

Episode 79: How to Transform Your Team into Leaders and Become Exceptional Maralyn Bellin

[00:00:00] Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the business growth advantage. Today's going to be a treat for everyone watching live, watching the replay, listening to the podcast episode, because today [00:01:00] we're talking about a topic that is an essential topic for any business owner, CEO, entrepreneur. I've got my. Good, a new friend, Marlon Velon here.

Who's going to walk us through her biggest secrets, biggest tips and strategies. When it comes to leadership. Marlin has a new book coming out called lead through fire. Marlin first, what's the subtitle of the book again, and then tell me the story behind the title. Okay. So lead through fire seven secrets to attract and retain top talent, increased sales by 67% and build bigger profits instantly, lead through fire.

One of the things that I've found in the work that I do is that. Fire is, uh, that thing that we bring to the table when we are committed. It's like that energy that we have, it's sometimes unpredictable. but it's like that burning inside of us. One of the analogies I often use is, things are going [00:02:00] wrong when your smoke, when you feel like you're smoking, something is underneath it smoking, there are a lot of fire analogies in interpersonal and leadership relationships.

And if you know what's going on in terms of the intensity of that, if you have some tools for that, it's easy to manage the situations either. Channel the fire or to temper the fire. one of the most interesting things about it is, is that if you have, interpersonal relationships in work where two people are having a fight.

So really you've got two flames on either side of this table, right? A leader has to be able to see that and make the best determination of how to handle those lanes. Do you walk away from it? Do you interrupt it? how do you handle the situation when two of your best people are throwing it at each other, you've seen that.

Yep. those are the types of tools that. I'm giving people so that they can manage the small things, those little [00:03:00] sparks, where people are just irritated. And then the big things, when there's something really big at stake and

somebody wants to win. So my steak is bigger than your steak or however you put it.

one of the great things though, is that if you learn how to handle this fire, this energy and commitment that people bring to the table, that's really powerful. People that do that well, they're the companies that grow, the fact, my sense is that you or your skills are very much in that line.

your innate diplomatics sex, you know, sensibility your way that you deal with people and talk to them as very calm and relaxed and observational, You're not putting your own desires in front of anybody else. And that's another piece of, good leadership is what is it that you're committed to?

So it's a point of reference for how you deal with everybody. Well, thank you for saying that role. And that's a huge compliment [00:04:00] that's very well received on my end. It means a lot. And yeah, I think that this whole topic of leadership is so important. And again, you're the title of your book lead through fire is, So I think for every business owner, this should be a book that people want to read a conversation that people want to lean into. the more that you and I have talked, the more appreciation the more impressed that I've become with what you do. And I asked you before we went live, if there are any specific tips or insights or secrets that you want to share, You told me that you really are more situational in the type of advice and consulting that you give.

And I really, love that you do that in the context of leadership. Um, you also brought up something that I thought would be. Diving deeper into it, the beginning here of this idea of in life, but especially in business and in leadership, this idea of symptoms [00:05:00] versus like deep core problems.

Right. Can you speak to that a little bit? it's so parallel. You have a cold, well, is the cold really? The thing that's the problem with it is a thing that's bothering you nowadays, who knows what it is, but when you have a cold it's your immune system. Usually that's the issue. There's something in the background that needs some tweaking and the cold goes away.

Now you can temper that with DayQuil or NyQuil or whatever you're taking, but unless you deal with immune cells, You'll always be taking something dampen that symptom. and or those symptoms start to, but it's very, you know, this story about, the frog and the pot of boiling water. So, if you have a pot and you put a frog in it with some water, it won't notice it's boiling to death.

Turn the flame up really slowly. It will jump out because it doesn't notice it. And that's the same thing with symptom versus core issue. Your [00:06:00] core issues start with small symptoms, like a cold, then, something like a stomach ache or, something like that. And, then the flu and it keeps getting bigger and bigger because that core issue has never dealt with.

And that's true for individuals. It's true for any kind of conflict, actually, whenever you're having conflict, it's always about an issue that is not being spoken about. you share any examples. Oh gosh. there's so many. Let me get my, So working with a brilliant CEO, amazing, really heavy growth, but she didn't fully trust the people that worked with her.

So when a client came back and would say, this went wrong and blah, blah, blah. Now she would take the client side, not just with a client, but against her own people. So you do have to say the client you're right. Let me take a look at that. That's totally [00:07:00] accurate. But when the underlying core is I don't trust you.

And I talked to the person who caused the problem. Well, it's going to create an inflamed situation. So working with her, I was able to in real time, Help pull apart that conversation of, I don't trust you. And once we started getting to the bottom of that, she stopped having fights with it during staff meetings, you know, like when they were doing debriefings, they would have some huge fights and I would be there like, okay, let's calm down and find out what the facts are.

And that's actually a really interesting tip whenever you're upset or frustrated or angry, because you can do it when you're angry, too, stepping back and letting the physical, emotional feelings, relax, count to 10. You be able to see the real fact. And if you look at the actual facts, it's very different.

It personally is a [00:08:00] personal story is my family gets together for family birthdays. You know, everybody says, okay, we'll come from wherever and we'll go have family birthdays. So and the person whose birthday it is, gets to choose the restaurant. So one time we went to a Chinese restaurant, really great, and all of us are sitting around and we looked at each other, one of my sisters wasn't there.

And someone said, well, so where's Barbara. You got me, Barbara comes in 10, 15 minutes later, fuming, really? You could tell she was like fuming and she walks over to my other sister and she says, why didn't you give me directions to get here? And I looked at her and I said, why didn't you ask? And the fact is is

that we project what we didn't do onto other people because of our self frustration.

So when you get to the fact. They were talking, this is where you're going to go. But neither of them talked about how do you get there or what's the address or anything like that. So the frustration was the person coming wanted to [00:09:00] blame the person who was there, but it's a relationship there's responsible as you are.

So the fact that you didn't ask when you knew you didn't know where it was, it doesn't make any sense to be upset about that. Yeah, being clear on the language that you're using, the facts that, are trying to, explain what's happening is an in an objective way as possible can really be a challenge.

I work with a lot of people who are working on bringing on their first team. Whether it's overseas or local. And there's a lot of question of when I bring them on, what should I have them do? Should I wait to hire anybody until I have my own processes in place more? how to the extent that you work with clients who are in that kind of a space, what are the recommendations that you tend to give around?

when you're in the beginning of going from an I to a we, how do you lead in [00:10:00] that way? Should you have certain foundations in place before you bring someone on or just kind of take the leap? Well, I think you could do both. Some people innately do really well with just taking the leap, but those are risk takers.

And if you're a risk taker. Great. most of us can't take a leap because we don't want to take that bigger risk at having a bad relationship, but the tools that I always find that work in those situations when you're starting a new relationship is one don't make any assumptions. So just because we speak the same language, or even if we don't, when you're beginning of the relationship, it's important to.

Checkpoints in your mind so that you can help them learn what your system is, because if they don't have those, if you don't have those checkpoints, you can't give that to them. And they'll just wander around wondering what's going on. Do you know what I'm saying? The other thing is. [00:11:00] No, what you're committed to based on your principles.

So having your principles. So some people, it could be, 15 minutes early as on time. That's one principle that some business owners have, you always look

your best. Without making the customer uncomfortable. And then you discuss what that is, responsibility and integrity. You could say responsibility and integrity.

What does that mean? Right. A situation where somebody just says, well, just relax. You're like, what do you mean? Just relax. What am I, how do I do just relax. one of the things that I've initiated for myself, I have for years, is that whenever I start to feel any level of heat, fury, anxiety, concern, irritation, whatever it is, step back and let it go.

And you can do that by counting to 10, you know, you know, your mom [00:12:00] used to say count to 10. It's true. But you have to count slowly and use it as a breathing exercise. So. Breathe in to breathe out and that'll help you gain control over that emotion. That you're feeling that powerful emotion that may be driving you to being upset.

This is so interesting because I think when most people hear, again, going back to your book, title of lead through fire, what I assume and what I would think most people would assume is you mean like leading through. Like a fire, a conflict, a whatever. And while that might be true, what I'm hearing is it's really about how do you lead through that fire that you're experiencing?

It's actually both that's bright, but it is both. You have to tend to your own skills and knowledge around your own personal self in terms of how you respond to things. What, ticks you off? What sparks. Anger. how much do you let things build up before? it's [00:13:00] an instant combustion. That's another thing.

When you have people who instantly combust, there's a history. Of something underneath that that has nothing to do with the moment it has to do with a lot of past that's never been handled. And so leading through fire is also once you, you never just get you done and then you go deal with other people it's like you and them and back and forth.

What's really great. If you're a good leader, you learn through the people you're working with because you're going to get upset. So you're getting upset with them. Okay. So now how are you going to handle your own ups? So that you can calm things down and bring that flame down a little bit. but once you've learned you it's much easier to help and teach your team.

So it's really, it's fascinating. And I've been in situations where I have two people, like at each other's like flaming at each other's throats on either side of me, but because I know how to handle my. [00:14:00] Concerns my thoughts

and step back and not make assumptions. I can hear both sides to understand what's really going on versus, telling people just shut up and sit down and we'll deal with this later, something like that.

that's great. You know, that makes me think of a question. I'm curious on your thoughts on this and I don't know how you're going to answer it. When I think about my audience, I have quite a few lawyers, law firm owners that I work with that watch this show. And one of the things that I've heard a lot recently from my lawyer followers is sometimes it feels like what makes you a good little.

Is at odds with what makes you a good leader, a good business owner, and those same things that, clients are paying you good money to be fiery, to be right, to be competitive, to kind of have that cutting edge they're learning. Oh, I need to go in the opposite direction in terms of being a business owner, do you think that's true or do you think that by going in the other direction, you're [00:15:00] actually also improving yourself as a.

I don't, I think that what I see is that you can have both things simultaneously. So instead of going in another direction, what we're always looking for in life is balance balance between happy balance between being sad, because they're both going to exist between on fire bounce, between being, down and out.

but what I find is that passion. And dealing with other people so that they can hear you and understand what you're doing is possible by making sure you know, what your commitment is. So this is a family thing that is so clear. I just have to share it. When I first got married. my husband's family and my family were really different.

It's like really different, totally different shades of blue. And I would go over to his house and feel like, I don't know what's going on here. I hate this. This is terrible. I'm [00:16:00] like, I got to go. So every time an event would come up, before the event, I would go, oh, I hate this. I don't want to go, what am I doing?

And be really down in the mouth. And my husband said to me, one time, he said, look, we're not going. For you to have a good time. we're going to support a family tradition, like, oh, oh, okay. We're going to support a family tradition. That was then my commitment. It wasn't okay. Go have a good time. Or, oh, see who likes you?

Or, you know, all these other things. It was like, we're going to have. Uh, family tradition that I want to be a part of because this family is important to me. And

so that type of commitment, why are you being the leader? What are you, what's, you're passionate about that. You want them to understand you have this passion for them.

So for instance, I'm as committed to you being successful. and these are the things I see as being really important. So. Making them a part of that conversation of your own [00:17:00] passion. Yeah. that's really well said. I've heard, you mentioned a few times now the idea of kind of stepping into being a good leader.

One thing that we talked about before we went live was what bad leadership, chemical, like, and specifically that phrase of, bosses being bullies. before we dive into the bullying thing, are there any other kind of labels that you see in terms of bad leadership looking like certain types of categories?

Oh, well, And the wall street journal. They once did an article a few years ago on tornado leaders. So there are native leaders, there are bullying leaders, they're absentee leaders, those people that are the leader, but you don't understand, you don't have access to that leadership. You don't, it's like you guys go off and do your own thing and I'm going to do my own thing and kind of like that.

and there are fearful leader. The people that are always not confident that [00:18:00] what they're saying or doing is right. So with those people, commitment is really important because then you get a stronger sense of yourself with other leaders. I think it's still also commitment, but it's also the fact that.

You as a leader, once you've got your core, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. You know, the hierarchy, those hierarchies of needs can transpose from your own personal life, onto your business life. So just like you need food, shelter, water, those kinds of things, and then you need acceptance, et cetera, those same things.

Go on. business relationship at a different level. So the more clearly you have the lower levels handled, the more able you are to help other people with those little levels. Now think I haven't really answered your question though. No, but well, you definitely answered the question about the different types of what combat bosses look like, but circling back to [00:19:00] the bullies side, before we dive into why that's bad.

why do you think people fall into that trap? because it's, it's habitual behavior, I think the things that we know most we're going to respond in that way. It's if all

you have is a hammer as a tool, everything looks like a nail, right? Yeah, that's the whole thing is being able to, understand that you're in a habitual pattern of behavior that's causing problems around you.

Now with some leaders who we think are bullies, They may have a particular overarching strategy that validates their behaving that way to produce a particular result. I think that that's really damaging for the people in the environment and damaging for them, but they don't necessarily see it. so the way to, when I work with people and we talk about habits that we have, We have to look at habit as not a month, you know, not a 28 day thing to change.

It takes 20 days to [00:20:00] understand the habit and then it takes another year or so to really embed that habit into our behavior. and that's one of the things that is really important, consulting is making sure that people have the tools to embed behavior. Not just understand it. Yeah. Yep. But again with a bowl.

Well, I'm sorry. I just want to go with it's more than the strategy that's at stake. Usually it's their ego, their desire, their place. So they're often bullies are often not. Trying to get a particular goal met. They're looking to make sure they're positioned in their environment in a particular fashion.

I'm strong, I'm impenetrable. You can't mess with me. and you can do that without being a bully, but those people haven't learned that skill set yet. Yeah. I appreciate you, finishing that thought [00:21:00] because I was thinking, as you were talking, that, that idea that, you know, it takes 28 days not to build the habit kind of understand better what that could look like.

it seems like there's so much opportunity as leaders for us to know better and better, in what cases am I being a bully or being a tornado leader, or it can take a lot of. Honest and open conversations to see that. Do you have any advice to share or stories that you can share about how leaders have created a culture that their team feels comfortable providing a kind of feedback and saying, here is how we think you Mrs.

Or Mr. Leader can improve. Well, you know, that's interesting because. the way you create an environment that is transparent. One might say. And when I say transparent, I don't mean, everything's out in the open. I just be your social security number. Now that we're warming, [00:22:00] that kind of transfer.

We just need it at the moment. Nobody's got competing agendas. So when I'm talking to you, what's my agenda. but in reality, that's where I keep coming back to commitment because that's a very foundational element of building healthy

relationships and knowing your commitment. So you can explain it to other people.

Because without knowing consciously what you're committed to, you always behave in habitual ways they serve some need or desire that you have. and I think now, now you're talking about a huge conversation about, conscious in the moment versus automatic behavior. Most of our sites, we have automatic.

Where you get your car, you drive somewhere and you're like, oh, I'm here now. I know what happened on the way you really didn't experience it. And when we talk about being in the moment, it's not about not having any other problems or not having any other breweries. It's about being able to [00:23:00] let go of the past and the future to see what you have right now.

And I think we don't really understand that company. that's the only way to break a habit is to let go of the past in the future and see the facts of the moment as they are right now. There's another tip though. One of the most important things for tornado bosses, bully bosses, regardless, fragile bosses, absentee boss.

You must be able to hear external input for who you're being, how you're behaving. if you don't allow other people to say that doesn't work or you don't allow other people to say anything about how you behave, you can't change. You're wedded to that behavior. It's too vulnerable to understand or be.

accountable for it for a lot of people. So the maturity level and the growth level has to be, and the commitment frequently [00:24:00] commitment will get you past all those things. If you're really committed, I really want this to happen. You can tell me anything you need to tell me. And they say something that like hurts you to the core, except could they're telling me that because it's about this commitment.

They're not telling me that because I'm that person or a good person, or they're angry at me or something and yeah. That's a hard thing to figure sometimes, you know, one of the things that our team is working on improving is we now have a pretty great accountability chart structure to the way that the team is building out.

So we've got, the CEO at the top of the accountability. And then there is a CEO or integrator, that reports to the CEO and then below the COO position or different department leads. And that's become a really effective kind of fuel for the machine because we're making sure that there are certain meetings in place

at each level, and people don't need to be at these kind of big [00:25:00] team meetings where kind of the agenda is all over the place, kind of a thing.

I think the more that we are streamlining our meetings, the more we have to be really intentional about still holding space. For me having a one-to-one conversation with someone who is below the C O O level and seeing how they're doing, in terms of just putting some of this into practice and being a good leader.

Do you have any. Tips or our ways to create the meeting structure or check-in points with your team where it's less about, let's go through the agenda of these things in your department and more about let's just do a check-in, how are things, how can we make those types of meetings really effective? I think that's a really good question.

And I'm trying to make sure I understand what you're asking me, because a couple of different things went through my mind as you were talking. And one of them was that, it's really great to have stratification so that people at this level know, and then [00:26:00] people would just let them know and then et cetera, as it goes up, that, choice, that decision tree.

So. Is you're establishing them. You really want to build in the breathing space in that time to deal with anything that isn't on the agenda that is specific to this group, and actually listen and hear it. So that one issue is how do you help your team regardless of the level of. Improve their communication skills.

It's, they're not, most of the problems we have with meetings is the lack of clarity for the meeting itself, but also the lack of clarity about our role in the meeting. What's my role here. So we don't come prepared with, okay. My role is to double check that this piece is, is solid, or my role is to let you know where these fires are occurring.

People don't know that. So. Knowing their role in this situation gives them power to actually interact [00:27:00] in a, in a more strong fashion. but I had a really great conversation with a CEO and he shared with me that once a quarter, he's got a worldwide business. So once a quarter, his teams get together as a state of the union, In conference rooms and video on soon.

And he lets those people, everybody ask him any question that they have. It doesn't matter what it is now. Personal questions aside, like what do you like to eat for dinner? It's not, but any question about their position and any question about how things work, any question about, What's going on. So he allows that

in a big context, that guy is incredibly skilled one because he can hear what's going on.

he can allow himself to be vulnerable when people are upset. and I think that that's a really important thing about being a leader with a [00:28:00] group is to be able to open it up that broadly and then pull it back into a functional. Teen situation. So does that kind of gives me, I think that's a really great example.

and thank you for your time, Marlin. again, this, to me, going back to your hierarchy of needs as business owners, we quickly learn about marketing sales team building all of this stuff. What I've seen so far is that leadership is like the top of the pyramid. And don't think that business owners can ever be spending too much time thinking about this part of business ownership figuring out ways to improve and get better.

It's fascinating. You would say that because I would actually flip that. I think.

I think it may be the most important element. Therefore it is the foundational element. Your leadership will be built as you overcome the issues that you have in building a business, you know, and how do you face them? [00:29:00] That's really crucial because being able to face an issue without blaming yourself or somebody else is crucial.

If you're blaming somebody, that means they have the power and you don't, if you're blaming yourself, that means the whole world rests on your shoulders. That's good. And I appreciate correcting here because I think the metaphor breaks down quickly. What I mean to say though, is it is such a fun, exciting stage to be in at a bit as a business owner.

Yeah. You have the other parts of the business in place in a rolling. And you can spend most of your time thinking about these leadership issues. Yeah, what's interesting for me is that, God I've been studying leadership for so many years before we had zoom before we had Facebook before we had the internet.

But, Leadership is something that you do every day. It doesn't, [00:30:00] some of you just study because you're interested in it. It really is an everyday. How do you behave situation? Because, I heard someone say their job is to be, bring the best part of themselves to the table in their role as. So in becoming a leader, you're always looking at.

Stumbling things that you've done or, you know, things that didn't quite go the way you think, or how are you responding to things. And that's all that self

contemplation. That's where leadership lies Exercising it as you're trying to build those layers. that's it, that's what you're doing.

All you're doing is leading every step of the way. And then now, then you get to back, sit back and study. That's great too. Right? Yeah, so good. Well, Marlin, thank you so much for your time today. I know that I am very excited for your book to finally come out. Do we have a sense of, of timing there or just some.

The late [00:31:00] summer, somewhere between August. I believe so. Yeah. I'm really excited about awesome. Well, we'll have to, we'll have to figure out a way to bring you back on once the book is ready to be shared with the world. Thank you again, everyone. we'll see you, either next week or the following week here on the business growth advantage, we are starting to.

Enter into a new phase of what this show looks like. So starting in may, we're going to start to kind of wind down these guests interviews that we're doing. It's been a while since I've done more solo episodes. So we're planning those coming up for you. some exciting updates for you soon. A brand refresh that may or may not be happening, by the end of may.

I'm excited to have announced all this good stuff with, again, my good new friend Marlin here. if anyone has any questions wants to get in touch with Marlin, maybe ask her what, resources she has available while you're waiting for her book to come out, please don't be a stranger in the comments.

[00:32:00] Let her know Marlin. Thank you for your time. Joey was great to talk to you as always. Thank you so much. All right, bye everybody. We'll see you soon.