

## Transcript / Winning with Whiskers: A New Approach to Sales

**Melody King:** 0:00

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.

**Chris Comeaux:** 0:22

Hello and welcome to the *Anatomy of Leadership*. I'm excited today, especially excited because I have a really good friend, a longtime friend actually. So, Dawn Landry is the CEO and founder of Authenticity. Welcome, Dawn.

**Dawn Landry:** 0:36

Thank you, Chris. I'm glad you said longtime friend and not old friend.

**Chris Comeaux:** 0:41

Not old at all, actually. I swear you look just like you did when we were in high school together, which is a cool hint for our listeners. Dawn is definitely the only person who I go back that far with. So, we literally were high school teammates, classmates. In fact, both voted most likely to succeed, and she has exceeded beautifully. So let me kind of read from her bio. Dawn Landry is a two-time bestselling author and an award-winning and nationally respected business professional. She has spent more than half of her 31-year career in corporate real estate industry, excelling in business development, which we're going to talk about today, and marketing leadership positions with Houston's largest economic development organization, as well as in International Commercial Construction Companies. She works hand-in-glove with technical and operations team members to expand sales revenue. And that gives you a little bit of a hint of her many superpowers. In February of 2017, she founded Authenticity, an independent business-to-business growth strategist. And she is a Gallup-certified CliftonStrengths coach. Some of you might remember a long time ago it was referred to as Strength Binders. And so, she provides consulting, training, coaching services that optimize technical teams' engagement. That's cool, Dawn. Is there anything I left out there?

**Dawn Landry:** 2:06

Oh, no. It's a lot. Thanks.

**Chris Comeaux:** 2:16

I've asked a question. So thanks for agreeing to be on. You were actually one of my very first podcast guests before I had my book. And so in the early days of TCN Talks, thank you. I didn't know what the hell I was doing back then. And so we kind of got a clue after three or four years of doing podcasts now. And I think we actually just figured out this week, you've had 36,000 views/downloads since we've actually started doing the podcast. But again, you were one of those early folks. And when we start the anatomy of leadership, so as you know, you were very instrumental in my first book, *The Anatomy of Leadership*. And our editor is, I actually got my editor from Dawn. And so she's one of the key reasons why I had this book. But the whole point of *Anatomy of Leadership*, it's like a meta framework for what is leadership. And the first part is the why of leadership, Dawn. The second half, of course, is the what. And I framed it as the seven M's. And one of the M's is message into the community. And one time someone said, Oh, that's marketing. I'm like, it's more complicated than that. And I think of you because you have such a superpower in this area, which we're actually going to unpack. But that's the question that I just stumbled upon in one of my very first podcasts of the *Anatomy of Leadership* is what's your superpower? And then I quit asking it. And then a lot of our listeners are like, you need to ask that again. So here we are. What is your superpower?

**Dawn Landry:** 3:33

I love the question because it gets people to be really reflective in that way, Chris. I am innate I was one of those kids whose mom said, Without curiosity, we can't do anything, quite honestly.

**Chris Comeaux:** 4:13

That's so cool. You and I were actually reflecting. Again, we have so many common high school friends. We knew each other before college and anything, which is just crazy to look back. I won't tell my age. And again, you still look like you did in high school. But the word we use is like learning mode. So I could look back and go, knowing you those many years ago, you're just naturally in the learning mode. And you were sharing one of our mutual high school friends reminded you of something that you forgot. Do you want to share that real quick? I thought that was so cool.

**Dawn Landry:** 4:42

Sure. It's amazing to If you don't know how hardwired you are or you think you know how hardwired you are and you need reinforcement, ask a sibling, ask a parent. Most importantly, ask someone who's known you for years. three or four decades to remind you who you were back then. And I recently had a chance to visit with one of our former high school friends. And she reminded me that one year, I was a junior, sophomore, junior in high school. I proclaimed that January that I was going to learn a new word for the year, for the day, every day for that entire year. And I did it. And the reality is I have zero

recollection of it. I just like, That learner piece of it is hard baked in me and it continues to transcend to who I am today. I know that I want to be better today than I was last week, last month, last year. And whatever that looks like, it comes in a variety of different forms for me.

**Chris Comeaux:** 5:46

Yeah, well, you definitely have modeled that your whole life, again, having the perspective of knowing you that long. And probably another good reason why you and I have just always, we reconnected, but just have always kind of had a good connection, because we have that in common with each other. So let's jump in. When I was reading from your bio, I was just thinking of, again, another unique way of talking about your superpower. I love that you brought it down to curiosity. But your ability to help folks, you know, first off, oh, sales. Sales is a, I don't do sales. I had a friend who long time says look sales is basically trying to connect what you believe in with people that need to know about it and probably need to utilize it which is easily said really hard to do and the fact that you do it with very technically minded people like I'm reflecting on kind of your construction background etc um I've got a brother-in-law who actually is an engineer and in the very last couple of years they actually they had him in sales and Because he could technically talk about the product. But to think about your superpower of kind of being that Rosetta Stone between both, which probably a good segue, right? So, I remember when you shared the concept before it actually was called. So our listeners may not be able to see I'm holding up Dawn's book, Winning with Whiskers. And you shared with me like, I'm going to do something different. You don't know, my second book that I'm working on, you inspired me because I was wrestling with something similar with you of like, if I write this, I'm going to be bored with it. And I need to do it in a different way. And you were the final kind of push over the edge. So that's to be continued. I'm working on my second one. But man, you did it. You actually did something really different. And so I'm just curious. So, what inspired you to write it the way that you did? And how did the idea of using animals to represent different personalities just come about?

**Dawn Landry:** 7:36

Well, first off, I see people. And when I start BD Dynamics, this business development training course that I have developed over the course of the last 12 or 13 years, even before I've had authenticity for eight and a half years now. But even when I was still in-house with a commercial general contractor, publicly traded, international, that sort of thing, I was doing business development training internally with my colleagues to get them more comfortable with that outward facing component of it. And if I had a dime for every time I've heard a technical person say I didn't go to school to be in marketing and sales I went to get an engineering degree or an architecture degree or construction management or whatever else this whole dog and pony thing I don't want any part of but

the reality is our clients are sophisticated and they know that me as the full-time business development person I'm not designing engineering building anything it's incumbent upon our technical team members to be able to connect to become those trusted advisors with credibility, reliability, self-orientation, trust, to be able to make that connection so then that way I can transition the relationship to them. So, when I was doing the training, BD Dynamics training, I would oftentimes, a component of it, before winning with Whiskers, I would say, we all get to relationships in a variety of different ways. Tell me how you like to be sold to, because oftentimes if we can get to the heart of how we like to be sold to, we can figure out how we like to sell. How do you like to cultivate and advance your own relationships? And for years, like you said, I would sit down at my computer. I have thousands. I probably have 50, 60,000 words of this business development book. And I was so bored with it that a couple years ago, I was reacquainted. I was coached because I do executive coaching and leadership consulting as well. And I was coaching one of my emerging leader clients. and I was reminded of the book, Who Moved My Cheese? And it's all about change and it's a business fable. So, I... Told her about it, but then I went looking for my book and I couldn't find it. And I got it, reread it. And then I said, what if I write my business development book like a fable? And there was born Winning with the Whiskers. And then I've utilized it in my training over the last year and a half. And so probably almost 500 people have now gone through the training, utilizing Winning with Whiskers to identify which of these characters they most identify with, most familiarize themselves with and finding those ways of connecting with the people in those ways. It's called Winning with Whiskers because we all have whiskers. There's five characters in the book or six characters in the book, including the assistant. So, there's Gigi the giraffe, Willie the wise owl, her assistant. We have Stevie the sea lion and Harley the workhorse and Danny the wise, loyal older dog. And we have Rocky the robot. And when someone says, well, do robots have whiskers? Robots have whiskers. The antenna that, think of your iRobot, the, or your Roomba, the antenna that it takes not to run into things are called whiskers. So, it being able, going back to seeing people and being able to utilize it as a way for them to really own their own process of developing and advancing their own client relationships.

**Chris Comeaux:** 11:17

That's so cool. You're making me reflect. I didn't even think about this, even preparing for the show. But my first job in hospice was in Pensacola. I was young, I was 25 years old, and our hospice was in Dire Straits. I mean, it was a... the patient was critical. We'll just put it that way. But even everything within me was like, we got to right the ship. And maybe it was our good Louisiana upbringing. And most of these ladies were older, kind of middle-aged, and I was 25. And so, they're like, oh, he's like our son. And so, what I did is I just humbled myself and I went out with them on patient visits. But what I could do is look over that, my journey with them, and I became that Rosetta Stone because my job was to

help translate the financial challenges the criticality of it. What does the data mean? But then I saw what we did through their eyes. Like literally I went out on patient visits and I can now look and go, I, I had a different sense of what my whiskers were and maybe enough good intuitive sense of, I'm not going to win these folks over with like the business challenge because they were, they would tell me, Oh, Chris, this is art. And I'm like, yeah, but even an artist has to eat. We have to have our budget here. We have to meet certain metrics. But they made a huge impact. And I can look back and go, I was a Rosetta Stone. And I see kind of listening in many respects, you've been that Rosetta Stone for business development, but giving people a very practical way to get their minds wrapped around it. I assume people have really taken to the characters pretty well and probably seen themselves in it, right?

**Dawn Landry:** 12:51

As like any great engineer I'm going to generalize here. They're skeptical at first. They're like, as I start, because I start with the fable to begin with, and then we work through some exercises and whatnot in the training. But they're all they kind of like. Like they're looking at me like, what are you? And I'm like, this is not meant to be cartoonish or simplistic or anything else. Just kind of go with me. And then once, I mean, you can see the entire, because I do it at the beginning of the day, the entire day just shifts. And then I give them all their little stickers with each of the characters. I have the characters printed out.

**Chris Comeaux:** 13:27

Oh, that's awesome. Well, actually, if you're okay, we'll include that as a link.

**Dawn Landry:** 13:31

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I'll send it to you. And so, yeah, so they each have a sticker with the character that they have. want it then they began talking about it and really owning it in that way you know I love assessments like you said I am CliftonStrengths certified as a coach since 2018 and it's one of the aspects of my business that I enjoy doing but there's a complication that comes with a lot of those assessments where if you can just identify oh I'm most like Harley the workhorse like i want to get in i want to start the meeting i don't care about your kids starting kindergarten or you're trip to Costa Rica can we just get to the agenda and get in and out and done so I can get back to my computer and actually do the real work and so it's identifying oh that's unique to me I don't have to have all the relationships I just need to find the people that I gravitate and I connect with most in that way that appreciate the production that appreciate the repeat repeatable kind of standards that and procedures that I deliver overall so yeah I And Harley, he's the workhorse. He was the very first character that my illustrator provided to me. And I'm like, yep, that's like every superintendent that I've ever met in my career. And the characters

are not based upon any particular person. Some of them are more influenced than others by people, though. So, there's some fun characteristics related to

**Chris Comeaux:** 15:03

Well, that's probably a good segue. So, in the book, you emphasize just the importance of understanding yourselves and then others. So, share an example. How has self-awareness helped you maybe overcome a significant barrier in your career?

**Dawn Landry:** 15:17

Oh, Chris. So, I sit here, and I will tell you how old I am. I'm in my mid-50s. And I sit here a far better human being than I was starting off in my career, because earlier in my career, I thought everyone thought the same way. I thought everyone communicated the same way that I do. and background and all the stuff that they bring to the table. Because if we all were the same, then we would have a very myopic homogenized appeal and look and we wouldn't be able to think beyond and look around the corner to really see the value that we might be able to provide to our customers, our clients, and most of all to ourselves. That's what that's what I do in the trainings is, you know, being able to identify, hone and articulate our value, the value we provide externally to our clients and our allies and those we serve, the value we provide internally, maybe to our supervisors or the organization if we're a publicly traded organization or whatever. But most of all, the value we provide to ourselves. If we don't know our value and we can't articulate our value, then we can't persuade a decision. We can't motivate ourselves to get up in the morning. We can't advocate for ourselves and what we want to do in our careers.

**Chris Comeaux:** 17:03

You just know that's exactly why I asked the superpower question, because I think it gets to that essence of that person. Well, you've alluded to the characters. So, each character in the story, Rocky, Harley, Stevie, Danny, Gigi, so they represent different personality traits. I'd love to hear like, are you, my guess is you are so good now, you encompass whatever one needs to be played. Maybe you'll correct me on that. But how can leaders identify which whiskers they align with? And how can they use this to to up their game, enhance their leadership?

**Dawn Landry:** 17:35

Great question. I have always... I didn't intend for all of these characters to be me, but I am very chameleonic also. So, in the development of these characters, and it doesn't mean that they are all the characters that exist in the world, but in the development of these characters, they are... more me than not. And some are even more, you know, in addition, like Danny is really me.

**Chris Comeaux:** 18:03

If you look at the rear-view mirror, is that like the original version of Dawn before she got all this growing?

**Dawn Landry:** 18:08

Yeah, Dan, Danny, like going deep, customizing, individualizing the experience. Danny, the older dog is, is me. I am least like Rocky, although I appreciate the Rockies. Rocky the robot is, um hides behind his gadgets he's really big in terms of innovation and uh being a trendsetter and liking those references and that data and that information The thing that's different from me to him is that I don't hide behind my gadgets. Like he has his gadgets in his breastplate. He has a computer on his arm. He has his...

**Chris Comeaux:** 18:47

The illustrations are awesome, by the way.

**Dawn Landry:** 18:50

Yeah. And so those were very mindful. Those were very thoughtful in terms like there's a phone in his arm also. So, he hides. If he goes to a networking event, he's in the corner like... looking important. But you know, those people, they just are looking important. They're not, you know, they're just trying not to talk to anyone. And so, I'm most like Rocky in that I want to stay relevant. And that's the piece of Rocky that I can really embrace and I'm really excited about. I am also and a lot of people were surprised for me to say I am also least like Stevie, especially as I get older. Stevie is that very, very charming, very life of the party, extreme extrovert. I am an ambivert. You had Daniel Pink on a while back in his book to sell as human, which I'll give him a plug there to sell as human. He talks about the ambivert and the ambivert. And so that's one of Stevie's blind spots. I do talk about their blind spots in the book, but man, she's fun. She is so much fun to be around and knows the best part. and can put on the best defense and everything else. So those are the two that I'm least like. I am also very, very, very much like Harley, the workhorse. I have built a career. I've built a business on repeatable business. I'm so, so, so blessed in that I don't do a lot of marketing. I just have clients that have been with me for the last eight and a half years. I have relationships that I've carried. Like once I get a hold of you, like I don't let you go. And so LinkedIn was built for me. for somebody like me, like that I can constantly just be in touch with. And I call it, and I know a lot of your listeners are of a certain faith. And so, I call it Holy Spirit Business Development. And that when somebody's name pops into my head that I haven't thought of in a really, really long time, I am very intentional. If I can't contact them right there, I send myself an email because I know that there's something behind that. They might not be, it might not be business, but

it's might be something that I can do for them. And so it's being mindful of watching those breadcrumbs and following the breadcrumbs.

**Chris Comeaux:** 21:19

That's actually how this podcast got done. If you remember, you actually tweaked me and you said you came to mine. And I'm like, oh my God, you were on my mind too. So how cool is that?

**Dawn Landry:** 21:28

Yeah, no, it's good. So, you know, it's really knowing that we don't have to connect with all the people. That's the other thing that a lot of people that I encounter earlier in their careers, it was the same for me. I thought that I had to know the CEO of the firm or I had to know and everybody had to like me across the board and unilateral. Maybe, maybe not. I mean, what I've seen is that the tide is rising. People are retiring and dying. It's just how it happens. And eventually you look, you hang in there long enough and you hold on to the relationships you have at your level. And then you look around and you go, All my friends are the heads of the firms and they put you in charge. And so it's kind of crazy. But that business development at your level is definitely a thing. And then business development... At an authentic level, when you actually can connect with someone, not everybody's going to like you. That is one of the biggest misnomers that there is, is that I have to have everybody like me. And it's extracting our egos and knowing I'm not going to be the best fit for everyone. They're not my people. I need to go find my people.

**Dragonfly Health / Ad:** 22:44

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**Chris Comeaux:** 23:32

That's so, gosh, there's so many people I'm thinking I'm going to forward this podcast to. I don't think you talked about Gigi. Can you talk about just Gigi real quick and maybe go back to Danny too?

**Dawn Landry:** 23:41

Yeah, yeah. Let me finish the actual sales characters. So, Danny is that older, wiser dog. And she, I'm a dog person. So, I knew that there was always going to be a dog in the

story. But like, if you have a dog, like they know you, they get to know you, they can feel your emotions. They want you to be happy. And that's the whole point behind Danny. It's being able to sit down, look at a client eyeball to eyeball and not sell them anything. Let them know I may be across the table, but I'm actually sitting with you at the table side by side with you. I want you to succeed. I'm not here to take something from you. I'm here to give and make your life easier. And that's what a Danny does in that environment. Gigi. So, Gigi is my character for my business overall. Gigi is the client in the store. She's actually dressed like you are today.

**Chris Comeaux:** 24:46

I just noticed.

**Dawn Landry:** 24:47

She is. I'm very much Gigi. But Gigi, she's the client in the story. And for her, she can be chameleonic. And the whole point, and I'm not going to give away the story because I want everybody to buy the book. But the reality is, it's how do you get to know her? What... There's an authenticity about giraffes. They're monogamous. They can go fast, but they go slow. They're methodical in what they do and process-oriented in what they do. And so there was a natural gravitation to giraffe for me, even as a child. I had the great opportunity when I was in construction to be able to sell to the project for the complete transformation of the Houston Zoo over 15 years ago and it included a new giraffe exhibit and giraffe born and everything else and so the giraffe behind me It's actually Miles. Miles the giraffe was five days old when I met him, when I initially had my first pre-sales call to the Houston Zoo. And here he is 15 years later, still at the Houston Zoo and great. And so I attended an auction and that's a photograph that was taken for the foundation for the zoo.

**Chris Comeaux:** 26:14

I love your intentionality and you actually connected the dots. I never asked you before, why did you use the giraffe as kind of even your logo with an authenticity, that's awesome

**Dawn Landry:** 26:23

so if you get close up to a giraffe there's a soul that they have in their eyes much like a cow you know growing up in the country in Louisiana we had I got close to cows and so but they're just the eyes are just incredible on a giraffe

**Chris Comeaux:** 26:39

Well, this is an interesting segment. So, what role does empathy play in leadership? And how does understanding the whisks of others help leaders build stronger teams and client relationships? I love that question, Chris. I really do.

**Dawn Landry:** 26:55

Because one thing that I say is self-awareness about our strengths is only one piece of the puzzle. If we don't have the empathy and curiosity for who's on the other side of the table, then knowing how you're wired does no one any good. It's like saying, oh, I'm this way and you're just going to have to deal with it. It's that reality of, when friction happens and friction happens it just it happens I mean if you if you work close enough if you live close enough to a person over a long period of time there's going to be friction right and one piece of advice that I give to my clients is pay attention to the friction because when there's friction and you can feel it you feel it down like in your gut when like something like It's being able with some empathy and curiosity to throttle back and say, I wonder what that's rubbing up against. What is that rubbing up against for me? And knowing that I have to take responsibility in that relationship if it matters to me, which most of the time it does matter if it's a long-term relationship. And it's realizing that I need to figure out and give myself what I need in that situation to be able to continue with that relationship, whether it's addressing them directly or doing something for myself. And here's the example. So, I've told this story in my trainings. I've never told it on a podcast, so I don't know if my mother-in-law is going to watch this or not, but here we go. So, I love my mother-in-law. She gave birth to my favorite person on the entire planet, but you would search far and wide for someone more different than her than as I am. I mean, it's just like, I, we are not alike. And so, a couple of years ago, we went into Louisiana for the holidays and we were staying a long time. Usually, we pop in for a couple of days and we pop out. So, we were staying for, and she's been a widow for 20, 24 years now. So completely by herself all the last 24 years. So, she is like, Like Stevie, the sea lion. So, she like life of the party. She is, she processes and processes out loud all the time. It's constant words. And sometimes it's on a loop and it repeats itself. And so you don't know, am I supposed to respond to that or am I supposed to like what I, and so you just kinda, so by night three, It was too, like, I need quiet. I'm like, I don't have children. So, like, I'm used to being like quiet. And so I had brought a book. I excused myself. I went to the room. I'm like, this is crazy. Like what I knew that I needed to do something for myself. So, I was like, I do this for a living. Like, what would you do if you were coaching a client? So, I throttle back and I paid attention. There's a strength called intellection. That's a Clifton strength that is a heavy soaker and process and they need complete quiet for a while. So, I'm like, I need to give my intellection what it needs. So, the next day we didn't have anything planned. So, I got up that morning, got fully dressed, put my purse on my arm. My husband and his mom were drinking coffee and community coffee in the front room of the house. And they said, where are you going? I'm like, I don't know, but I got to get out of here. And so,

I drove around for three solid hours in complete quiet and it was bliss. And then I was able to go back and finish out the rest of the week in a lovely, in a completely lovely way. But imagine the other way. Imagine if I would have baited her and we would have gotten argumentative or I would have told her to stop talking. It's her house. Like what? Like I'm there for six days. Like what point is it for me? So, it's really owning yourself and your own position in the situation. You have to give yourself what you need. And sometimes the best thing is just to extract yourself so then that way you can reset to be back in as you need it.

**Chris Comeaux:** 31:19

That's pretty cool. One of the we we use the management by strengths I've shared with you before, like, you know, all of these pieces of wisdom. In fact, I could kind of see the MBS mapping to your characters, but I have a primary green, so a little bit like, um, The sea lion. But one of the things we teach our team is you'll qualify, I'm thinking out loud. Because people are literally sitting there going, is he telling me something to do? I'm like, this is all over the freaking map. What am I doing? And so, a simple qualification of I'm thinking out loud is an interesting way. Now, after three days, yeah, I totally understand why you would do that. You offer some incredible exercises in the book to help just the readers apply the lessons. That's what I love about the book. What's one exercise, Dawn, that maybe you'd recommend as a starting point for someone just to try and improve their self-awareness and their professional life, but also maybe their personal life. Because the cool thing is, this applies on both sides of the equation.

**Dawn Landry:** 32:15

It absolutely does. Anything that we can get to know ourselves better, anything that we can get to understand, because what you'll see, it doesn't matter which assessment you use. There's Enneagram, and you can get those for free. Whether it's Myers-Briggs or DISC or CliftonStrengths, I gravitate to CliftonStrengths the most. because it is science based it is all data based coming directly from Gallup and I have to prove it because a lot of my clients are engineer technical minded so I need all the data and the statistics and everything else but the other piece of it is that I love the nuances of it and it just explained me to me when I first took the assessment in 2012 I had taken lots of assessments before and they all say about the same thing like if you are hardwired in a certain way they There's different nuances and differences to it. But fundamentally, you're not going, you know, unless you go in it purposefully trying to trick the system. That's the other piece of it is just like, if you're dishonest in taking these assessments, then you're only being dishonest with yourself. And so the reality is, if you truly walk in with the intent of getting to know, wanting to get to know yourself better, and to be better with that understanding, much like a good book, we should continue to try to learn about ourselves and our motivations and what we what can inspire us and what can get in our

way because you know every strength is a strength until it becomes a weakness when I do CliftonStrengths there's 34 different strength categories and themes and most people by their nature go screaming down the bottom to the last five or six and go those are my weakness well maybe Or maybe not. Maybe it's the strengths that are your weaknesses. Because if we get, if we continue in our careers and we build those strengths and it becomes this big muscle and I do the exercises and I'm doing bicep curls right here. And all we're working on is our upper body. We become like Mighty Mouse. We fall on our face because we have no lower body strength. We get myopic to things. It becomes a steamroller through if we don't have any awareness of our strengths and how we're utilizing them. And so having that, again, going back to empathy of knowing when is my strength a strength and when is it actually getting in the way.

**Chris Comeaux:** 34:40

That's incredibly well said. In fact, I've said before, Don, that like something like MBS, I feel like it gets you in the gene eye, but it's still broad. Like if you want to get very specific, a tool like CliftonStrengths is like that next level of specificity. And quite often, even how we teach MBS is first and foremost, have you embraced your stress? Isn't it crazy, right? Well, recently got our employee engagement survey, Modern Healthcare Best Places to Work. Great accomplishment, right? Where does your mind go? Well, look at those crappy scores right there. Why do we go directly to that as opposed to, hey, have you embraced the positives? Have you magnified them? Have you used them to the best of your ability? And yes, there's a point that you do need to go and look at those opportunities for improvement. But if you go directly there and never embrace the stress, maximize the stress, then I think you're probably really thwarting your ability to grow and learn. I think you're probably a perfect example of that, of you've played beautifully to your strengths over the years, some of those that I know even back in the day, but I could also sense where you've grown and learned over the years. And I really did get a sense when I read the book, I'm like, oh yeah, she knows which character to be at the moment to be the best business development person possible.

**Dawn Landry:** 35:52

Exactly. And one more thing on assessments too. It's so amazing to me. I took I graduated from college in 93 degree in public relations. My first jobs in Lafayette, Louisiana were in the ad agency business. So very first job, took some assessment. Who knows what that was in 1994, right? And all I remember were the results. So they brought me in, took the assessment. They said, you were unorganized and you're a procrastinator. But they hired me amazingly anyway. And I was like, And I set it as a personal goal not to be unorganized or procrastinate. But if you look fast forward. 35 years. You look at my CliftonStrengths. There is nothing about executing. I don't have anything that even smells like executing until number 13 for me. And so it's all influencing and everything else. I

have high competition and high command. I point that back to myself to get things done. If I don't, then my to-do list, it drives high achievers crazy. My to-do list now says Mace But usually it has a date, usually it has a date, like at least six weeks ahead of time, I get things done. If it's a priority, I get it done in the time. But those high achievers that have a to do list for every single day, I drive them crazy. But I can look back and be, you know, 23 years old and have the same results as I did, you know, at 48 or whatever it was, you know, when I originally took it. So it's just kind of amazing. Don't do the math, by the way, if you're watching this and repeat, because I'm flubbing on numbers at this point. But you get it. So

**Chris Comeaux:** 37:50

So, in the book there is a client selection process where the characters learn to appreciate each other's strengths. How can leaders ensure that they choosing the right people to surround themselves with in the team or in a business relationship? the book, there's a client selection process where the characters learn to appreciate each other's strengths. How can leaders ensure that they're choosing the right people to surround themselves with in a team or in a business relationship? That...

**Dawn Landry:** 38:05

It's a great question. People leave us nuggets of who they are if we pay attention to them. And recently, I came across this article about the kitchen test for a job interview. And it's so simplistic that it is amazing. You might already know about it, Chris, but I'm going to tell your watchers a little bit about it. It is when you have the opportunity to interview a candidate and the higher ranking the candidate, the better. take a swing by the kitchen and offer them tea or water or whatever it is before you get over to the conference room that you're going to. Finish the meeting and pay attention to what they do with that coffee cup, that bottle, that whatever it is. Do they just leave it there or do they offer to do something with it? That is the test of a servant leader mindset and the test of being able to do some, that's the mentality that I want when I hire people of being able to do something, whether it's my job or not. And it's from the entitlement aspect of, and especially, it doesn't matter if you're younger in your career or you are someone that is a CEO level position. Paying attention to what do people do with that, I am amazed. I do trainings. I do keynote speeches and whatnot. I am amazed at the crap that people leave behind. It's terrible and nasty. It's so nasty. You don't clean up after yourself. It's everything. So that's one test when you have an opportunity to be able to say, is this a culture fit for me? Because it's really hard to test that if you're just interviewing a candidate, because they'll tell you the right things. The other aspect is if you can figure out what is their level of passion and their willingness to learn. We can teach lots of stuff. If you have two candidates that have basically the same characteristics and qualify for the job, it's really testing, are they passionate? Are they a learner? Are they credible and

authentic? And most of all, can I trust? When I coach leaders or even emerging leaders, the thing that is foundational that often is missing is the trust piece of it. And it goes both ways.

**Chris Comeaux:** 40:42

You know, I was, I had never heard that kitchen test. That's really cool. One that we had stumbled upon. We had such an incredible, um, her, she actually self-titled herself director of first impressions. And so, at many years where I was the CEO of the hospice. And so we would actually bring her in the debrief because she would watch them when they were actually waiting and how they interacted with her. We got lots of interesting Intel. Um, you know, and of course, you know, she always observed because they were like, it's kind of off stage, like Disney onstage versus offstage. And so that tells a lot as well. But you're not really.

**Chris Comeaux:** 41:14

Yeah, exactly.

**Dawn Landry:** 41:17

And that's one thing that a good salesperson will do also will know the second your car gets into the driveway, you are on. How you handle yourself, someone is watching.

**Chris Comeaux:** 41:29

Yep, that's well said.

**Sona Benefits Ad:** 41:30

Good employers know that health benefits can make or break your business. But while employers are looking out for their employees' best interest, who is looking out for theirs? Sona Benefits is an independent pharmacy benefit manager who partners with employers to optimize their pharmacy benefits while supporting their business goals. But by offering no spread pricing, contract guaranteed rebates, and the SonaMax program, clients are regularly able to save 20% to 35% off their total drug spend. The result? Pharmacy benefits that improve employees' well-being and employers' bottom

**Chris Comeaux:** 42:10

What challenges do you see, Dawn, that people face when implementing the principles in the book? I love what you said earlier. I could so see some of those engineers, and you introduced the characters, and I could see the eye rolls. I bet you get a lot of that. But get beyond that. The real challenges as they start, they get beyond that. And like, okay, now

I'm open to the learning. What are the challenges that you see and then maybe the ways you get them beyond it?

**Dawn Landry:** 42:37

So the biggest challenge is... knowing that they feel like they have to connect with everyone. And it's that knowing that you just need to go find your people. If you're Rocky and you're a robot, you just need to find the other robots out there, the people that will appreciate you for the time efficiencies that you're saving, for the utilization of AI that you're doing, for the trends and the innovations that you are providing for the organization. If we're continuing to struggle in connecting with someone, then you have to know when to let it go. And that's really hard for a lot of people. They don't want to let some of those relationships go.

**Chris Comeaux:** 43:26

What if you don't have the luxury? So, is this where you need a good team of people around you where all the different characters are represented? Like, okay, Dawn, I can see a robot's what's needed. I'm not a robot. Do I need to have a more ambidextrous team that can speak to all the different characters?

**Dawn Landry:** 43:40

Absolutely. So, if you don't, if you don't have the luxury of having colleagues around you that are— it's being able to— I don't want to say be willing to change because some people are. I mean, some people, it's just really hard to change. I'm chameleonic. I have always been. Let's talk high school. I didn't gravitate to any one particular friend group. I had friends with, I was friends with all the different groups. You ask me today. I have friends from all shapes and sizes and colors and diversities and countries and everything else. That's one of the reasons why I love Houston the most is because it gives me the variety that's there. But that's unique to me, and I can be that way. And it's realizing that you can ask people to try all day long, but some people just can't do that. And it's okay. We're asking a frog to fly. Frogs don't fly. They can hop really high, right? They can jump. Sometimes they can jump. But it's knowing that I'm going to ask them to do all that they can do and then I'm going to have, again, the empathy word. I'm going to have empathy when it's going to be completely difficult. It's also knowing, Chris, not everyone is meant to be that forward-facing piece of an organization. We didn't talk about it, but client retention is business development. If you can keep a client... and have that as a repeatable business all day long like the Harleys of the world, that's business development. That is foundational for your organization. And it's also the difference between the rocks and the rock stars. We can't all be rock stars because we would all be like, from a disc standpoint,

we would all be at war with each other all at the same time. But it's realizing that We need to have those rocks because it is foundational for our business too.

**Chris Comeaux:** 45:47

I want to say something and you push back if you disagree. I'm processing and just thinking of the different industries you've been in. I always find it fascinating that I end up in hospice having grown up in corporate America, KPMG, etc., And I always say that hospice is one of the most difficult areas. Business principles apply. I don't care if you're making spoons, forks, construction, or hospice, there are business principles that apply. And the hospice is also at the tail end of healthcare, which means we have to interact with all the other parts. So this is what we say, and I would love for you to push back, that using tools like CliftonStrengths, MBS, is number one, to understand yourself, But then number two, understand where you need to maximize those gifts, those strengths, but understand where you need to grow and learn because if you just stay the way you are, you're going to be so niched and we're in such a challenging area. you're either going to have a small sliver where you're going to be successful, whereas the team I will bet on is someone that's much more ambidextrous, which you call kind of chameleonic, exactly how you say that word. What we would say is you got to be in the learning mode. And here's like MBS uses colors. Like I want to leave this world where I'm a rainbow. I've been able to be so situational. I know where my natural is, but I could perform what needs to be performed in the moment. And that's the team that I would like to assemble because they're going to be successful. And then one more factor to throw in, and I'd love for you to push back. We're also alive at one of the greatest times of change. The last time this much change was the early 1900s. This is going to be even... more because of artificial intelligence and things like that. So therefore, I need an ambidextrous team. So, push back on any of that because I see the wisdom in what you're saying and also see how we take that wisdom and we morph it a little bit in how we coach it.

**Dawn Landry:** 47:37

Oh, and I love it. I mean, any time that we can have utility players where we can put people in different spots and they can thrive, it's great. But here's where here's the pushback it's knowing that there are people who are completely fine just doing the stuff that they're doing day in and day out for their entire lives and so here goes my customization it's being able to figure out who are those people and quite honestly if they're not willing to change eventually especially like you said because I know change is coming Technology, much like you talked about with Dan Pink last week, that technology, that AI, that utilization, we are going to be paid for what we know, not what we do as much. And the reality is, if we don't have people that have that. education, have those experiences that can impart those to other people and know how to use technology to be able to maximize it, then they may be dinosaurs at the end of the day. And so I agree with

you, but it's just knowing, again, frogs don't fly. Some of those people are going to gravitate to it and some of them don't. My sister's a nurse and she's an ER nurse who loves ER. She's a rare bird and she's married to an ICU nurse and they're like on the, and their kids are just like, you have to have a limb hanging off to get their attention basically. And so, but she's a utility player. She's tried, she's tried other positions also and being able to do that. And when you're talking about that specific to hospice, I'm thinking about my sister and her ability to transition and to coach and mentor and do those sorts of things. She would be one of those people that would naturally gravitate to it. But there are people that are like, nope, this is what I'm going to do. I've done it this way for the last 35 years and I'm not changing.

**Chris Comeaux:** 49:45

So again, I could reconcile thinking about the industries you've been in. I feel like your approach is much more pragmatic. That may not be, you may not receive that. That's actually not even fair because it's much more robust, especially knowing when I read it, I'm like, she's really after. If I could ultimately realize, well, what's my natural animal character and how can I grow and develop with all of them? I'd say mine's a little bit more aspirational for people. Like, can you understand that? But I think the pragmatic side is there's some people that just can't and then how do you compose your organization based upon that? Well, I want to give you an opportunity to land the plane. What key takeaways do you want people to walk away with, Dawn, and just any final thoughts? I mean, you've put just, I love the fact that you did this. I can so see how it'll workshop with you. In fact, we need to talk about maybe how to get you to do that with the folks that we work with. Because I could see it being super fun and just incredible learning.

**Dawn Landry:** 50:38

It is. And lots and lots of fun. And that's the next book is about the characters in communication and how they communicate in the different variances of ways. Because we sell the way that we like to be sold to and we communicate in the way that we like to be communicated to. And that's when, that's the common denominator when all things fall south is communication, right? But the takeaways for the book, I have several, but I'll lump it down into two. Without business relationships, we have no business. And the second thing is if we're asking any relationship to do anything for us, the number one thing we have to ask ourselves is have we made a deposit in that relationship? I have a banking client of mine and that's like further illustrated. It's when I'm when I'm coaching their leaders. It's like, what have you deposited in your people in terms of how are you leading them? Because you can't ask anyone to do anything for you if you haven't actually done and shown them the reason why they should.

**Chris Comeaux:** 51:39

That's so good. Well, Dawn, thank you. Thank you for just the work that you do. Thank you for who you are. This is a facinating conversation. I knew it would be. This was a fascinating conversation. I knew it would be.

**Dawn Landry:** 51:48

So much fun. And Chris, thank you. Thank you for always being supportive and willing to go with me on this ride.

**Chris Comeaux:** 51:54

Oh, you bet. And of course, you know, Dawn has just got some great stuff. So, this is a really good one. We're going to include a link to her book, Winning with Whiskers. Of course, we always have a link to my book. You can find them both on Amazon. So, thanks for listening to Anatomy of Leadership. And here's our Brain Bookmark to close today's show.

**Jeff Haffner / Brain Bookmark:** 52:41

"Without business relationships, we have no business." By Dawn Landry.