want to make sure that we're doing it in a way that serves both of you.

Kelly Lawson 3:34

Absolutely. I love that you said that I'm a little curious to know what it looks like when you say you blew it as a leader because I have a feeling that there are some listeners that are like oh my gosh. Am I blowing it, what does that look like.

Amy Lafko 3:45

No, so I am saying that I blew it from the standpoint of, I didn't listen to my team and I just plowed ahead. Now it is different when you are solopreneur, and you have subcontractors because right now. If your company is less than 10 team members. It is a CEO centric company, it is all about what you need to do in your zone of genius. What happened with my leadership was, I was working with a team of 60 people. And I blew it, because I didn't listen to their needs. I was so focused on the customers experience, and the finances that I didn't take into account their needs. And so they came to work every day, but their hearts in their heads weren't in it, they just came and did what they had to do with the bare minimum. Now as a solopreneur, I've also made mistakes. I teach my clients and I advise my clients on how to do best practices and hiring. And here I was a solopreneur adding my first virtual assistant. I didn't do what I teach. It wasn't until the third assistant that I finally got it right and it was because one of my clients said to me, Andy. Well, did you do the process, and like, No, I didn't think I needed it, and he goes, isn't that what you yelled at me about was like, yes, you need to do the process regardless of how many team members are adding.

Kelly Lawson 5:15

Absolutely, and I'm really excited to learn about what the process is but I think for a lot of people listening, myself included, we've all made or are making that mistake we focus on the finances, and the business function and we forget that this is a two way street and if we really truly want to succeed. We need to make sure that we're treating the people who are contributing to that success as well. So why don't we dive into the goodies to the process or to the tips that you have for making sure that we don't make those mistakes in our businesses,

Amy Lafko 5:49

Absolutely. So the first tip is to really get clarity on the expectations and success factors for each role. Now notice I'm not talking about people yet, I am talking about the job. Someone needs to do. And before you can even consider hiring someone you need to have clarity on what they specifically are going to be accountable to do. And so what I like to do with all of my clients as we start by creating those core expectations for the role. And then we also build in success factors. So I'm going to talk about a job description like you may think of where it's a laundry list of activities, we work on what's the biggest priority. And then how do you measure what success looks like. If you're hiring a subcontractor to do some assistant work for you. It might look very different for two people. Someone might say, I need turnaround time and 24 hours, someone

else might say, I don't mean things for a week and you want to be really clear about what you need, because it's about how you're going to get your work done. And so once you are clear on the expectations and what it's going to take to succeed, then you can actually start the interviewing process, And looking at bringing your team member on board.

Kelly Lawson 7:13

That makes a lot of sense, and I'm curious because I think in the early days of hiring, it can be really difficult to hone in on what are those specific tasks. So, do you have any advice on how someone can really zero in on what we need to focus on in terms of expectations and success metrics, with our first hire, or even our second hire.

Amy Lafko 7:35

Absolutely, because when you are adding that first and second person. There needs to be a high level of flexibility, it's all hands on jack, jack of all trades, but there are things that you know you need them to do. And one of the other tips that I like to share is about delegation skills you need to up your game on delegation, no matter how good you think you are. And the way I encourage people to start that delegation process is by first looking at what you love to win. What do you want to spend your time on where is your zone of genius. And so I have them make a list all the things that they're doing every day to keep the business going. And then I asked them, Star what's in your zone of genius star the stuff that is your joy, and then circle things that require your talent, and then outsource the rest, and that's how you start to build the key accountabilities for a team member, you know, you might say, alright, this is the part I hate, I hate the social media management. Okay, then that's where I'm going to focus my first hire, and the key accountabilities are going to be related to the voice that I want for my social media accounts. The way that I want information to be distributed and the pacing of it, so that becomes your key accountabilities,

Kelly Lawson 9:02

I love that and I think what was embedded in there that maybe didn't get mentioned is that you need to give yourself permission to hand that off and I think something like social media, for example, there's a lot of pressure to be authentic and keep it close to who you are and really I think that translates into you got to do this yourself whether you like it or not. So I think what's really powerful about what you just said is that it's okay to delegate that away, you still have control over the tone of voice and how frequently, things are being posted but it's okay to let it go.

Amy Lafko 9:34

Absolutely and you know it's interesting, one of the things I had the most difficulty letting go of as a solopreneur was bookkeeping. I hate it when I got my MBA, I got one B, and it was an accounting, that shouldn't have been my first hand. But that was the third person I hired as a subcontractor, it should have been the first, only because it's outside my zone of genius, I hate to do it. It took me a full day, a month to reconcile my books, and I would still forget to invoice clients thank goodness they were all wonderful to me and would call and say you forgot to invoice me. I never tracked some of the other things that you can get rebates on, and so I was

losing money, and losing an entire day a month. But I hold on to that because I thought no I have to know my numbers. When I finally hired a bookkeeper, they easily paid for themselves. Each month, based on how much they're saving me.

Kelly Lawson 10:34

Absolutely, I mean I feel like you're in my head when you say all of those things. And I think another really good indicator is, if you're putting something off, that's something that flags me to say like you know what I think you really should delegate this because I'll procrastinate, I'll put it until the last possible minute because I'm just avoiding it, because I don't like doing it. Exactly. It's so true. Yeah, amazing so what is your next tip.

Amy Lafko 10:58

So I think the next tip is once you've got your key accountabilities and again with that first hire, You might need some real flexibility there but once you've got your key accountabilities share that right upfront, even if you're hiring a company and they're going to bring different people into your team, you still want to make sure everyone is clear on this is what I need. And again, when you're small, it is about being CEO centric and that is okay. Give yourself permission to say this is my company, and this is what I need to have happen in my company. And so once you've got those key accountabilities share them. When you're posting the job or sourcing it, make sure everybody knows what those key accountabilities are. And then you want to think about when you onboard someone and again you may say, Well, gosh, I'm a solopreneur I'm bringing on someone part time. I don't need to go corporate and quote unquote onboard someone that you do. You need to make sure that you guys are on the same page about what the expectations are, what success looks like and how you guys are going to communicate, and especially if there's things that you want to make sure that you stay connected on during that interview process, you really need to make sure that you are sharing the expectations. And one other piece about the interview process, I have one client, and he was adding his eighth team member, and it was a very different role he never had someone in office management. And he said, Amy I'd like your help. I want to make sure I hire right the first time. So we went through this person's ideal characteristics or their communication style, their behavioral style are they fast paced slow paced, We looked at some of the skills both technical and soft skills they were going to need for the role, and we created this benchmark for an assessment, and then two months later he calls me goes me I hired that position and I said, Did I miss when you sent me the request for an assessment for this person. He goes, No, I didn't think I really needed it like it was in my head I knew what we needed to do and I said, Oh, okay. He goes, it's not working. And I said okay, Kevin. Let's have her take the assessment, and we took the assessment. And when I got the results I called him and I said, Kevin, let me tell you where you're having problems in this area this area and this area, it goes here. What do I do about that. And I said, Kevin, you hired someone who is incompatible with the requirements of the job in terms of their pacing, they want to slow pace of change. You hired someone who's very strong in analysis and that's not what this requires in the job and he goes, Well that's why it's not working. And I said if you had just done this verse we could have prevented that hire, and I've had that happen with more than one client where they see the power of using assessments as part of that hiring process. My one guy, he was a coach and he moved from solopreneur coach to actually having

a team of six like overnight, he was having social sellers and a business manager. And we did assessments on each of these roles so that when he hired, he hired all the right fit. And we ended up passing on a couple people he's like they're great, I love them. And I said, but their values, their style and what motivates them, is different than the direction of your company. We have to look at all of those factors when we're making hiring choices.

Kelly Lawson 14:47

Absolutely, it makes a lot of sense and these assessments that you're speaking of sound, magical. Can you talk a little bit about what the assessments are that you use.

Amy Lafko 14:56

Sure, so I use one most often, That looks at desk, which some of you guys may have heard of but disc stands for this idea of how dominant someone is in the way they respond to problems and challenges, how they like to influence other people through people and contacts, how they like steadiness, the pace of change, and how much they are conscientious when it comes to following the rules and procedures, set by others. And then the other thing that we look at is what motivates people, Are they driven by the return on the investment, do they want to capitalize on their energy and make sure it's only going towards things that are really going to drive the business forward. Are they someone who's motivated by learning for the sake of learning, or are they motivated by new ideas out of the box thinking. I had one client who their physical therapy practice, but they are doing it completely different than any other practice I've ever seen. And so when they're hiring folks, they need to hire folks who are motivated by new ideas. They can't be hiring folks who like traditional methods and structured approaches. So that actually became one of the key factors to make sure we brought on the right people.

Kelly Lawson 16:22

So, from a tactical point of view, does it look like you're the CEO or you're the business owner, do you take this assessment and then see how well your results, align with your potential hires or what does it look like from a tactical standpoint,

Amy Lafko 16:36

Great question. So yes, absolutely, as the owner and the CEO, you want to take the assessment you want to understand where your strengths and limitations are, so that you're bringing people onto the team who complimented. So, absolutely we want those core motivators to be aligned. And then when it comes to the behavioral styles, we actually want to make sure that whatever you're hiring for those key accountabilities match the person and the role. So for example, if you are hiring someone to handle your social media accounts, and you are going to create a really structured content calendar, then you can have someone who likes a steady pace of work, but if you're like me and you think of things last minute, and you go oh my gosh let's do this will be great if I hire someone who likes a slower pace, and who is motivated by structure, we're going to have challenges, and it's not going to match the way I need the role to be to support me.

Advertisement 17:45

So you bought a fancy camera or you're thinking about buying one, because it's clear to you that there is no shortage of beautiful moments or things in your life that you'd like to capture beautifully, But the record scratches because all the dials and buttons and settings are standing between you and your life in stunning photos. Well my friend, I have just the fix the ultimate photography starter kit, this free resource includes a recommended equipment list. Quick Start checklist, and a beginner's guide to creating natural poses and candid moments to give you the confidence you need to dust off that fancy camera and start documenting your moments, so they can last forever. The ultimate photography starter kit is completely free, and it has everything you need to get started. So grab yours today at [KellyLawson.ca/starter kit](http://KellyLawson.ca/starter-kit) that's KellyLawson.ca slash starter kit, and I can't wait to see your framers in my squirrel.

Kelly Lawson 18:53

What's bubbling to the surface for me, as we talk through this is that when you're hiring people, be it subcontractors or full time employees, what you're truly doing is hiring an extension of your business and your brand and your values, and they're representing you, whether you like it or not, and what's on my mind lately is the whole sort of debacle that was brought to the, I guess, mainstream by Rachel Hollis and basically saying, Oh, that post, it was my team who did it, not me. And I think the whole world is like. But that is you, right, so it sounds like she didn't follow your process

Amy Lafko 19:31

You know she should call me, and it's a good point because I think one of the things that's hard for a lot of us is when we leave the quote unquote professional world, or the quote unquote nine to five job. We don't take ownership of the fact that we are now a solopreneur, or that we are now the CEO of a company, and we don't step into that fully, and when we don't step into that fully, we set ourselves and others up for hard times. I want people to embrace is, I am the CEO. This is my company, I need people are going to be able to be aligned with me, the brand, and that we are bringing complimentary skills. I'm not going to hire a bookkeeper who's just like me. Oh my gosh. That would be horrible. I don't details I don't do numbers. I don't like to follow rules. I need a bookkeeper who's going to do that, but that hire an admin, I need to make sure that they are bringing what I don't, and that I can stay in my zone of genius, and they can stay in there.

Kelly Lawson 20:48

Absolutely. I love it. It all makes so much sense so key accountabilities check what's your next tip.

Amy Lafko 20:54

So after those key accountabilities that's where we get into this idea of the interview process, making sure that you have complimentary skill sets, and that the person you're hiring has those behavioral styles that are going to match the needs of the job, and they're motivated by things that are going to be met in that role. And then that third step is the delegation piece, like I said, once you brought them on, you need to spend time, onboarding them so that they actually have the skills, when it comes to doing their work, and that only comes if you're willing to delegate

those key accountabilities to them. And then the final step, and I've been guilty of this too because we get so busy. The final tip I have is schedule, check in times. Now these are not the times where you're going over the list or you're double checking your asana work profile and all of those types of things. This is a time to sit down and say, What's working between our teamwork, are there any areas we need to improve in. And then, what can you for me as the CEO, as the leader, what do you need from me. And then you also use those key accountabilities to say, this is where things are great. This is where there's an opportunity to get better. And I think that's the final piece of it you have to make sure it's an ongoing collaboration not just about the work you do each day, but how you work together.

Kelly Lawson 22:29

And so, again, it makes so much sense, but I think that this is a piece that's so easy for people to skip and I can completely see how things can spiral way out of control if they do skip it. So, once again from a tactical standpoint, how often should we be scheduling these check ins, what do they look like exactly is it over coffee is it over zoom. What does it look like, how do we do it,

Amy Lafko 22:52

So I am on the East Coast, and my assistant is out in DC. And so she and I do everything over zoom, but what we do is once a month we schedule and we do happy hour so we get together over a glass of wine and say, How's it going, and most often it's, oh my gosh, what do you need for me Jen because I'm scattershot, and I want to make sure that she can be successful, because I need to do certain things for her so she said last time, Amy, I need us to schedule further out in advance on what we're going to do and I'm like, Oh, okay. Can you help me do that because that was what she needed for me. So once a month, we have a glass of wine, and we talk about what's working, what's not, how do we make the partnership stronger.

Kelly Lawson 23:40

You had me at happy hour, makes it so much easier. Amazing so me I wanted to ask you about work life balance because this all sounds really great but I'm sure that it's easy to get caught up in the hustle, which I also don't like that word but there I just said it. And so what's your personal advice for achieving that work life balance.

Amy Lafko 24:06

It took me a long time to figure it out because when I left, healthcare operations. I had five weeks of vacation, I had sick days I had personal days, so I could take three weeks off and go to Greece, and love it, there were people doing the work and now suddenly it's like, oh, it's me. I can't just take off whenever I want to. And when I was writing my book, I hired a book coach, and she taught me that I need to follow my own personal rhythm. Each of us has times in the day, where we're more creative, where we are less creative where our minds wander and when we're sharpest and what you need to do is take time to figure out what your personal rhythm is. So with my book coach, she said okay, it seems to me that your best time of day for creative is first thing in the morning. Awesome. And then I said, Yeah, but if I do that first thing in the morning that I don't get my workout in, she said, Well, are you getting your workouts in now and I said no, they never happened. And she said okay then when would be a good time, so I

figured it out. I work from 730 to 1030, creative work or whatever bulk I need to do that morning, didn't go work out because I'm exhausted at that point I've expended all this brain energy so I go get revived I go get refreshed. I do my workout, and then all my client work is in the afternoon. And so I found my rhythm, and I made it work for me. I also found that Thursday's not my day, so you know what, I don't schedule stuff on Thursdays, but somehow turns into my wife, Saturday, and that's okay, find your rhythm for your own personal best.

Kelly Lawson 25:49

I love that and I mean I think, as entrepreneurs we certainly need to make sure that we're enjoying the perks that come with it which for a lot of people is having control over your schedule, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with taking a Saturday on a Thursday, if that's what fits your flow. I love that you suggested that I think that we all need to get a little bit better at hustling just a little bit less, and making sure that we're taking the time for ourselves and our people and nurturing our relationships as well because we have the power to do that

Amy Lafko 26:18

Well Kelly, I have to say when you talk about hustle less, I think hustle smarter outsource the things that aren't your zone of genius, make sure people know their role in your work, and know yourself, so that I'm not trying to do creative work at 10 o'clock at night when it's just not going to happen.

Kelly Lawson 26:37

Absolutely. So, you mentioned your book which I think is a nice segue into that is being released in August, can you talk a little bit more about your book that you're writing.

Amy Lafko 26:46

Yeah, so my book is called people first, a proven method for an exceptional healthcare practice. Now what I have to say is the stories are all healthcare related it's from my background as a physical therapist, but the principles are really universal. So, in the book I talk about key accountabilities I talk about how to onboard people because I want us to actually change the language. I want us to think about that time as the opportunity to align, and inspire the team towards the work. One of my clients, I mentioned the guy that was coaching and went from one to six with him, we did a full day retreat where we got together with his whole newly formed team, and we really got alignment we. These are the core values of the company, how are we going to live them out in our different roles, we created a strategy of where we're going to go in the next six months, and then a year, but really bringing that team together for alignment, made a world of difference in their success level so quote unquote losing a day had 10 fold benefits.

Kelly Lawson 27:56

Yeah, I can totally see that. Well, we will make sure that we link in the show notes where folks can sign up to be notified when your book is launched and all of the good things that we talked about today and I know you also have a free resource for listeners do you want to talk about that now.

Amy Lafko 28:10

Absolutely. So we talked a lot about key accountabilities and success factors. So what I'm going to share with everyone is a template for that. Now the key with the template is two different things. Number one, focus on the role, not a person. So even if you have someone in that role today. Don't think about what Susie or Bob does great, think about what the role needs. And the other thing is, I'm going to send you the template, and I'm going to have some examples in there for an admin assistant position. Those are only samples, this needs to be unique to you. Enter your company, so your needs for an admin, their success factors look different than what mine are. So it's only there as examples, it is not your master copy, take what's there and use that as a springboard for yourself.

Kelly Lawson 29:05

I love it. so we'll make sure we link that in the show notes as well. Thank you. The final question that I have for you and we always like to end these episodes with something really actionable so that when people are finished listening, they can go forth and take action toward developing their skill that we've talked about so what is your last piece of setup advice and action that listeners can take when they're all finished listening to us today.

Amy Lafko 29:29

Please go make your list of everything that you're doing in your business. And then once you've got that laundry list, start Pehrson it down. I want you to look at what do you love doing, what's your zone of genius what takes your talent. And then I want you to start to figure out how do I shed the rest of it, how do I build a team, so that I can do what I do well, and move the rest to other people.

Kelly Lawson 29:57

I love it, as you were talking, I was envisioning myself doing that and I just felt this weight being lifted I thought, I don't have to do my invoicing, somebody else can do that. And so I hope that listeners are feeling the same sort of excitement for the potential of offloading the things that you put off doing that weigh you down that you regret or dread so that you can really design, a position for yourself that gets you excited every day, so thank you for that. I'm going to definitely make my list after we stopped recording here today, and Amy I just wanted to say thank you so much for your generosity with sharing your expertise and all of your tips and your time I really appreciate you and I'm so happy that we got to talk today.

Amy Lafko 30:41

Oh, Kelly, thank you so much and please for your listeners, feel free to reach out to me, my information will be in there I'm happy to either do some email, chat or hop on a discovery call and figure out what you need.

Kelly Lawson 30:54

Absolutely, thank you again so much, Amy, and we'll chat soon. The moral of this story is, if you put all your time and attention into your customers while skipping over your staff and team members, you're going to have a bad time, and consider this your permission slip to delegate

and pass off work, that is not within your zone of genius because doing so will actually help your business by being crystal clear with your expectations. You are being unpleasant, you are setting up your potential hire for success. Take advantage of the many tools out there to ensure that you're hiring the best staff for you and your business because remember what you are really hiring here is an extension of you and your brand. This episode has inspired me to take me up on her advice to make a complete list of everything I do in my own business and start figuring out what else I can outsource, so that I can focus on what I love to do. And I suggest you do it right along with me. I can't wait to check out Amy's book that comes out this summer, and thank you so much for joining me, and Amy for another episode of the workshop weekly podcast. You are the reason I do this, my friend. Bye for now.

Intro Voice 32:19

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