

EXPERT INSIGHT: The waiting zone that many of us don't realise we're stuck in | 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 on over to topfivemovement.com/tools to get started. And of course, for all of your social sector news, head on over to probonoaustralia.com.au.

Clare Desira:

Hello, and welcome to another bonus episode of Leading Generous Teams. This is our final bonus episode for season one. In fact, our final episode for season one. And 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, mental health, and wellbeing. We love to give you some extra tips that you can try yourself and with your teams as well.

Today, I really want to talk about a time when I worked in paradise. Now, we have to wind the clock back nearly 20 years to this paradise, but it still feels real to me. The sand was white, the palm trees aplenty, and the water was crystal blue. I was an activities and entertainment officer on South Molle Island in the Whitsundays.

By day, my role was to feed the tropical fish with the guests, take bush walks, run golf competitions, and every day at 3:30, my role was to go and pick up a coconut from somewhere on the ground on the island and meet the guests at the coconut splitting spike, split that coconut open, and hand out fresh coconut. Happy days. And by night, I called bingo, danced in the staff show, and ran trivia nights. It was a load of fun. I deferred uni for a year and I was on an adventure of a lifetime. Our meals were cooked. Our dishes were washed. Our bills were paid. And for a measly \$13 a night, our staff accommodation was just metres behind the expensive beachfront guest accommodation. As a 20 year old, you can imagine this really was paradise. But even though we worked in paradise and really had very few responsibilities, people still complained. Complaints like, "I'll be happier when this busy period is over." "I'll be happier when the season changes." "I'll be happier when the guests leave." "I'll be happier when one of my colleagues leaves."

If people complained there, it's no wonder that people complain when they're in a regular old workplace, and say things like, "I'll be happier when I get a pay rise." "I'll be happier when I get a promotion." "I'll be happier when a tricky boss or an annoying colleague that grinds my gears leaves."

When we say, "I'll be happier when," we're parking that feeling of happiness to a later date. We're putting it on hold and we're hanging out in this gap between our complaints and some future time when you'll be happier. That's a waiting zone, and it's so easy for us to get stuck in. Since that time, I've spent nearly 20 years learning about this space we create, this space between where we are now and the elusive later time when you'll be happier. I've also dived in fascination to that space that we create between knowing what we could do to look after ourselves better, or to bring more energy or confidence to our lives, and actually doing those things, applying those things, that space between knowing and doing.

And over this time, I've learnt quite a few things and they've been things that have really shaped my life with, but also this organisation called Top Five Movement. Our generous guests have touched on many of these themes too. And I want to just share a final few thoughts with you this season.

The first is positive thinking just doesn't cut it. Telling folks to be positive doesn't work. It's boring and it's outdated and it can invalidate people's feelings. And the only thing it can inspire is a collective eye roll. And still, our brain has a negative default and influences how we turn up to every opportunity, relationship, and day. So if positive thinking and negative thinking are not the answer, then how do you get the best out of yourself and out of your teams when, by default, you're thinking negative thoughts, even if you don't realise it?

Because the missing link to getting results and supporting your team to make the biggest impact in our view is what they think when they walk through the office doors in the morning, or when they log on from home, or when they face a problem, or when a colleague grinds their gears. We believe that the missing link is what people are thinking, because that goes on to influence how they feel and how they show up. We love creating environments where your teams can truly say how they're thinking, feeling, and the best part, make choices about how they show up. It's so simple but it's so powerful when we see so many light bulb moments when people recognise and realise the choices that they make and the influence that they have for the things that happen on their watch. So I wonder, what choices have you been making about how you show up lately? And what thoughts and feelings are fueling that behaviour? And what choices have your teams been making lately? And let's remind them that there is one.

The second thing I wanted to mention today is you've never been busier than you are today. You've never been more connected, your to-do list has never been longer, and time can feel like it's constantly running out. We live with a lot of adrenaline these days. That perception of 24/7 communication and urgency all the time can wear us down. It can become the daily grind and we can all be living it. Busy-ness can be our purpose, but it's so important that we don't let our to-do lists and our busy-ness become our purpose and the only thing that we need to get through or connect with in a day. We believe the only way to break free from the daily grind is to learn a new skill, which is slowing down. At Top Five, we call it "slowing down to go faster." And when you learn how to do it, you start feeling at peace during your back-to-back meetings and growing inbox.

Slowing down to go faster is about pausing before you approach that colleague that grinds your

gears, taking a breath, and owning how you're going to show up to that conversation. Slowing down to go faster is taking a moment to study your ever-growing to-do list and finding the highest value thing that you can do instead of just impossibly trying to churn through everything. Slowing down to go faster is taking the time to listen to your team and support them in new ways. This is something so many of our leaders have talked about being fundamental during this time.

Three ways you can immediately slow down to go faster with your team, include taking the time to write a top five list every day. This retrains your brain. By simply picking up a pen at the end of the day and writing down five moments worth remembering from that day is one of the most powerful activities and ways you can spend your time. This is not about rainbows and lollipops. It trains your brain to expect the good in your work and your team and your industry, even on the busiest days and even in the depths of change. This little habit can support you to move from feeling like you're treading water and catastrophizing, to actually seeing the progress and problem solving in new ways.

The second is, do one thing at a time. Give your brain the opportunity and your mind the opportunity to be present. Use the Pomodoro Technique. Scrap procrastination and scanning overwhelmingly over your to-do list. Pick one thing, set a timer for 25 minutes, and just focus on that thing. Chances are, it will be complete when your timer goes off or you'll be so absorbed in it that the procrastination around that task might fade away. This is about practising how to focus.

Another idea to slow down to go faster is to grab a copy of our free To Feel List. This PDF you can print out and fill out at the start of the day instead of writing it to-do list. It helps your brain to look out for ways to live in the way you want to, with more grace, ease, focus, or fun, you name it, it's your choice. And this template can help you bring to life and deliver with impact on your terms. You can grab a copy of that any time over at topfivemovement.com/tools. Slowing down to go faster is your secret weapon, and the best part, it's a learnable skill. How can you slow down today so that you can go faster?

The next thought is that mindset and resilience training is not a nice idea. Proactively building your mindset and mental health and wellbeing, as well as supporting your teams to do the same, is crucial for leadership these days. We've had so many people throughout the series mention this. It's not something you should get around to one day and it's not something to add to your wishlist. Mindset and resilience training or investing in this is a must. It's fundamental to your life and your organization's work. And when you look at the research for the jobs of 2030, some of the most important skills are problem solving, analytical thinking, communication, and creativity. People have to learn on the job more than ever before, and to be able to be applying new skills as they're learning them during change as well. All of these things are going to layer on top of each other.

So investing time in mindset and resilience training today not only supports the mental health, productivity, relationships, and self-leadership of your people today, it's also going to help future-proof them for years to come. When you future-proof your employees, you future-proof your organisation. The tools and lessons from mindset and resilience work can help you develop new perspectives, raise the bar on solutions, and help your team take better care of each other along the way. The world needs this right now. If you'd like to catch up and have a chat about how we can help future-proof your team, then please book some time in my diary. I'll include a link below in the show notes, and we can have a chat any time.

Investing in this type of training isn't fluffy, it's strategic. Across the thousands of people that we've worked with just in the last year alone, which sometimes includes a lot of cynics and reluctant participants, they've rated the likelihood to use our tools in their day-to-day lives as an average of 9.1 out of 10. That link is below in the show notes so feel free if you want to talk about how we can arm your team and future proof them. As we wrap up season one, we encourage you to keep prioritising your wellbeing, mindset, resilience, and mental health. We want to say, thank you. Thank you for being here. Thank you for that focus on mindset, wellbeing, and resilience. It's such an important one. Perhaps you've learnt some new things along the way. I know I have.

And, as we know, leadership can feel like a lonely place so we've been so rapt to hear the feedback from you that some of these conversations have simply felt like great company at the moment and have reminded some of you what a generous job you're already doing. Head on back and listen to the interviews any time. Mat Tinkler from Save the Children talked about leading with vulnerability, and we had Caroline Liuzzi in episode two talking about slowing down to go faster. The formidable Jane Hill, Ovarian Cancer Australia CEO, talked about what positive leadership really looks like. And then we had the forever peaceful and energetic Ronni Kahn who heads up OzHarvest talking about living with purpose. We then shifted into Michael Graham, the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, talking about the role of connection, community, and trust. And lastly, we had the ever vibrant Rhian Miller from AIME talking about creating the life you want and supporting thousands along the way.

We have loved creating this first season for you. Thank you so much for listening, for subscribing, for sharing the show, and reviewing it to help us reach more leaders and support your fellow leaders. But most of all, and most importantly, thank you for the work you do.

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 straightaway, 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.