

EXPERT INSIGHT: Myths about “finding your purpose” + what to try instead | [Transcript](#)

Intro:

Right now one of the biggest concerns for leaders in the social sector is the wellbeing of their staff.

From Pro Bono News and Top Five Movement, this is the Leading Generous Teams podcast and I'm Clare Desira.

As the founder of the Top Five Movement, I've worked with thousands of leaders across 40 countries and I've seen how challenging it is to lead teams at the best of times, let alone right now.

COVID-19 has had a seismic impact on the social sector, and this is taking its toll on the people working in it.

So this show is dedicated to you, generous leaders who recognise that the resilience, mindset and mental health of your teams has never been more important.

Hit subscribe now to never miss an episode.

And if you can't wait to start building your team's resilience with our free tools, head to www.topfive-movement.com/tools to get started.

And of course, for all of your social sector news head on over to www.probonoaustralia.com.au.

Clare Desira: Hello, and welcome to another bonus episode of Leading Generous Teams. These episodes are designed to bring you some expert insights and expand on the conversations we've been having with our generous leaders around mindset, resilience, and wellbeing. We aim to leave you with some extra tips that you can try yourself and with your teams too, of course.

Today, I want to talk about purpose, goals, and how we can bring a greater level of ease to our lives. In our workshops, we often work with teams on identifying and shifting those underlying beliefs and thoughts that can lead us to being stuck, navigating tense relationships, and more focused on the unknown rather than where they can get results or make a bigger difference. We work with teams on identifying and shifting those beliefs.

We also work with clients on proactively adding in more helpful, encouraging, and productive thoughts into their lives. And one of the ways that we do this is with goals. There's no better way to be able to increase our focus on what we want to bring more of into our lives than setting goals. Now, there's some really common kind of theory around setting goals, and we're going to flip that on its head today.

We're often asked about finding our purpose. It might be someone quietly pulling me aside after a

keynote speech or someone quietly dropping into the inbox to say, “I want to move into more purposeful work.” And our recent interview this week with OzHarvest CEO, and purpose advocate, Ronni Kahn, prompted people to start thinking about this too. As coaches, Dr Kate Cashman and I, from the Top Five team, are aligned with Ronni’s thinking, that we actually already have the answers that we need. We don’t always know how to find them and what to do with them and where to start applying them, but we actually believe that we know what we need know already.

In our fast paced, 24/7 world, our purpose can often become busy-ness. Coping and surviving and getting on with it. And really, we can get stuck so easily in that treadmill of busy-ness. Also, finding your purpose and setting a goal to find your purpose can be one of those grand elusive dreams that can actually distract us more and put us in the waiting zone. It can leave us thinking and saying, “I’ll be happier when I find my purpose.” Like it’s some external thing, an external thing that you need to discover.

So I want to flip that idea on its head and look at the goals you’re focusing on to bring more purpose in your lives as they are right now. To do this, I want to share two stories. I want to take you back to almost 20 years ago and I was having my first leadership and personal development experience. And I was sitting down and going through the process of setting some goals. And through this process, I was really thinking back to what had lit me up when I was younger, what had really made me more excited about life.

And one of those things was, as a kid or a teenager, I really loved rallying people around a cause and getting people involved in supporting causes in lots of different ways. I drive my friends crazy by doing the 40 Hour Famine one week or doing the MS Readathon the next week, just trying to bring people around any cause that was happening. I really loved the idea that it kind of disrupted the mundane and it disrupted our lives as teenagers and young people that we’re so focused on ourselves and got us actually thinking beyond ourselves for a moment.

And I’d actually kind of squashed, in growing up, I’d squashed that love. And I hadn’t really been doing it much at that time. And so, by slowing down to go faster in this program that I was attending, I remembered about the joy that I got from rallying people around a cause and connecting people with volunteering opportunities or fundraising opportunities. And so I set about bringing more of that into my life again.

Flash forward about seven or eight years later, and I was in a role that I couldn’t even believe was happening. It was a dream role. My role was to actually manage and run a team that looked after a national employee volunteering programme. So the employees for the organisation I was working for, had paid volunteer days each year, and it was our job as a team to connect them with community organisations where they could use their time and skills volunteering. Every single year, we connected millions of dollars of in-kind time with hundreds of community organisations. When I set that goal to spend more time rallying more people around a cause, I had no idea this role even existed, but somehow, I’d been using it as a guide to help with decision-making.

So here I was in this dream role, everything was going really well. We were making great progress. On paper, it was amazing. And when I told people about my role, it was amazing. And I almost couldn’t believe it anytime I tell that story. But what a lot of people didn’t realise was that I’d been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition, and I was really struggling. I was bubbling along in a state

of burnout and something needed to change. And so, I came back to the idea of goals and I didn't need more performance type goals, that's not what I'm talking about here. We'd ambitiously set those around connecting with more organisations, with more in-kind time.

But I needed to set a goal around what my work meant to me, how I was going to show up and how I was going to bring more purpose into it every day. And so, I didn't set a goal to get a pay rise or a promotion, or to make more money, or to set another quantifiable goal, which often people do. I set a goal to work with love and purpose every day.

Now, as you can imagine, I didn't head into the head office and yell out, "I'm going to work with love and purpose every day!" Can you imagine? I would have been kicked out by security before I'd had a chance to pinch any stationary. But every day, I took deliberate steps to work with more love and purpose every day.

And so, that sounds really fluffy, right? And how can that be a quantifiable goal? Let me tell you what it looked like. When it came to working with more love every day, I had to put practical steps in place to look after myself better. As I navigated this health challenge, but habits and actions that would last well beyond me working out this new way of living. I wanted to remember to be generous with my time, skills, and experience, which is something we can forget to do when we're feeling really shaky and really tired as well. So every day I looked for opportunities to be able to share and add value. Before every meeting or every conversation, I just took a couple of moments to think about and re-connect with why I was there, whether it be an objective to turning up to a meeting, or whether it be picking up the phone and talking to someone, it was just that slow down long enough so that I could check in around, why did I want to be there? And who did I want to be when I was in that interaction?

The other thing I did to work with more love was actually put time in my diary to recognise progress. That was recognised progress of our team, it was recognised progress around how I was leading and what I was doing, and was to recognise progress around our work overall. And so there was concrete time in my diary to actually be able to do that. So often we're just, tick, finished something on our list and onto the next thing. And it doesn't support us. The way that we live doesn't support our brains to train in new ways, so recognising progress became a really important role of living out this goal too.

So that gives you an idea of some of the practical things I did to work with more love. Well, what about purpose? To work with more purpose every day. On a day when I was feeling good, I sat down for 25 minutes and I wrote down in my notebook, my why for doing this role, why did I think it was important How was it supporting people? What difference were we actually making in this role?

And writing that down on a day when I felt great, meant that I had it there for on the days where I didn't feel so great. And in fact, to support me through that time, I read that out every single day before I started work, my why for doing the role, and it really helped me bring things up mentally a level, and show up differently. Rather than getting bogged down in the nitty-gritty, I was able to keep the goal of this work front and centre and keep things in perspective.

Why did I set this goal? Well, so often we're chasing the feeling, not the outcome when it comes to a goal. I might take this idea for a second, if we're setting those typical workplace goals, I get a pay rise or get a promotion or finish this project, so often what we're doing is we're setting achieving that goal

at a future time, which may or may not happen.

But when we flip this goal setting on its head and think that we're actually chasing a feeling, if I get recognised with a pay rise or a promotion, or when I finish this project, we're actually chasing a feeling, not necessarily the outcome. And so, once we get clear on the feeling we're chasing, we can actually then build more of that feeling into every day, which is what I did with bringing in more working with love and working with purpose.

So, when you think about your work, how do you most want to feel? If you were to set a goal that said to work with something and something more every day, perhaps it's work with more confidence and clarity every day or work with more joy and focus every day. If you were to set your own version of that goal, picking two feelings. And adding them into the sentence, work with something and something every day, what would it be? How do you want to show up? How do you want to feel? What is the most important way for you to feel when you're doing the generous and important work that you're doing?

Once you know how you want to feel, then take some time to explore these questions. What do those words mean to you? What are those feelings mean to you? And how will you know when you've got more of them in your life? Then think about, what could you do more of and less of to bring more of those feelings into your life or into your working day or into your meetings or into your presentations? Wherever you really need the most, sit down and actually do a stock take and think about what you already know and where you could bring them more into your life.

And then, think about how you can actually add those ideas into your calendar. This is where we can really take this fluffy idea into a really practical and productive actions that you can take to really support and bring more of these feelings into your day. If you keep doing the same thing, you get the same results, right? This is about actually putting in your calendar, those actions.

Now, I haven't got a magic wand here, so of course it doesn't mean if you set a goal to feel confidence and clarity that you're not going to have shaky days, or that some days you're not going to feel confident and clear. But when you focus on feeling these things, more often than not, and bringing in changes that can allow you to access those feelings more, guess what happens? You feel better, you show up differently, you're more purposeful, you're going to have a bigger impact, and you can make more strategic decisions, and believe that you're more capable of more than you ever could imagine. And you can also see new ways that your skills are valuable and transferable to purposeful work.

So which one of those do you want more? Is it feeling better? Showing up differently? Feeling more purposeful? Having a bigger impact? Because with commitment and change, those things are absolutely available for you. And that is when you truly you have a ripple effect and lead generously. Now I should mention that when I look back at the programs that we were working on, that employee volunteering program, even though I was leading with that seemingly fluffy goal or a goal that some people would think is fluffy, over a couple of decades of the program, you can actually see that the time that I was leading the team in that way was the biggest increases that that program's ever seen before or after that time. So this stuff actually counts.

Now, if you were already doing purposeful work and you want some extra tips, then absolutely head on in and read our podcast partner's resources. Pro Bono Australia, they're the place for community

news, events, and jobs, and you only have to be on their site for 30 seconds to be inspired by other people living their purpose and to learn and to get ideas of new things you can bring into your life.

You also might like to work with a coach to bring your idea to life. Perhaps you want to find your purpose, or you've got some ideas already that you want to bring to life to live more purposefully, or perhaps you're looking to bring more confidence, clarity, joy to your life. Then reach out to us at Top Five and we can set up a 20 minute chat and see if we're the right coaches for you.

That's all from us today. We're wishing you the most purpose filled and love filled week. It's not a fluffy concept, as you know now. We'll be sharing another CEO interview next Tuesday, it's a special one, look out for it. But for now, thanks so much for listening and we'll see you soon.

Clare Desira: As we wrap, I want to say a big thank you to all of the generous leaders and their teams out there, making a difference in our world, especially right now.

I'd like to say thank you to the people of the Kulin nation, from the Country where this podcast is produced, and of course I want to say thank you to you, our listeners.

Be sure to subscribe to the podcast and never miss an episode and if you're looking for some tools to get started with straight away, we've got some for you. Head over to topfivemovement.com/tools. For the latest social sector news, head over to probonoaustralia.com.au.

And for now, we're wishing you the strongest mental health mindset and resilience as you head into the rest of your day. Have a good one.

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