Transcript

Anatomy Of Leadership Podcast

**Influence with Meridith Elliott Powell** | Episode 4 Season 1

0:00:03 - Melody King

Everything rises and falls on leadership. The ability to lead well is fueled by living your cause and purpose. This podcast will equip you with the tools to do just that Live and lead with cause and purpose. And now author of the book the Anatomy of Leadership and our host, Chris Comeaux.

0:00:25 - Chris Comeaux

Hello and welcome to the Anatomy of Leadership. I'm excited Our guest today is Meridith Elliott Powell. She's a business growth strategist, an award-winning author and a Hall of Fame speaker. She's also a good friend. She's been a mentor, she's been an executive coach to me over the years. She has an incredible background in corporate sales and leadership. Her career expands over several industries, including banking, healthcare and finance. She worked her way up from an entry-level position to earn a seat at the C-suite table. She's a certified speaking professional and designation helped by less than 12% of professional speakers and a member of the prestigious Forbes Coaching Council. Just an all-around amazing woman, an inspirational person. So welcome, Meridith. Is there anything I left out that you'd want to add?

0:01:12 - Meridith Elliott Powell

I don't think so. I think we've covered enough. I want an honor to be here and really excited about this important conversation.

0:01:19 - Chris Comeaux

Well, thank you, Meridith. So my book, the Anatomy of Leadership, which is also the name of the podcast. You were a pivotal part and gave me an incredible endorsement. So I didn't actually have the full vision of this podcast then, but afterwards I thought I'd like to do a podcast because the book is kind of 10 miles wide.

It wasn't meant to be the no-all-end-all of leadership. I was kind of tired of first-rating people. People would ask me hey, Chris, you're eating five, six leadership books. Where should I start? I would give them maybe five books. I just see the look on their face and finally I thought let me write the book that say just start here.

And so the point is is that this is really meant to be a table of contents and so I'm bringing incredible guests like yourself in and going deeper on the different subjects. And when I thought about influence, I cannot think of a better leader than you to talk about influence. And, Meridith, I don't know if you used this lesson. I can't remember where I first heard it. I actually think it was a documentary on TV. But when a lion tamer uses a chair, the reason why they use a chair to tame a lion is the lion doesn't know what to focus on. The four legs of the chair literally paralyze the lion, and I think we live at such the velocity of things coming at leaders, and I think it's a fitting metaphor, and so I'm just wondering first off, do you see that metaphor in play with the people that you actually coach?

0:02:43 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, in fact, I think leaders get stuck in one of two paradigms. Number one is I think they get paralyzed. I think, in fact, I think most people get paralyzed. There's so much coming at them that we get stuck in a fear base. The other is and it's a smaller percentage of leaders they get stuck in shiny object syndrome. I mean, they're so concerned that they should be doing this, they should be doing that, they should be doing it. So we're complicating leadership, in my opinion.

0:03:12 - Chris Comeaux

That's incredibly well said. I can see sometimes where, probably, people are even on both sides of that equation paralyzed or also shiny, so which is a perfect segue then for us to talk about influence. So, first off, how do you define influence, Meridith?

0:03:25 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, first of all, I think influence is probably right up there with communication as to one of the most important skills a leader can have, and I think that influence is the ability to lead, impact and engage people without having any authority to do so.

0:03:44 - Chris Comeaux

That's incredibly well said. Dr. Thayer used to say it in an interesting way. He would say that your leadership is a factor of literally every aspect of who you are, in other words, the weight of who you are, your essence and how it's projected into the world. And actually I had a really cool call this morning. There's a gentleman who's the CEO of a fascinating company that's bringing artificial intelligence into the hospice field, if you will. And this guy was so in assuming and it's funny he actually just read my book and he said I feel like I need to do better with influence because I don't go to conferences. But yet I was just at a conference and I was around his team and how his team represented him just struck me. So in other words, this man's influence was showing up at a conference he wasn't even there for and actually shared that with them this morning he goes thank you, that's a gift. I never thought about that. So I don't know if that resonates with you at all, Meridith, but it is beyond just where we are right.

0:04:43 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Absolutely. I mean, I think when you can influence people, they buy into what you're doing and they'll carry your message. And they're more powerful than carrying your message really than you are, because they're your disciples, so to speak, and you know how the world works. It's one thing if I have an idea I want to spread, but if I can get others to buy into that idea, that maybe have more influence over you, then that's far more powerful. But I think that leaders far too often miss. They think, because they are in a position of leadership, that people will follow them. And people maybe will follow you because they have to, it's their job to follow you, but they're not really following you, they're not really all in because you haven't bothered to focus on the skill of influence.

0:05:34 - Chris Comeaux

Well, maybe that's a good segue. So how do you coach leaders and leadership teams to use their influence? And then also, for what ends do they use their influence?

0:05:44 - Meridith Elliott Powell

What a good question. Using influence right Like I was funny. I was talking with a client kind of about this the other day. She is in an unusual position. She's a second in command in a company that is heavily influenced by the federal government. I mean, if the better their connections are in the federal government, the more successful they will be. And, as luck would have it, a couple of her college connections have wound up in very powerful positions with the federal government.

And she said to me I don't, you know, I feel really awkward asking them for things because that's sort of like I don't know, it's crossing a line. And I said let's talk about this a moment. I said what you want to do is change your industry for the better. Your industry is stuck and if it doesn't change, it's going to become the radio shack of your industry. It's going to disappear. I said using your connections, your influence, to better your own position. I'm not sure I like that, but when you can use your influence, you can use your connections to improve a cause, to change the world. By all means, you ought to be doing that all day long.

0:06:56 - Chris Comeaux

Someone you were coaching Meridith who quoted you the other day and I'm like I've never heard Meridith say this, but it was awesome. She said your "net worth is your network.” Yeah, yes, so that was that. Did I accurately quote that?

0:07:08 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yes, yes, you did. I'm a big believer that if you build your network, it will literally change your life. You know I and I know Chris. You know this probably better than anyone. You're so incredibly well connected.

But I love the fact that we are living in an unbelievable high tech world, but if you watch successful people and you study successful people and you follow great leaders, they do two things they communicate simply and they are well connected because the shortest path to get anything accomplished is through a relationship and a connection you've already got and that's influence.

Right, I mean, it's so, like I was advising my client, I said you go back to your college friends, you tell them the cause, what you're trying to do, because what you're trying to do is going to better the lives of people and then you lay into those relationships and you use the influence because you built, in my opinion, influences, trust and connection, like I can influence you when you trust me, when I connect with you and when you believe because of that trust and connection, you believe in what I'm doing or what I'm trying to accomplish, and that's influence. And so I was telling her. I said you use that influence, those you've built that trust off years of relationship to further that cause that's going to help everybody. So that's how I encourage leaders to use influence. I've seen far too many good ideas die on a vine because that leader can't get people to follow them or they don't have the connections to get the cause furthered.

0:08:38 - Chris Comeaux

I just thought of an interesting question to ask you that we didn't talk about, so hopefully you're okay with this, thank you. So I totally agree with what you said. In fact, I'm just thinking like reaching out to people. I have it, I reconnect on Facebook, but because we're in the trenches with each other, we have this brotherhood, sisterhood that I've never thought about tapping back into that network as a way to create collaborators and maybe their cause and purposes in mind. Do you see any industries where there's some almost grade schoolish type stuff? I could think totally about those people and I'd go into the trenches with them all day long, but yet there's some other segments where it's almost like middle school, like well, I'm not sure I want to help you, because will that help my kind of thing? Could you speak to that at all? Do you see that in this? I don't know if that's kind of a healthcare thing or if you see that in other industries.

0:09:31 - Meridith Elliott Powell

I wish. I think it's a human nature thing, right. I mean it's, and it is a mark of whether you really. I call it the difference between whether you're leading a division or whether you're a strategic leader. And I see it a lot with, unfortunately, c-suite level and executive level leaders, and it's a cycle. We've got a break. In fact, I'm working with a large company right now who's set to go an unbelievable second level. I mean, their company has grown leaps and bounds, but it is not. We have not scratched the surface of how far they can go.

But to get there we have to have strategic leaders in place, and what I mean by that is it's leaders that understand. It is collaboration that's going to move the company forward, not competition. My goal, like if I'm trying, chris, if you and I work for the same company and I don't want to help you be successful because you might outpace me and you might get the trophy at the award banquet at the end of the year, then you don't need outside competitors because I'm going to be your biggest roadblock to what's happening. So I see it a lot you have to. Leadership isn't a straight path. It isn't that I win every month, every year, year after year. What it is is you and I are working together, and sometimes I let you take the lead and sometimes you let me take the lead, but I understand that by helping you, it's the fastest path to help my cause get where I need to get to.

0:11:02 - Chris Comeaux

That is so well said, Meridith, and that kind of strikes me and I ask you that question is I just think of what's hanging on the edge of a knife if we don't collaborate, especially in the healthcare space. I mean, you and I used to go to breakfast and be concerned about healthcare in the area where we live and we're seeing some horrible things play out right now in our area and I just think about what's at risk. I'm going to have to leave at the end of today's taping. My wife's mom died and I saw her healthcare journey. I mean, there's so much at risk if we don't collaborate and if we can't put our personal little grade school stuff and put the greater good ahead of us and say I want you to win. If we both win, then great, but the greater cause and purpose is more important than both of us individually, then you know what we probably shouldn't be in this space.

0:11:51 - Jeff Haffner (Ad)

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0:12:28 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, absolutely, I think about, I always think, I think about, I think about, I always think, I think about.

War and the military are such great places to look for true examples of leadership, and when you think about that, you think about world wars or times that we've been in. There are literally countries that sacrifice themselves for the greater good, because in the end, if they hadn't done that, if troops hadn't sacrificed themselves, where would the way of life we be at the end of the day? Now, luckily for us, we don't have to do anything that dramatic, but we do have to say I may not be here when the answer to healthcare is complete, but if I was a part of moving that cause forward, then better and I think that way so often as a leader is that my job is to help the people around me be successful, and maybe that's going to wind up positively for me. Maybe it isn't, but at the end of the day, it's about doing the right thing. I mean, imagine where we would be as a country right now If we actually had politicians who led life.

0:13:29 - Chris Comeaux

Amen, sister. And you know something that occurs when you listen to you, Meridith, Dr Thayer. So we say is that the greatest heroes are always the heroes that slay their own dragons. And so if we get really down to bedrock, it's like our own personal dragon sometimes are inhibiting us to hold the greater good and say, look, I want you to win. And it's like we need to tap the inner hero in all of ourselves. I love that you just took it to that, because I think that's what's going to take in healthcare they're all going to have to tap the inner hero.

0:13:58 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, absolutely. I think you know, one of the greatest things that ever happened to me was I was working in corporate America. I was last job I'd ever had in corporate America. It was a few years before I left and I screwed up pretty badly. I mean a pretty. I'd misfired on something and I'd lost the faith of my boss and I'd lost the faith of the chairman of the company and I pretty much I thought my future was over. In fact, I was waiting for them to show up and fire me, but they didn't.

And with nothing with I had no ability, I felt, to further my own self interest. So I poured my energy into my team, not because I was a hero, not because I was morally a good person, but because I didn't think there was any use focusing on me anymore. I thought I'd burned those bridges. So I focused my time and my energy on helping the people around me become more successful and by the end of the year I wound up with a big promotion and a bonus. And I've never forgotten that. I've never been able to get back to that selflessness state ever again. I've never much, as I have tried, but that is probably the peak of the best I have ever been as a leader because I had nothing left to lose or to gain, and so all I could do was help other people. And if I could ever be a leader like that again, I will accomplish great things. But I've never my ego's never let me get that far again.

0:15:26 - Chris Comeaux

Wow, that's incredibly profound. I did. The frost line from the poem comes to me. You took the road less traveled and it made all the difference.

0:15:34 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, exactly, and, like I said, I wish I'd done it as a morally wonderful person, but unfortunately that wasn't how I got there. But to think about this, you know, Chris has probably been 20 years ago and it stuck with me.

I've never forgotten what it felt like to truly lead completely selflessly. I think it's a very hard state to get to, other than I think parents do it all the time, I think because we just want what is best for our children more than anything, that we don't even come into that equation, and I think the goal is to take that into the workplace.

0:16:11 - Chris Comeaux

Well, I think it's also difficult too, Meridith, with the success that you've had, this is a double edged sword. It is hard because I mean, you've got incredible things you can look at. So maybe people there's no way in hell I'd sit here and judge you on that comment, because I identify with that the more good you do with the platform you've been given, using your influence, you're going to get affirmation in that and it's hard to say then it's totally selfless. But it's like you have a different perspective then and maybe it's a different form of selflessness because you have a different level of understanding of who you are and what you bring to the table. Would that be a better way of describing what you're describing?

0:16:54 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, I think so too. I also think that one of the beauties of getting older and getting into the more, into the legacy parts, of your career.

I don't have as much to prove anymore and you sort of have to feel that way too. I mean, you know we've like and you don't have. You don't have as much to lose. You almost have more options and a little bit more comfort in it because you do have those accolades and those achievements behind you and I think this is a more rewarding time to be, because you can be more passionate and committed to being influential, because you're not as hung up on what others would think or the promotion you might not get, because you know other options will be that and you've weathered some of those storms before and there's there's a lot of confidence in knowing I've been here before and you know what it turned out okay.

0:17:42 - Chris Comeaux

Maybe another way, it just occurred to me. So we have our leadership certification course under Tileash University that we teach and we've been using this metaphor because, you know, I'm a little bit older, a little bit more gray hair now. You're used to look like you're 30. But it's like every time you get to the top of a mountain range and all the work to get to the mountain range and you had, like you know, the one that you talked about, where you're totally selfless, I mean, that probably felt like the challenge of a lifetime. But you get to the top of that mountain range and guess what? There's a whole nother mountain range in front of you and it's a different type of mountain range. It's got different topography than that initial kind of ascent.

And I'm thinking of a lot of people I've read before. I just finished the book about Elon Musk, which was actually fascinating, by Isaacson and just you know, many people have that experience and we kind of look for that first like incredible. It's like the crucible, that first crucible, but the crucibles come in different forms as we go in the journey and it's using your influence differently throughout those. Is that resonator, would you?

0:18:43 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, absolutely. I always say to my clients we use that too is that I think it is so important for leaders to help their team members understand that when they take on a new role or they take on a new job, they're back in the valley and the valley is painful. The valley is uncomfortable because you've got to climb way uphill, but you never could have gotten in that valley had you not climbed the first. You know the first mountain and I love the language of it. I'm so. It's so important to me.

I don't think that leaders communicate enough. Help people understand why they're feeling, how they feel or what they're going through or what they're experiencing and it's not going to make people like it anymore, but just understanding that I won't be here forever and this is part of the process and I need to do it, All of a sudden makes it okay and acceptable. I can do it because this makes sense, Whereas all people are feeling is I used to be king of the hill or I used to be at the top of my game, and now everybody thinks I'm an idiot and I feel like an idiot. That's an uncomfortable place to be and I think leaders miss how they need to guide people through challenging times in business, and we're experiencing more challenging times probably than I know we have ever experienced in my history.

0:20:04 - Chris Comeaux

That's so well said, Meridith. The show for enamel leadership right before yours was Quint Studer, and Quint was talking about this at the orientation level for new people coming in healthcare and he was saying almost exactly what you're seeing, just using slightly different words. Like I'm a brand new nurse and I see this nurse doing just incredible things starting a pick line or whatever and I think I will never do that. But what they brought into the orientation is those nurses saying I remember what it was like when I was you and this is exactly what it felt like and it normalizes what they're going through. And so when they hit that barrier of I feel incompetent and we used to talk about the stages of learning.

As the first one, You're unconsciously incompetent. That's the honeymoon stage, Like you're just like whoa, I got a new job, this is awesome. But very quickly, the consciously incompetent stage that's the O and bleep stage of you start to realize the gap between where you truly are you're beyond the honeymoon and where you need to be, and that's where it's super important that the people come alongside, and I remember what it's like. You're going to get there, we're going to come alongside you, here's the tools, et cetera. So is that basically what you're describing?

0:21:09 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, it's exactly what I'm listening to you. It makes me laugh. Feeling incompetent is so painful, but feeling incompetent with other people who feel incompetent is somehow okay. You know, it's ancient. They're normalizing it. Normalizing it is really comfortable. The other thing I want to mention with that I want to listen to that interview because I'm sure it's just going to be fascinating. But the couple that you introduced me to that from Silicon Valley working on something C-Plan IT.

Yeah, I, just one of the things. I just I've quoted them like crazy. They were talking about nurses sitting on the sidelines in the state of Michigan just because of the state of healthcare and how badly Michigan needs everybody needs nurses, but these nurses won't come back and the number one reason they won't come back and the number one thing that they have been told in their work people are grateful for is nobody listened to them.

And people just want to be heard. I mean, we think as leaders we need to fix things and we avoid it because there's so much we can't fix in today's marketplace. I can't fix the fact that I don't know what inflation is going to do. I can't fix the fact that I don't know if we're going to be merged or acquired. I can't fix the fact that you know we've cut the training budget. I can't fix those things, so we avoid it.

People don't need you to fix things. They need you to listen to where they are and say I hear you, I understand. Here's a couple of things we can do, here's what I can't. But no worry in this together and I think you know, that was really powerful to me. I don't believe you want nurses to come back. I don't believe you've got to fix healthcare. They're not expecting it to be that much easier, but they do want a voice, they want to be heard and they want to say and quite frankly, you ought to listen, because they're probably way smarter than you are on how the problem can be solved.

0:22:54 - Chris Comeaux

That's so good. In fact, I didn't even get to my second question, but I think we've been hitting on it. But I just want to see if there's anything you'd add to it. But what do you find are the limiting factors or inhibitors that prevent leaders from using their influence? And again, it feels like that's the ground we just plowed. But is there anything else you would add?

0:23:12 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, I think that leaders I think, especially when goals get tight or situations get, you know there's a lot of pressure, they're feeling a lot of pressure from the top they go into control mode. They believe if they tell people what to do, if they solve the problems, if they, you know, they micro-manage, then the results will be better and truly it's the antithesis. I mean, what you need to get through difficult times, what you need to get through goals that have just been increased, is an engaged workforce and a workforce that cares, and you can't expect people to engage in care if you haven't engaged in care for them.

So I think it's our own fear as leaders that gets in the way that we need to control the process, and I feel you know we're in a succession planning crisis in this country. I mean literal crisis in this country. And not asking yourself as a leader what am I doing right now that I shouldn't be doing this time next year, and how am I going to get the team to train to? That, I think, is something I think we're so afraid to say. If I let go of these duties, maybe I'll become irrelevant in the organization. I think it's a falsehood, but it's a limiting belief. A leader should constantly be working themselves out of a job.

0:24:34 - Chris Comeaux

I don't know if you go back to this, Meridith, but for some reason I've been going back to it lately because I do think I struggle with. So Colin's called it the level four leader versus the level five leader. Right, that level four leader is that brilliant leader that loves solving problems and, like you know, I have great respect for Elon Musk. But if you read that Isaacson's book, he's a level four leader. The guy's brilliant and making calls and like it's the typical action hero movie. I mean, he is kind of like Iron man and we reveal kind of that type of.

But if you read Colin's about the level five leader, it's more what you're describing. It's not that leader that's out front making the decision, solving the problems. It's really the leader that's empowering their team around them. And you know, for me, I'll be honest, it's not that I think, well, if I I'm going to work myself out of a job, I love solving problems and I think that's where I get stuck. I don't know if you see similarly for other leaders and some of the brightest are the ones I think that struggle with it and then, if you're bright, you probably find yourself in a leadership position. Does that resonate?

0:25:44 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, I always tell leaders. In fact, this is a huge issue, I see, for leaders. I always tell leaders, I think, one of the biggest flips we've got to make in our minds we got the job because we're good at what we do. That's why you were selected as the leader. Once you move into the leadership role, that's not your job anymore. Now your job is to produce four to five people better at doing the job than you are, and you need to understand that that changed. You know I'm going to. I'm going to. I. 30 years later, I still cite a leader that we both know from the stage.

I tell the story all the time, and it's a story about Jeff Ward, and a million years ago, when you and I were both young, and so was Jeff he used to lead through the power of the question. You never went into his office without having some solution, because the first thing he was going to ask you is I don't know, that's a good question what do you think we ought to do? He was notorious for it. One afternoon I walked into his office and he had his five year old daughter, Caroline. Caroline is in her 30s now she's probably married and I asked him that question, and Caroline was standing there and she looked at her father, she looked at me, she looked at her dad, complete disgust on her face, and she said oh, daddy, do you do that here too? Because apparently Jeff was raising leaders at home. But here's what. Here's the interesting thing, Chris, is

A year later, Jeff got promoted. He got promoted to corporate headquarters, and what I realized was we didn't need him anymore, because Jeff had not taught us to do a job, he had taught us to thank you, and that is a big difference. If you are a leader in teaching people to do a job, you're not. You're not leading, you're teaching people to think. And so when he left, we were perfectly capable of running that division. We didn't need him anymore. So it's rare that I run across a leader like Jeff. It is rare because most are telling people what to do in solving the problem and they're not realizing that their job is to produce people that are better than they are.

0:27:44 - Chris Comeaux

And that is so good, Meridith, that whole story of Jeff has got like such a cool par Harvey and we think about that subject to about influence. The metaphor comes to mind to me is Quint Siro always say picture that Pebble being dropped in the pond in those concentric rings. Well, Jeff, doing what he did at the bank where you were, he was on the board of Four Seasons and cast a crazy vision. And I came to Four Seasons, changed my life. My family moved to Western North Carolina. My son is now moving back to North Carolina with the state bureau of investigation.

He changed a trajectory of all these people's lives and to me it's like a person of influence like that and I have no idea if that Jeff is aspiring to be that type of person, but being that person of influence or using his influence might be a better way to say it the ripples are just amazing and he probably didn't even know about the things I just said. He didn't know who I am or much less who my kids are. Have you changed a trajectory of our lives by being a person of influence?

0:28:44 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Well, and I think that too, I mean I think of. Like you know, I travel all over the world speaking to people and carrying a message that never would have happened had he not been the leader that that, you know, that gave me opportunity. I think the funny thing too is I run into his dad now and then here in town, and his daughter. That daughter, Caroline, now works for the, for the bank.

0:29:05 - Chris Comeaux

Oh my gosh.

0:29:06 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Doing something incredibly difficult in the wealth management area, and it's the big joke that you know that he's a greater asset to the financial institution that Jeff is, which I'm sure isn't true, but but you know he takes great delight in that because that was his job was to produce people better than than he was. And I think if we can really understand that as a, as a leader, is that because the people around us have so much potential and I can find a million people to tell them what to do, but I can't find people who can spark the potential in other people. And if you could do that, that's influence and that's value and that's leadership, and that is changing not only the company but the world.

0:29:49 - Chris Comeaux

You know something you just just made me think about. So, again, I've just finished that book. It's a pretty dense book about Elon Musk. I have no idea of Bezos if Jeff Bezos is more like Musk or a different type of leader but if you look at Musk it's much different. His leadership style is much different and you could say well, he's putting. You know his vision is to put someone on Mars, but he is still that brilliant, almost computer like robot type person. That's what the Isaacson does a great job. I mean, he paints a picture, but it's not what you're describing. And you think about that level five versus level four leader.

I think there'll be an interesting case study that'll play out over the next 10 years. You've got Branson who's. You know there's an interesting space race going through some really interesting personalities right now. And you know one hand you know Musk is actually. I think he came out the other day and said by 2029, there'll be a million people on Mars. That's crazy, sounds crazy, but if you kind of look at his style it's much different than what we're describing.

0:30:52 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah, I think you know, I think, what's so interesting about that. I love this idea of level four, level five leader. I'm going to go do some research on that. I don't know much about it, but what's really occurring? It's such a. It's such a great way to start to think about it. So easy to see, to see the difference, because I think about the space race if these guys would work together. I mean, the problem is, it's all about that.

0:31:13 - Chris Comeaux

That's well said.

0:31:14 - Meridith Elliott Powell

When I look at, when I look at this election year you know it's not just election year here in the U S, it's in 70 countries and most of the most of the elections are as volatile and divisive as ours are that it's because the politicians have made it about themselves that they truly step back and looked at the country and we're willing to do what needed to be done. I mean, the most important thing that can happen here in the U? S is for us to find a way to come together. You know that's what's going to better the organization. If you really want to put people up in space and you think that the opportunities you know to to make life better or there, then work together. Pull your tremendous amount of intellect and resources and work together, but they want to be the one who who wins, and when you're there, you're stuck. You'll never get the result you're looking for.

0:31:59 - Chris Comeaux

I think there's a great piece of wisdom. I've been actually ruminating on something that you take what you just said but put it in my space, and the hospice and powder care field. I think there's a very similar quarrel area. There is so much talent and amazing solutions and if we quit the circular firing squad and come together because it you know, healthcare is so critical for people's lives right now, so I think that's incredibly well said.

Well, that's a couple of questions Meridith and so Stephen Covey used to talk about. He kind of break influence down and he would say think about your circle of concern, your circle of influence and your circle of control. And then the wisdom was focus on that which is in your circle of control, realize that there are things within your circle of influence. So maybe I could more kind of influence it. But then circle of concern is don't put your energy there.

And here's the interesting paradox and I now feel like I'm old enough that I've seen it play out my own life Things that used to be in your circle of concern are all of a sudden in your circle of influence, your circle of control. Case in point I used, you know I've made a living now in 30 years in the hospice field. I'm part of a group that we're helping redesign what that might look like for the next 40 years. That had been crazy 30 years ago, but I've seen that play out of my own life and so does that resonate with you. To use a similar framing, or do you frame it differently? How do you coach folks there?

0:33:25 - Meridith Elliott Powell

I feel like I frame it a little bit differently, but it's the same. It's the same idea. One of the biggest shocks that I got from doing research around uncertainty and disruption and change is that success is not logical. It's got nothing to do with logic. I do not go find the organization that is the most well funded, that has the best geographic location, that sells an unbelievable product at the cheapest price. Success belongs to the leader who can control what is focused on, and I think that is fascinating and I'll give you an example in a minute.

But what I have my clients do is I think we underestimate the power of anxiety, and we all have it. It's really easy for me to say focus on what you can control. So, because you know, I get in bed at night and sometimes I completely freak out. I can't go to sleep, I'm worried about so much stuff that I cannot control. So I run my clients through an exercise that says I want you to write down everything you're worried about. Everything you're worried about, put it down. I don't care if it has to do with business life, whatever. Write it down, because I think it's important to get it out of us. We can't release things until we speak them or we write them, and then I tell them to walk away for couple hours, come back and divide it into what you can control and what you can't control. And then, when we divide that into what we can control, to get you to stop focusing on what you can't, I get you to take action.

Because I think the antidote of fear is movement. You know, like maybe I'm worried I don't have enough business next month. Well, if I make six sales calls, you know what? Nothing's happened. I didn't land a single deal. But I feel better because I did something. So that's how I handle the circle of control versus what I can't control.

Circle of influence to me is I always tell my clients let's look at the situation, like I've got a client that's trying to make some changes in an industry that's going to be very difficult, and I said let's figure out. You cannot control that, the other people won't follow you. But let's figure out where you have connections and relationships and you can start greasing those wheels, start building the connections and the influence. Because I feel like you know I don't have that much influence in hospice, but I know you. If I could start with you and sell you on my idea, then you can help get other people. So I kind of use those models. But my biggest problem with focusing on what you can control versus can't control is I think we miss the step of allowing people to state what they fear.

0:36:11 - Chris Comeaux

That's well said.

0:36:12 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Because if you don't state what you fear, it hides somewhere in your belly and it'll come up and snatch up when you least expect it.

0:36:21 - Chris Comeaux

That is great wisdom, because you're exactly right. It's almost like bringing it to the light out of the darkness or something about that, and then stratifying it and then focusing your energies. That's brilliant, Meridith. Well, Meridith, what final advice do you have to leaders about influence?

0:36:35 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Yeah gosh, there's so much that we could talk about is I would say that to realize that if you need to build trust and connection with your team and to build trust and connection, you need to listen to them, you need to validate what they're feeling and you need to instill confidence that you see a future that is bright for the organization. And it's okay that you all don't know how to get there. But I think that if I had the biggest piece of advice, do not put a strategy in place until you have built the relationship and the connection first. If people trust you and they believe in you, they will follow you off the edge of a cliff.

0:37:18 - Chris Comeaux

That is great, Meridith, and you know it's interesting. I'm kind of reflecting just my own journey and thinking about what you said. And through that relationship building the strategy starts to emerge. Because you have this amazing group of people that are bringing all these different perspectives, you get a much more finely crafted strategy and it's funny, one of our team members, so early on I would say we're on Mission Impossible because we're doing something that's never been done Teleios Collaborative Network and one of my team members created this beautiful slide of use to this day and it shows that I am and they're pushing it off the cliff, so I am possible. So they took my thing and made it so much better and that's just a beautiful little metaphor.

0:38:07 - Meridith Elliott Powell

That's so true. When I wrote the book Thrive, we use a story about whitewater rafting. And the story about whitewater rafting is that if you focus on the obstacles, you will be pulled into the obstacles and your raft will be stuck there. But if you focus on the calm water, where the raft needs to go, you will have no idea how your raft got to the water. You won't be dictating the path, but somehow you wind up in safety on a beautiful ride. And I think that's the way that we have to lead through an uncertain marketplace is to say we're in this together, we've got it, we're going to focus on where we need to go, I'm going to listen to you, you're going to listen to me and somehow we're going to wind up where we're supposed to go. And I would have maybe thought that was fluff years ago, but in the time that I have spent researching companies, I am blown away by companies and organizations that are well led, wind up in places, far better than they ever realized they could, what they could achieve.

0:39:06 - Chris Comeaux

And I think about the need of that prescription, Meridith, for the time that we live, there are so many obstacles that feel like they are kind of mission impossible. But leaders if leaders would harness what you just said, as teams, build relationships and focus, I think the impossible can be accomplished, and by golly it needs to be. I mean, we live in very fascinating times, and so I think you just wrote a beautiful prescription. Well, thank you for the work that you're doing, Meridith. You're making a difference in many different segments. I'm blessed for having many of my peers now that are getting exposed to you. This podcast is exposing me, exposing people, a lot of different industries and segments, and so keep doing the great work you're doing, helping people thrive.

0:39:48 - Meridith Elliott Powell

Well, thank you for letting me be here today. I just have so much admiration and respect for all you're doing, so always an honor to hang out with you.

0:39:56 - Chris Comeaux

Well and for our listeners. At the end of each episode, typically what we do is we share a quote in a visual, and the idea is that it's a brain bookmark, a thought prodder about our podcast subject to further your learning and growth and thereby your leadership, and hopefully it sticks in your brain. It makes it actually sticky. So be sure to subscribe to our channel, the Anatomy of Leadership, so you don't miss an episode. Check out the book on Amazon. Tell your friends about the Anatomy of Leadership. Check out Meridith's books. Thrive is an amazing book. She has a few others. It's so easy for us to rail against the world and be frustrated, but let's be the change that we wish to see in the world. So thanks for listening to Anatomy of Leadership and here's our brain bookmark to close the show.

0:40:37 - Jeff Haffner

Today's bookmarks. Success is not logical. Success belongs to the leader who can control what is focused on. Collaboration, not competition, moves an organization or a cause forward. Both of our quotes today are by Meridith Elliott Powell.

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