

Ep #33: Strategies for Success with Art McCracken



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With Your Host

Allison Watts, DDS

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Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. Allison believes that there are four pillars for a successful, fulfilling dental practice: clear leadership, sound business principles, well-developed communication skills, and clinical excellence. Allison enjoys helping dentists and teams excel in all of these areas. Each episode she brings you an inspiring conversation with another leading expert. If you desire to learn and grow and in the process take your practice to the next level, then this is the show for you. Now, here's your host, Dr. Allison Watts.

Allison: Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* podcast. I'm your host, Allison Watts, and I'm dedicated to bringing you masters in the field of dentistry, leadership, and practice management to help you have a more fulfilling and successful practice and life.

Hi, Art, it's good to have you here. Thank you so much for joining us.

Art: Hello, Allison.

Allison: I'm going to go ahead and officially introduce you. Art is the founder and CEO of Synapse Point Consulting, a highly-regarded firm specializing in leadership transformation and team dynamics with great success in taking practice leaders and their teams to a higher level of performance than they ever thought possible.

With extensive experience in organizational management and transition work across many business sectors, his firm brings an inspiring and fresh approach to effective leadership. Art is a member of the nationally recognized speaking and consulting network. I know Art personally and I also can say he is quite a cook, quite an artist, and quite a planker.

Art: That works, yep.

Allison: You're married with three kids, right?

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Art: Yes.

Allison: You have two girls and a boy. I know that you lead some pretty cool retreats. I haven't been able to go to any of them but I see the pictures on Facebook and I know you have sent me some information and you do couples retreats. You've worked with quite a few dental teams, right?

Art: Yes.

Allison: You've been in dentistry for a while too.

Art: I have. It's fun work.

Allison: Yeah, we're so happy to have you here. Thank you for taking your time to share your wisdom with us.

Art: Thanks for having me.

Allison: Is there anything you want to say before we start?

Art: I think you said it all. I'm a diversified guy but my passion is leadership and helping teams perform at higher levels. I thank you for your gracious introduction.

Allison: Absolutely, I thought you were going to say planking was your passion.

Art: No, I'm thinking of giving up planking and taking on Prancercising, but I haven't made the shift yet.

Allison: The leap, oh my gosh. Anyway, Art and I had a fun trip where we would just kind of plank all over the place. It was really silly. So anyway, I want to start with a question. Art and I have talked about how we would start off this call.

It's kind of a two-part question, but I'm going to ask it the way that you had sort of framed it when we talked originally. Which was, why would someone want to be led by us? Right? That's

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the question. Why would someone want to be led by me? You would ask us, why would someone want to be led by you, right?

Art: Right, correct. I think it's an important question to ask and throughout the content of tonight's broadcast we'll get into some of the dynamics that help us as an individual leader challenge that paradigm but also understand our responsibility. It's a question that we need to be willing to approach on a very personal level and understand the people around us. Recognizing that leadership is simply defined as just having impact and influence over another. People have an option to follow or to not follow.

The question that we ask ourselves is why would somebody want to be led by us? So it's an important question to keep in the back of your mind as we go through things tonight. Certainly consider that response carefully because to some degree throughout our life we'll all have an opportunity to lead and oftentimes we're leading, what we refer to it as accidental leadership, where somebody's following us whether we've set out to have them follow us or not. So it's a good question.

Allison: Yeah, that is a good question. I wasn't even thinking of it that way, but that's cool as a background, just kind of keep it in the back of our mind. You do have some key elements or some ideas about how we can help shape the desired outcomes and progression of our business, yes?

Art: Yes, certainly. One thing that we might start with tonight is a framework for some of the core components that can help write business outcomes. We hear oftentimes buzzwords like mission statements and vision statements and purpose statements or we'll hear the term culture thrown around quite often and team. These are all elements of human capital management.

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It's interesting that the bulk of the companies that I've done work with, I won't classify it as primarily found in practices, but across all different industries, one of the common elements that is missing in an organization and even at those organizations that are performing at a high level is oftentimes a vision is very vague or unclear. There's certain confusion and lack of cohesion around a common path.

If we look at the framework and some of the terms that I want to cover tonight, vision would be one of those. What's the difference between vision and mission? Strategy and what strategy is. Then culture and how that plays into this whole picture, and ultimately, the outcome. Then what's the team dynamic? What can it be and what can it not be? Then we will hit some of those terms and general ideas.

But I think the first one I would like to address is vision. I'd like to give you a real clear example, a concrete example, at least in my own mind's eye I look to as a prime suspect in what a true vision statement can really be and what a vision can drive.

If we look back in the history of American people and we look at what happened when this country was founded. Originally the Pilgrims came to America on assignment from King George of Great Britain. King George decided that I want to expand my empire and so I'm going to send some people over to America to figure it out, set up shop, and help us establish another section of our empire.

Well as soon as they left the shores of Great Britain and headed on their way to America they were sent with troops and supplies. They got to the American continent and it was almost immediately that they were cut off from those supplies. In fact, the troops started to try to take those supplies back. Then America quickly became not the extension of the empire but the

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black sheep of the empire, really a banished ground that King George was no longer willing to support.

So the groups of people that were here had set up some self-governing bodies within their individual states and colonies. Started to manage themselves and try to use the resources wisely that they had and remain. It wasn't too long after that that they started to perish. In fact, it got bad enough that the supplies were so low that nerves and the tenseness of those people became very active, almost to the point of pushing them into battle against each other.

So as representatives of these groups of people came together to discuss the challenges that they had in hopes to come up with a solution, they came together under a common purpose and that was everybody was mad at King George. They didn't like what he had done to them, they were mad. They felt like it was an atrocity against them. So the common ground that was the foundation of the Declaration of Independence really became a statement of distain and a statement of being completely fed up with their former ruler.

So they came together and that Declaration of Independence became a declaration of war, a very brave statement for a group of people to make in a somewhat decimated state. So the outcome of that once they had spoken their mind and taken the big elephant in the room and put it out there and said, "We're willing to fight for our rights." Those rights were indicated or the desire for this group of people was placed in the Constitution.

If we look closely at the words of that Constitution, it became the goals and aspirations and the rights that this country would protect and fight for for many years up until today. Oftentimes when the country is confused and we're looking for a point of reference we go back to that Constitution, which if we look at

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the parallel, that became the vision statement for this country. It hasn't changed very much, a few amendments here and there but all and all it's been used as a foundation and as an element of decision-making when we have questions or concerns or are confused about something. So it's stood the test of time but it was something that the country came together and was willing to fight for and protect and still remain in that mindset today.

So that's a great example of what a vision statement is. It really becomes an internal document of an organization that should be derived from the owner primarily. You can have a team vision statement but an owner must be willing to write down what it is they hope to achieve. Something as simple as:

"I want to maintain a 30 percent profit margin on all cases that I preform or all services that I charge out."

"I don't want to work on Fridays."

"I want to be a practice that does cash only and doesn't contract with any insurance companies."

"I want to be involved in the community at X level."

"I want to provide a type of environment for my employees that has these factors in it."

It becomes a statement of again goals and aspirations but most importantly it forms the foundation and definition for future strategy. Strategy, as we identify what that is and how it kind of falls into this whole picture, strategy is the decisions that we make that will differentiate us from our competition. They also are the decisions that we make in conjunction or in alignment with the vision that we've developed. Once we've developed that vision, it's important that we share that with our team and that we ask for active participation in achieving the items that are indicated in that vision.

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I told you that I would give you an indication of what's the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement. A mission statement is the statement that's on the wall that everybody would expect you to say and do and act like. Oftentimes we'll read them on the wall of an establishment and we'll just kind of think to ourselves, "Yeah that makes sense. Yeah, that's the way this company should act and treat me as a customer." But it really doesn't mean much.

We've seen good mission statements but in the end the vision statement is really what drives the decisions of a business. It's that internal statement of effort and activities that will help achieve both short-term and long-term goals. So that's the differentiation between the two and a good idea of what vision is.

Allison: Cool. So you're suggesting that the owner—I've heard both ways and there was actually quite a little debate on Facebook at one point where one dentist and/or team member was saying it should come from the doctor or the leader. The other people were arguing it should be a team event. I've done it both ways. You think it could be done either way but the owner has to have...

Art: I think you absolutely have to have a vision that's derived from the owner.

Allison: Okay.

Art: You can have a supplementary vision that's been put together as a team but this comes back to accidental leadership or expected leadership. This an area when I do key stakeholder surveys with some of the businesses that I do coaching for, oftentimes there will be confusion as to the direction we're headed as a company or what does the owner really want?

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I know what my responsibilities are, I know how my success is measured, I know the metrics that they're tracking against my performance. But at the end of the day, I really don't know where we're going and why. So that challenges a couple of different paradigms but most importantly they're looking for somebody to set the pace on where we're going as a company and what are we willing to protect.

There's a concept to consider again that deals with culture. If we look at the very simple definition of culture, culture is just the way we do things around here. It's the work ethic that we embrace. It's the way we interact with each other, the things that we celebrate as a group. It may be a culmination of the ethnic backgrounds in a certain area. But there are certain components that come together to create this environment of how we do things.

There are two different ways to look at culture. There's culture by design and there is culture by default. Culture by design would imply that we have an awareness of the culture, we are willing to protect it, we're willing to enhance the culture, and certainly we are doing things on purpose and not by chance.

Culture by default would be the exact opposite. It would be determined by the whims of each day. We would have employees that would come and go that may influence the culture. It starts to get into some of the human capital dynamics of a business, but it's left to chance. It often changes and you'd have one experience one week and a different experience the next week. Lots of confusion and lack of clarity around who we are as a group of people and how do we interact with each other?

So culture is important. At Harvard, there were two studies, I guess two scientists, with Harvard that wanted to do a study on culture and the impact on the return on equity and ultimate

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profitability of companies. They studied these companies over time and they looked at these common factors of culture by design and culture by default. What they found was those companies that understood their culture, that at least had some reason to be concerned with it and paying attention to it and working on it, would experience between 400 and 800 times greater return on equity and greater results than those that didn't pay attention to culture.

That's one of those buzzwords that we hear out there in the business world now, but it's very real. Culture by design will reap, it will produce great, great rewards if we choose to pay attention to it. When it deals with key stakeholders, if we talk about the key stakeholders of your business, it's not just the investors that have a physical stake in your company.

As an owner you're a stakeholder, you've got employees that can be stakeholders, customers, patients. You might have key vendors that you work with on a regular basis, you may have some community involvement. But there are many people that you can touch the lives of or that are impacted by your business and we consider those key stakeholders.

When interviewing these key stakeholders, it's important to understand and ask them about their experience in the culture. What are they feeling? What are they sensing? What are their experiences they're having on a regular basis? And be sensitive to look at those experiences and compare them to the cultural outcomes that you desire. If they are non-congruent, then we have work to do.

There's a cycle that was taught by Steven Covey's organization, the Franklin Covey approach to organizational effectiveness. It's a process that reverse engineers the outcomes and the gaps that exist between stakeholder needs and the results that we desire. As we look at those gaps and

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identify that they exist rather than trying something new, we go back into the architecture of our company and we look to see where the root cause of that problem is.

So we would move from results to culture or the behaviors that are happening and look for gaps there. If that's intact, then we move further upstream into processes and structures and system. We look at the environment, understanding that there are people involved at each of these levels. If the processes are intact, we go to strategy and we look at the decision-making that's happening in the organization. How are those decisions being formulated or the building blocks of those decisions? Oftentimes if that strategy is weak, it will again move upstream into mission, vision, and values. That's the core foundation for changing the effectiveness of your organization.

As you work backwards now and look forward in that process, we plug those gaps and we start to strengthen those areas again in principal strategy, processes, culture, ultimately creating a better alignment between the stakeholder's needs and the results that we're getting.

Allison: I don't know if it would take too long or if there's an easy example that you can give, but can you play that out? So like some result is happening and it's not what you want, right?

Art: Yes, let's think about a stakeholder name. So if we use the patient as an example. We'll use a kind of customer service as a general concept in this, the customer, stakeholder, or patient has a specific expectation of customer service. Maybe through a survey you realize that their experience in that environment is poor. So you identify, okay, my desire as a business owner is to have great customer service. When I establish that there's a gap between the needs of my stakeholders and the results that we're actually getting, I've got to try to figure out why that's happening and where we're falling short.

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So the first place I would look as I work backwards or I reverse engineer what's happening is I would look at the culture and the behaviors. Are we incenting the right behaviors? Are we promoting and setting the example for the appropriate behaviors? If the culture is broken, that's a place to fix immediately and oftentimes ending in a greater result.

If the culture is one that the general mindset is customer service is priority number one, then let's look at some of the things that might be causing that. Oftentimes when a group of stakeholders, internal stakeholders, so say the team gets a survey back that's adverse. It's adverse to their own paradigm or the lens that they view their world through. We oftentimes will see this where we'll get these surveys back and we'll disagree with them.

We have to understand that perspective is relevant to the person that voiced their perspective. We have to be willing to honor those perspectives and understand that it's what they see, feel, hear, and touch, and we have to believe that that is what's happening and compare that to our own perspectives. If we're in denial that things are not happening the way that we would intend them to or we believe that the culture is well established and that customer service is priority number one, then let's try to drive deeper and see if there's something else that's causing this gap in results and stakeholder needs being met.

So the next place we would look to is processes, the structure, and the systems. We may have an external billing company that is being rude to our customers on the phone. That is maybe the precipice of these complaints or these challenges that we're getting or this poor reputation. We may have a poor flow in the office or we may have too much paperwork at the front desk. There are certain things that aside from the cultural norms and how we interact with people, there may be a system

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or process that's causing that stress. So we look at the environmental factors.

If we haven't been able to identify anything there that's causing the breakdown, the next place to look would be at our strategies. What are the decisions that we're making? And oftentimes if we have a system that's broken, it was the result of a decision or a strategy that was made to go with that system or to implement that system. So maybe we need to look at our strategy and how we make those decisions and why we would have made that decision in the first place.

If we're unclear on that, then let's go back up to the very top of the cycle and that is, what is our vision? What are the values that we embrace? And what is our mission? If we can look at that and again go back and make sure that we're well-founded in each of these areas, we may find that the vision was a little unclear or there wasn't a specific value set that we established that caused us to make decisions appropriate in our strategy work to put the processes and systems in place that would help drive stakeholder results.

So it's just a way for you to troubleshoot and see where those challenges are coming from. Oftentimes, it may not be the result of the people. It could be a system breakdown. There's an acronym that we use oftentimes in helping coach communication. It's an acronym that you can take and use right away, and it's one that does two things. It will help you troubleshoot where the confusing and contention is coming from but it will also help you create cohesion, collaboration, and clarity.

The acronym is GRP. It stands for goals, roles, and procedures. So if we have confusion or we have challenges, we start with procedures and systems. If we have systems that are not

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working, we take it another layer back. Do we have roles that have been misaligned or unclearly defined?

If you have two people working side by side that absolutely hate each other but they have the same goal that would be the G in this acronym, they have the same goal we can give them specific roles and they can achieve the goal. If we have a goal that's unclear and they're on different pages on that goal, then chances are we're probably never going to achieve the outcomes that we're hoping for and the systems really aren't going to matter.

So those three components or areas, that again, we can back into and see where the breakdown is and what's causing the confusion. We may have people that are on the same page with their goal, their roles have been identified, they know exactly what they need to do to achieve that goal, but the systems do not support the achievement of that goal. So we have to fix the systems and that may be a source of contention or confusion.

Those are two methods, or two systems that you can look at to establish, again, the gaps between stakeholder needs and the results that you're currently getting.

Allison: You said the resource for the backing the thing out the gap is from something from Steven Covey?

Art: Yeah, it's a Franklin Covey approach. It's referred to as the Organizational Effectiveness Cycle. It deals with leading organizational change. You may be able to Google that and find it online. It's one of the systems that they've used extensively in their consulting efforts and work with companies to help teams identify what's working and what's not, and how to reengineer the processes and the paths around new implementations or even existing organization modification to achieve the results that they desire.

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Allison: Cool, thank you.

Art: Sure.

Allison: Did I get you off track?

Art: Nope, that's good.

Allison: Okay, good. I don't remember what you were talking about before but I do have another question. I was curious how you see la vision and culture, how you see those things related.

Art: Sure.

Allison: Or really I guess what I'm looking for is how you, you're talking about culture by design and culture by default.

Art: Yep.

Allison: How do you see that people create their culture by design? And how does that relate to business?

Art: Sure, it's interesting, I just had this conversation with a client yesterday morning in a coaching session. What we were identifying is what's the natural progression of these terms and the concepts and methodologies? Vision will always be the primary or cornerstone or foundational piece of organizational success. If we have vision, then at least we have a starting point we know what we are working towards.

Culture, culture and strategy is kind of the chicken and the egg argument. I believe that decisions can be made when we talk about culture by design. Strategy is making a decision to do something. So if we have culture by design then oftentimes that would indicate that we're making choices to enhance and maintain a certain experience or way of doing things. But I believe culture would come directly after vision. Culture I believe, oftentimes, Chuck Blakeman talks about culture as

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being a well-represented or well-indicated as it aligns with the values of leaders and the values of the owner.

If you have an owner that doesn't pay attention to the metrics, that believes that people are a dime a dozen, then you are going to have a culture that oftentimes parallels low levels of success, not much attention to the results, and heavy turnover. You can see how the values and the beliefs of an owner often play out into the culture and shaping the culture. In fact, Chuck has argued that culture happens anytime you have more than two people assembled together. You're going to have some sort of common interaction and environment.

So when we're looking at culture by design what would that look like and how would that translate into this whole picture? When you're hiring, you're making decisions to look at somebody's skillset on one side of it. But the other side of it, you're looking for fit and you're gauging that fit based on maybe how they're going to interact with the other people on the team. Is their work ethic going to be up to par with what we expect? Are they going to be drivers? Are they going to be self-motivated? Whatever factors we have in our mind of what the right team member is.

Oftentimes when we go out and recruit we're looking for the right fit. In fact, one of my favorite instructions that I was given by an early mentor was, hire slow, fire fast. Take the time to find the right person and when we realize they're not the right person then move them on and help them find the right place for themselves.

Culture by design would certainly be an area that we would focus on the team that we have there because of the interactions. It would encompass the things that we celebrate as a group, the things that we join together on. So oftentimes

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it's interchanged with strategy. Culture by default is just letting things happen. Whatever happens, happens.

If we have somebody come in to work with us that maybe isn't the right fit but we needed that spot filled at the front desk and they're showing up to work on time, they're really not that friendly, but you know what they are filling that need and I don't want to have to go through the hiring process again. So we just allow it to exist. We know that it's not the right fit and oftentimes that misfit can influence the organization and oftentimes align the organization temporarily with their own personal culture and work ethic and attitude and view of the world.

So again, a culture by default would be allowing things that are non-consistent with our vision to take place and shape the experiences that people have with our business. Culture by design would be a congruency in following very closely with the vision that we had in mind making sure that we have the right people.

It goes into Jim Collins' discussions on having the right people on the bus in the right seats. We'll head in a proper direction if we can do that. So culture is driven by the people and it's driven by the values and beliefs of the owners and the people that associate with each other.

Allison: Thank you. Yeah, that helped. I like what you said about it being driven by the values. That makes sense to me. That would be the biggest thing is having them fit and be aligned with your values.

Art: Sure.

Allison: Right.

Art: Yep.

Allison: Okay cool.

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Art: So if we continue through the kind of the stair step of these terms and how they play into the practice, we talked about vision being primary or foundational. Culture being an early strategy or a fundamental, the unspoken strategies that help us achieve our vision. Then strategies in and of themselves, the decisions that we make day in and day out that have short-term and long-term impacts.

Some of those strategies might be the way that we approach our patient consults. It might be what are the key relationships we're developing in the community? It may be the way that we track results. Do we have a scoreboard, do we not? What is our method of delivery when it comes to case presentation? It could be in the way that we've decided to answer the phone.

It could be in the technology that we purchase or that we adopted. It may have to do with, are we ahead of technology or are we behind technology? Where are we at in that whole picture? Strategy to use social media and marketing. A strategy to replicate leadership at different levels. Those are all active decisions that we're making in hopes that they will differentiate us from the competition and provide lasting impact and sustainability for our businesses.

Systems would be a subset of strategy. There are systems, you know, we have practice management systems, we have customer resource managers, we have tools, we have a website, we have pamphlets, different tools and resources which again are supplementary or complementary to the strategies that we've put place, the culture that we've adopted. If we have a culture of education, then we embrace education. Then strategically we would make decisions to bring educational components into the business and certainly provide systems and learning at many levels.

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Then the last two components of that would be, what are the desired outcomes that we have? That's something that we always need to look at. What are the desired outcomes? Are they consistent with the vision? Have they changed? Again, is that foundation still strong? Then what are the present outcomes we're achieving?

Realize that a vision, it doesn't have to be set in stone. I used an example of one that hasn't changed very much but a vision can be revisited, it can be adjusted, certainly in the evolution of a business owner there's a life cycle. There's an environment that exists when you're brand new and trying to grow a business and practice. Then there are those of stability and plateaus and time to bring in a new partner or an associate. Then certainly looking towards selling a practice or retirement.

Each of those may take on a different set of goals and aspirations that are shaped or noted in that vision document. Sometimes when we make those strategic decisions it will provide an opportunity for us to step up and lead through that transition or lead through that change but also to solicit the teamwork that needs to be in place to drive the results against that new vision or path that we've developed.

Allison: I'm kind of going through that right now. It's interesting with the redoing my vision. I'm kind of curious, I don't know how to take a poll but I'm wondering if everybody on the call, I guess you guys can push *2. Does everybody here have a vision, believe it's important? If you do, if you are doing that, I'm just curious if that's kind of a—I don't know what you find, Art, but I'm going ask you in a second.

Art: Qualify that as a written vision. Not just in your head.

Allison: Yeah, written vision. I have four hands, I'd say about half of the people.

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Art: That's impressive. I'm happy to hear that. It's not often that I find business owners that have very clearly defined written vision that's been shared with their team. Their team is aware of their role and helping accomplish that and they've bought into that vision.

Allison: Yeah. That's what I was wondering. I'm starting to do a little bit of coaching and I always think this conversation is kind of like everybody knows that. You know? But I think you're right. I think a lot, and I would say even for myself right now, mine is not very clear because we've had some transition.

Art: Sure.

Allison: So we're in the process right now of reworking it and kind of figuring out how everybody fits into it. Are they even aligned? Are they even in alignment and agreement with it?

Art: Right. Well oftentimes even if it's written it hasn't been shared with the team. Is the team familiar with it enough that they understand either their role or their opportunity in that vision? They see their place in it. Just as you brought up Allison, you're in a place of transition and taking on some new ventures and you have a team that may or may not be in support of that. That's okay.

But in order to have a cohesive team that's engaged in a common goal, we've got to have that vision that's been clearly identified and giving them the opportunity to say, "Yep, I'm in," or "nope, I'm not. That doesn't fit my own personal vision for the future." And that's okay. In fact, that's the environment that we would hope that we're building a cohesive enough team that the communication is well founded in looking at fit and looking for future opportunities for contribution.

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Allison: Nice. So I'm curious if you had mentioned something when we talked about what ingredient must be present in order for business owners and teams to thrive?

Art: Yeah.

Allison: Is that something we've already talked about?

Art: I'm going to throw the secret ingredient is leadership. People know about leadership. They hear about it. They try to understand it. There's been hundreds of thousands of books written on leadership. I don't think people have it figured out yet. Leadership again is having impact and influence over another. The secret ingredient I believe, and if you look at those organizations that are performing at high levels, it will be a leader that understands their role in replicating leadership.

There's two different models. My good friend Bob still talks about this. The two models, the traditional model of leadership it looks like a pyramid. The leader at the top, his function or his mantra is to make sure that everybody within the organization helps and succeeds. He may view his business as the ultimate measure of that success. But everybody that I hire and bring in to my business will ultimately help me succeed, help me retire, help me achieve my goals.

Oftentimes even at mid-level management or departmental management levels, oftentimes the traditional model is: I'm at the top and anybody that I bring into the organization will never be as smart as me or know as much as me or care enough about this business, care about it to the extent that I do, and therefore will be contained within this pyramid. Well consequently, the top of that pyramid is you and you're the road block for further growth and expansion.

If we flip that model and we look at the opposite of what's traditional, it's called upside-down leadership. That is where Mr.

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Big now is at the bottom of that triangle with no cap on it. His sole purpose or sole function is to make sure that everyone within his organization succeeds.

When we look at leadership and leadership replication, I would say the secret ingredient is our ability to coach and mentor hearts and minds that value the people around them and truly look at an opportunity to mature the business through leadership replication. People that are willing to hire above themselves and hire people with greater skillsets than their own to recognize that they may not have all the answers.

I heard a great quote the other day. I was listening to one of Simon Sinek's newer presentations and he shared in his presentation, I wrote this down because I wanted to bring it to the script tonight. I think it's profound. He said, "If you don't understand people you don't understand business. We are social animals, we are human beings, and our survival depends on our ability to form trusting relationships."

His question was, "What are you doing to help the person next to you?" Effective leadership is being willing to help somebody succeed. If we have a culture of leadership and helping others succeed around us, the possibilities are limitless. It becomes a very fun environment because we're more focused on serving than we are being served.

Allison: Yeah.

Art: So that's the secret ingredient in my own opinion. The common element that I see in businesses that are succeeding or practices that are seeing high levels of success versus levels that are not. It comes down to the culture of leadership that they're embracing or running away from.

Allison: Do you think dentistry is a hard, any more difficult than any other business just because of the way that it's setup? Where

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we're just like with patients all day and we're investing that time in people. Do you think there's any difference in dentistry than there is in any other business?

Art: I don't, I think we can use the industry or the situation as an excuse to not lead. We chose to go into business. There's two levels of leadership. In fact, an interesting concept that is starting to emerge is what's referred to as entrepreneurial leadership or the executive entrepreneur. We see group practices coming on to the scene. We see less new startups or new practices being founded by a new grad out of school or even the transition rates are starting to go down. But at any level, we can choose to lead and make something better.

Again, I go back to my statement on we can use the industry as an excuse as to why we may be challenged with that or why that environment may be different but at the end of the day it's still a people business. We're asking volunteers to give us their heart not just their back.

We're looking for great outcomes, we're looking to drive phenomenal results, we went into business to achieve a couple of things. One of them was financial gain but the other one is freedom of time. If we're always attached to the business and we're always attached to the day-to-day functions and we're micromanaging it every single level, we're sure spending a lot of time doing things that are counter-productive.

So if we look at again the differences between leadership and management, oftentimes I'll find business owners that they went to school to be a dentist not a business owner. Or they didn't want to be a HR guy, they didn't want to handle payroll, they didn't want to deal with the benefits and deal with managing people. They just wanted to show up and do dentistry. That's what they love to do and there's nothing wrong with that. They know where their passion is. But understand

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that as a business owner it doesn't exempt you from all those things. At the end of the day they still need to be done.

So the difference between leadership and management, management is babysitting. It's very tiresome and it will weigh on your mind and eventually turn into a major annoyance and that will show up in the way that you interact with people. If you have to manage or if you have to babysit, you've made hiring mistakes as Jim Collins would say.

Leadership on the opposite side is not babysitting, its providing vision and direction and helping a team succeed. So there's vast differences there. If you find yourself getting sucked into the management mode, get off that treadmill. It's a pretty tiresome treadmill but you have to change your paradigm and you have to start to bring leadership as an element into your business so that you can regain that passion that you once had. And that you can have people around you that understand the opportunity to lead and direct and to take responsibility on their shoulders and to think like a stakeholder as opposed to an employee.

Allison: Nice, I don't have any questions, Art. I thought that was great.

Art: No questions? Okay, let me leave us on a quote by Harold Whitman. I think this was appropriate in regards to our own personal journey that we're on and the opportunity that we have to make something great and to take control of the situation. Harold Whitman said this, he said, "Don't ask yourself what the world wants. Ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

So with that quote in mind, I would challenge you to take on the challenge of leadership. Understand that you have the ability to impact and influence others for positive. Start with a vision, don't be afraid to pen it and write it down, have it free flow. It

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doesn't have to be a certain format. Just write it down and then share it with your team and ask them to support that.

If they're willing to engage at level, and make sure that it has components that bring value to them as well. Then from that vision, continue to make good decisions. The strategic decisions that will help you differentiate yourself. Then review often the results that you're getting and gauge them against what you desired at the beginning. If there's gaps, troubleshoot the gaps and continue forward. The more we look at the outcomes and results that we're getting, the more attention we're paying to the culture that we have and the focus on that design, the greater results that we'll get.

So I'd encourage everybody to do that. You have a great opportunity. Thank you for being the entrepreneurs that you are. This is what drives this country. It's what the troops that go into battle when asked what we can do to pay them back for their sacrifices, they'll tell you, "Live in a free land and continue to thrive and be entrepreneurs and make decisions that have impact to others." Thank you everyone for being on the call. Thanks, Allison, for having me.

Thanks for listening to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists, with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. For more about how Allison Watts and Transformational Practices can help you create a successful and fulfilling practice and life, visit transformationalpractices.com.