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LEADERSHIP & BUSINESS PODCAST

EPISODE 45: MARGARET LIPTAY – SUMMER LOOK BACK: LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

Ken White

From the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is Leadership & Business. The weekly podcast brings you the latest and best thinking from today's business leaders from across the world. We share the strategies, tactics, and information that can make you a more effective leader, communicator, and professional. I'm your host Ken White. Thanks for listening. We launched our weekly podcast series in September of last year, and since then, we've had a range of professionals join us as guests to talk about a variety of subjects. Our podcast has featured CEOs of companies such as the Hollywood Reporter, Billboard magazine, Red Lobster, Gateway, Universal Health Services, Honeywell, and others. Professionals, executives, and professors from a variety of backgrounds have talked with us on the podcast. They've shared their expertise pertaining to leadership, communication, career management, social media, marketing, and personal branding, innovation, company culture, and many other topics. Well, now that summer is upon us, we thought we would look back at our series and repost and replay the top four episodes based on number of downloads and feedback we received from you and other listeners. This week in the second installment of our Summer Look Back series, we feature an episode with one of our most popular guests, leadership coach Margaret Liptay. Recorded in November, Liptay talked with us about leadership presence and the leadership trilogy. Here's our conversation with leadership coach Margaret Liptay on leadership presence.

Ken White

Margaret, why don't we start by talking about what a leadership coach is and does? I'm not so sure people really understand that.

Margaret Liptay

Sure, Ken. The way I look at leadership coaching, I view it as opening up possibilities for the clients that I have. I look at it as them taking them from a place of I can't to I can or I won't, but I will. Now you might ask how do I do that. That's done through, of course, lots of engagement conversations. It's through assessments. It's through practice. And let me give you an example, and I use this with my clients all the time. When I want my clients to

really improve around something, I usually use a sports analogy such as golf, and I say to them you know, most golf bags have 14 clubs in it for a reason. You need to use all the tools at your disposal. So what I try to do is introduce them to those tools. I try to say to them, listen. You can't putt with your driver. You can't drive with your putter so let's figure out what you need and how you're going to go about improving your behavior. Now that's not always that easy. And it takes a lot of practice. It takes rigor, but we do it, and we do it together. But it's not about me. It's about them. And that's very clear from the beginning. This is your responsibility to look after your own future, and that's what they do.

Ken White

And when you and I were talking before we recorded, we talked about you mentioned the term leadership presence, and that's something that you discuss with clients. What is that?

Margaret Liptay

Well, leadership presence there is a formal definition, and we can get back to that in a moment. But what I like to say the definition of leadership presence is it's once again having people step into possibilities so you can have a leader who is not present, and it's obvious. A leader who is present, is engaged, is empathetic, is self-aware, is interested in your story is helping you with your story. A leader who is engaged and who is present is with you in every way through their voice, through their expressions, through their body. So that opens up possibilities for both of you. You're allowed to be vulnerable. You're allowed to be courageous because you're also allowed to be curious. So leadership presence gives you the ability to do things once again that you couldn't do before and see things that you couldn't see before. Now I view leadership presence as one of a trilogy. To me, if you're going to look at the whole concept of leadership. There are three important component parts. There's the technical skill that's a given. If you're going to be a good leader, you have to have technical skill. The second part are leadership competencies things like problem-solving, critical thinking, flexibility, adaptability, good communication skills. That's the second. The second ring of the three rings. The third ring is leadership presence. Because, to be honest, if you don't have leadership presence, you don't know how you show up. You don't watch your words. You don't watch your behavior. Then you can have great technical skill. You can have great problem-solving skills, but you negate those by your very presence. And the other aspect of leadership presence that I think is very important is that it's not what you say but how you say it. It's not what you do but how you do it. And that's a nuance that some people miss. But it's not the words. It's your body language. It's your expressions. It's your smile. It's your eye contact. It's your listening skills. Those are all the things that drive leadership presence.

Ken White

Of the three in the trilogy, technical skills, leadership competencies, and leadership presence. One more important than the other? Are they equally important?

Margaret Liptay

They're equally important but as respects leadership presence. If you don't have leadership presence, you could be the smartest person in the room with the greatest technical skill. But if you don't have leadership presence, those words and that skill will fall fallow because people will realize that you're not listening to them. You're not open to other comments. You're not open to other ideas. If you're not present, if you're not listening, if you're not engaging, if you're not having a conversation, then you're selfish. You're not selfless. So my opinion is without leadership presence, the other two could very well be weaknesses, not strengths.

Ken White

Am I correct in assuming that some may be newer leaders will have the technical skill because that's why they were sought out in the first place and maybe will possess some of the leadership competencies, but it's the presence that's missing.

Margaret Liptay

That's exactly right. And that is something that needs to be practiced just like that golf game. It just is a question of practicing. The beauty of leadership presence is everyone can have it. It can be contagious. One person having it leads to others having it. Many people can have it, but it is something that requires practice. And just like in coaching, what we try to do is get practice to natural. That's the whole concept. So after a while, you don't need as much practice. You know, when you're gonna putt, you're gonna use your putter.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

You know you know what club you're going to pull out of your bag depending on what your shot is. That's the same thing with both coaching and leadership presence. You know how you should show up in different circumstances.

Ken White

If I'm a lousy putter I know it. I look at my scorecard and it tells me that I four-putted, right?

Margaret Liptay

It's good self-reflection.

Ken White

What about how does a leader determine or anyone determine whether they lack leadership presence?

Margaret Liptay

Well, well, that's a really great question. If you are open you will hopefully get feedback. You will go to your peers. You will go to your leaders. You will go to your family and ask them how they think you show up. Do your words match your actions? Are you a good listener, and by good listening, I mean there's, you know, three levels of listening? There is listening when you're already forming a question. The second level is you're listening and you are kind of listening and leaning in a bit and then there's the third level the global level. Are you really listening, watching body language, watching the other person's expression, and also paying attention to what's not said not just what is said? So if we could take even that global listening skill to both our families and to our professional life that would be huge. But you don't know you don't have it until you ask somebody.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

So feedback is really important. Assessments are really important. Self-reflection is really important. And you'll also find out if you're self-managing well. Lots of emerging leaders seem to have challenges around energy management. They emotionally hijack themselves, or they self-sabotage themselves because they don't know how to manage their energy and manage their persona and manage their vision, if you will, of themselves. So I would encourage emerging leaders to reflect and, at the end of the week, say what did I do well, what did I not do so well, and what will I do differently tomorrow? And that might give them some sense of what they could do better. But asking people going to Ken White and asking him how do you think I showed up at that meeting.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

Being vulnerable, being courageous enough to ask the question and then accept the feedback and then come up with a practice to fix it. That, again, would inculcate great leadership presence, and it would become contagious because people see the change.

Ken White

We'll return to our conversation with Margaret Liptay on leadership presence in just a minute. Today's episode is part of our Summer Look Back series, where we're reposting and replaying the top four episodes from our Leadership & Business podcast series. Leadership & Business is brought to you by the Center for Corporate Education at the College of William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. The Center for Corporate Education can help you and your organization get to the next level by designing a leadership development program that specifically fits your needs to learn more go to wmleadership.com. Now back to Margaret Liptay and our discussion on leadership presence.

Ken White

When I was in my twenties, I worked in television, and I would ask people how especially my wife, how did I do. It didn't matter what I did. She would say the same words every time. Oh great, or oh fine. It was tough to get really good feedback from anyone who cared about you. So I'm making an assumption here. I assume that's where the leadership coach can be so unbelievably effective because you're going to tell it like it is, aren't you, to your clients.

Margaret Liptay

That is absolutely true. It's rigorous. It's not. We're not there to be a friend. We're not there for talk therapy. We're not there to tell people how great they are. We're there to have them self-reflect. And then through powerful questions and through really digging a little deeper, and I call it peeling the onion, finding out what's getting in their way. And you know, a typical question a good coach will ask is when someone expresses or describes their behavior in a certain situation. The easy question for me, and then I go quiet, is so, how's that working for you.

Ken White

Yeah, great. That's great.

Margaret Liptay

So the feedback from a coach is critically important, but if you have good leaders around you, which is where leadership presence comes in, giving and getting good feedback, then your leaders should be in that position. They should not be afraid to give you constructive, you know, nonjudgmental feedback. Feedback that is objective around a certain behavior.

Ken White

Why is listening so really actively listening? Why is that so hard for many leaders and executives?

Margaret Liptay

It's probably a skill that we haven't all worked on very well, and actually, listening at a global level is very selfless. It really is putting yourself in sort of suspension, and I think that's very difficult for most people to do. To just suspend their own thoughts, to suspend their own judgment, to just say let me be and be in this person's space and listen to what they have to say. And also, most people aren't very good at observing body language unless it's a severe anomaly. Otherwise, they're not thinking about a person's body language, so if you get to be pretty good at studying body language, studying what I call the secret weapon, people's smile. How often does a person smile? That's a secret weapon that people don't use often enough. How bright are their eyes, and then what are they saying? How does the content match their physicality?

Ken White

You said a couple really cool phrases, energy of voice and energy of body. Can you tell us more about energy of voice? Have you worked in that area? What do you mean by that?

Margaret Liptay

Well, energy of voice gets back to this whole concept of energy management, and we all know people who walk into a room and are very loud. The question is, are they effective?

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

So you have to understand the energy that your voice brings. You have to understand who you're speaking to. You have to understand when your voice should be louder when it should be softer when it should be more directive. When it should be more quiet, that's also very hard for people to do. Your voice does bring energy. We've all been at meetings where you know. I call it the talking head syndrome, the monotone. You know someone's talking in one monotone, monotone, monotone, and everyone falls asleep. The content of whatever that presentation was, you'll leave the room you have no idea, or you made two notes, and you could care less. But the real issue is when you have someone who is has energy from within and is centered and present. Their voice has the energy. They're excited. They're excited to be there. You're excited to listen. It's conversational. You're sharing it. It's a real connection. That's the beauty of energy of voice. It's that connection.

Ken White

And that passion and people love that, don't they?

Margaret Liptay

They do love it.

Ken White

Like talking to somebody who's passionate about the company.

Margaret Liptay

They do love it, and it's contagious.

Ken White

Yeah.

Margaret Liptay

People leave that meaning, and they're jazzed. They go spread the word.

Ken White

Yeah.

Margaret Liptay

It's fabulous.

Ken White

Yeah, absolutely. Earlier before we recorded, you and I talked briefly about how the workplace is changing so much, and we have different generations now. Wow. And it's so interesting because those generations are unbelievably different. You know, the boomers from the millennials is such, and we'd do an hour on that. In terms of your leadership coaching, what are you seeing with the generations? What does that mean for leaders today?

Margaret Liptay

Well, you know, if you really do dig into the demographics, it's going it's a very interesting time because 10,000 baby boomers a day over the next nine years are going to be retiring from the workforce. That means there's going to be an exodus of talent and an exodus of intellectual capital. Meanwhile, we've got the millennials coming along, who are as big in generationally and demographically in size as the baby boomers. And right now, 15 percent of millennials are already leaders in firms. So the way I look at it we have a real responsibility to bring those leaders along very quickly and to have them appreciate the

fact that there is this demographic shift going on but also to have them appreciate the fact that there are at least going to be five different generations represented in the workforce. And what I love about that is think about it, think about the storytelling that can go on between a 21-year-old and a 71-year-old, and those 71-year-olds are still in the workforce.

Ken White

Sure.

Margaret Liptay

Think about the exchange of information if everyone came to the party with leadership presence, openness, nonjudgmental, listen to stories, and learn from those stories. I think it could be fabulous where we run into a little bit of a challenge. I'm thinking is with social media. Social media may or may not be the best mechanism to demonstrate leadership presence, however, if you think about it. Why not. Why can't you write a fabulous tweet? That's that's empathetic. That's kind. That's putting yourself in the other person's shoes. Why can't you do that? Why can't you write an email that isn't full of outrage and vitriolic statements? Why can't you write how are you doing today? How are you feeling today? How can I help you today? Why can't we do that? So I think leadership presence actually dovetails into even everything to do with social media, which of course, is the space of millennials for sure. But I think they can also learn and want to learn. The one thing that I'm finding with millennials and I think they get a bad rap, frankly, because clients I've had who have been millennials and the emerging leaders that I coach. They are hardworking, diligent, wanting to learn, inquisitive. They have tons of skills, and they want someone to help them get better. And that's the beauty again of leadership presence. They want to learn about leadership presence but they want to be with people who are leadership present. And I think that's just going to be a win-win. The more leadership presence we can develop the more leaders we can develop. Once again, it can be contagious because we everyone is complaining. All the major firms are complaining right now that there are not enough leaders. They don't have enough leaders for the work that they've got. So we need to accelerate the system. We need to make this trajectory for millennials a lot faster than maybe the trajectory was of the baby boomers. And the only way you're going to do that is through mentoring and coaching, teaching them about leadership presence. Giving them the opportunity to learn skills that they have and that they want to have and also about those leadership competencies. So they too are going to be part of the trilogy.

Ken White

When when we talk to our MBA students about professionalism and winning, we talk about communication, especially we say be and other centric communicator. And it seems like that's the common thread. Everything you're saying is it's about the other person, isn't it?

Margaret Liptay

It's selflessness if you just come back to that. And that's what we coach to. That's what leadership presence is all about. It's about being empathetic and trying to understand the point of view of the other. And if you can do that and be other-focused, I don't think you would write a vitriolic email. I don't think you would say something awful on Facebook. I don't think that you would show up and treat a colleague with disrespect if you thought about them first and you second. I think it would be a much better environment for everybody. And that applies to a generational gap too. There shouldn't be a generational gap. Everyone can learn something from everyone else.

Ken White

That's our conversation with Margaret Liptay, and that's our podcast for this week. Leadership & Business is brought to you by the Center for Corporate Education at the College of William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. If you're interested in learning more about the opportunities at the Center for Corporate Education, visit our website at wmleadership.com. Thanks to our guest this week Margaret Liptay and thanks to you for joining us. We'll be back next week as we continue our Summer Look Back series replaying one of the top four episodes from our Leadership & Business podcast. I'm Ken White. Until next time have a safe, happy, and productive week.