

# THE EMPLOYEE *Playbook:*

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HOW TO EMPOWER YOUR  
**Employees to Step Up and Lead**

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*By: Molly McGrath*

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## Introduction

After working with entrepreneurs and the team members who support them, we realized there is a missing link between the ability of an entrepreneur to connect with key employees, despite sharing the same goals. Both are committed to the business, they want the company to succeed, and they buy into the vision, but there's a very real gap in the ability to communicate day to day and produce the results possible.

Business owners are saying, "I can't get my employees to step up, to get the big picture. I can't get them to get this into their bones." Although employers might think they want people who will just do what they were told, the truth is that, when it comes to making the boss-employee relationship productive, most small-business owners really don't have all the answers either.

Employees want a job they're excited and passionate about. They want the opportunity to grow and make a difference, in a place where they can retire. They want to work where it's not just about a paycheck. Ideally they would have permission to grow and stretch, and also a degree of partnership – where their opinion is valued, if not always agreed with.

In short, the most committed among them want to become intrapreneurs, working for and with an entrepreneur, taking direct responsibility and accountability for thinking and acting like a business owner. This book will address the challenges they and their entrepreneur bosses face in making this work.

Often intrapreneurs say they buy into their boss's vision but then are disappointed to find that the boss isn't "showing up," as in really being accountable and has their head in the game, when it comes to the business. The employees hang around not knowing if they should just find another job or wait for their boss to engage again. It creates an incredible amount of stress and uncertainty for them that shows up to the boss like them not caring or stepping up.

Bosses really don't want to keep firing and hiring staff members or having them quit. They're sick of the transition and of having a turnstile at their front door. It costs enormous amounts of money to find someone, hire them and train them. Then the employer feels like a hostage, shackled to the employee, not wanting to go through that process again. Or they might keep the employee because they're just good enough.

We want to eradicate that entire dysfunctional cycle and create a new way of doing business day in and day out, when things are flowing smoothly and when they are going poorly. If you have the right tools and resources, even in your darkest, most frustrating moments, you still have this process to use as an anchor. It's a two-millimeter shift of the dynamic between employees and employers, but it makes all the difference in performance and satisfaction.

We wanted people to know that it is possible for employees to bridge that gap with you, that they can have big-picture conversations with you. As a business owner, you don't have to feel like you're a lone ranger making all of the decisions by yourself.

We hope this book changes the vision of what's possible in the relationship between you and your employees. We hope it encourages you to empower your employees to step up and lead, so you can reap the benefit of having a team as committed to the company's success as you are. This book will show that it doesn't have to be that hard. It requires time and attention, and sometimes tough conversations, but it's far less than the time you are likely spending now dealing with drama, and inconsistent efforts and results. Embracing this new vision will eradicate the uncertainty some bosses feel when dealing with team that lack a plan and an understanding of how to make the relationship work.

Enjoy the book!

To your success,

*Molly McGrath*

# Chapter 1: Why It's So Hard to Hire Great Employees

Hiring is often one of the most dreaded tasks a business owner faces. There often seems to be no rhyme or reason to why one person ends up being a great employee and another is a horrible hire. Through years of measuring and tracking, we have identified five common reasons why the hiring process fails to produce a superstar employee.

1. Business owners aren't sure what they are looking for. (They have a vague idea of a magical jack of all trades who takes away all their problems, but they lack an actual identifiable job description.)
2. They have no process for hiring. (They may have a hodgepodge of ideas and forms they've picked up from others, but no real process.)
3. They look for skill sets, not core values.
4. Business owners become rigid, not realizing hiring is a fluid process.
5. Business owners are not bringing IT to the table to attract superstar employees.

## Reason 1: Not Sure What You're Looking For

There are many reasons why hiring a new team member can end in abysmal failure. Not only is a failed hiring attempt a waste of time and money, it also drains confidence and energy from the entire team.

Reason #1 we see failure is that most bosses don't know exactly what position they are hiring for. Most entrepreneurs hire from a place of pain – work is not getting done, someone quit, everyone is overworked and we need HELP! They may need to hire someone, but there is no clarity on what role needs to be added to the team. Broad terms like “assistant,” “paralegal” and “marketing assistant” are too vague, and that is a BIG

danger. Having worked with over 400 small businesses, we see varying definitions for each of these job titles. Does “assistant” mean this employee interacts on your behalf, or is the job more strategic – handling your scheduling, project management, etc. Is your paralegal involved in client meetings or doing all drafting? Is your marketing assistant handling your blogging and social media, interacting with people or reacting to all of the above at any given moment?

Before you even think of posting an ad or talking to a potential candidate, it is crucial that you are VERY clear on the nitty-gritty specifics of what position you are hiring for. Otherwise, you hire a marketing person after being seduced by all the business they can bring in, but after two weeks they are knee deep in administrative work and the business is backlogged on getting the promised (already paid for) work out the door. The new hire ultimately ends up confused, the entrepreneur is wildly frustrated because the new hire doesn’t seem to “get it,” and the story ends with the new hire leaving or the business owner feeling it’s time to fire their confused butt.

Often the bottleneck isn’t automatically the area where the entrepreneur needs to hire. A classic example: We assisted one small business that wanted to hire an attorney to help get work moving in the probate department. They had one attorney already working in this area who was swamped, work was backlogged and they were desperate. After completing our initial analysis call, we determined that a new attorney was actually not what was going to unblock the bottleneck of work. For less than the cost of hiring one attorney, they could instead hire two support team members. One would take over the billing and a majority of the document drafting being handled by the current attorney, and the other would be a client coordinator. Too much of the attorney’s time was spent fielding “one quick question” from clients calling in, or having to make follow-up calls to obtain missing information – which always turned

into a 30-minute phone call because the client would take advantage of the direct access to the attorney and get some “quick advice.” Having a support person with great people skills to pro actively handle communicating with the clients not only freed up the attorney but also provided better, more consistent service to the client. Adding another attorney to the mix would have compounded the problem; instead of two attorneys spending time on activities a support team member could be accountable for, one attorney would be freed up to do the specialized (ummm, revenue-producing) work only an attorney can do.

In another instance, an entrepreneur contacted us for help hiring a new marketing assistant. Cash flow was down and the firm needed someone to help drum up business ASAP! Well, after completing our analysis, we all realized the marketing assistant had a tremendous opportunity to schedule the boss to bring in new business. Her problem was that his calendar was so jammed she could not get anything scheduled for a prospect or marketing opportunity for six weeks out. And it had been this way for months. People were going elsewhere because the firm had no capacity to assist them in a timely fashion. So we created a plan to hire a drafting paralegal to take the majority of the drafting preparation off his plate, thus freeing up 10 hours a week on his calendar for new client meetings or marketing activities.

And this allows clients to move more quickly through the process and enables the firm to collect payments faster.

So often we see business owners place employment ads out of a reaction to their overwhelm and frustration. Unfortunately, without some analysis and intentional thought on what you really need, hiring someone only causes more pain. This cycle eventually perpetuates the story that you can never get ahead, and that hiring is a torturous process. That doesn't have to be the reality of your situation! Take some time to really think through what your firm needs to unlock its potential.



## SIDEBAR: Being seduced by a resume

We remember conducting a phone interview with a candidate for a national sales position. The interviewer was a nice guy and very eager to please. He was willing to “do whatever it took to get the job done.” He had a lot of sales experience, but mostly following up on phone leads that were handed to him. Although he would be an awesome support person to a national sales producer and could grow into the position, he just did not have the makeup to step into creating the relationships this entrepreneur’s business needs.

In this case, it’s great that we were handling the hiring process because we have the ability and tools to be more objective. This candidate authentically had ALL the right answers about why he gravitates to sales because he loves to serve and help people, and he finds people interesting. This entrepreneur would have gotten caught up in “liking” the guy and his authenticity about people, but unfortunately the candidate just wasn’t qualified to step into this position. The entrepreneur didn’t have the need for a support position nor the training structure/support process to grow someone into this roll. He needed someone who could get in there, understand the business model and then hit the ground running on his way to producing.

This is a common problem we see when business owners hire. They get seduced by the paper resume, then by the personality or by something in the candidate’s skill set or experience that stands out, without carefully evaluating if this person truly fits the role they are hiring for to support the goals of the company. The devastating part is that they end up with a nice person in a bad-fit situation that the entrepreneur tends to tolerate, because they don’t want to go through the awful hiring process again and/or cannot even think of the emotional vortex of firing a good person. It can work very well to have a qualified company handle your hiring process. If you prefer to handle your own hiring, make sure you are crystal clear on EXACTLY what role you are hiring for and what standards you are operating by, and stick to your guns until you find a

good fit. You only have so much of your budget available for salaries, so you have to make sure you are filling all the necessary roles your company needs. Someone may be a great person, but not a fit for the role. They might be a great quarterback, but if you don't need a quarterback they aren't a good fit for your company.

## Reason 2: No Process for Hiring

Another reason your attempts at hiring a new staff member may fail is very simply a lack of process and time. In a moment of frustration or overwhelm, you place an employment ad. Now what?

It sounds simplistic, but considering that your next three days are packed with meetings, work you promised would be completed, phone calls to return and emergencies that will inevitably pop up, it could easily be a week before you even have time to start sorting through the flood of resumes you receive.

When you do find some spare time, often at home when you would rather be spending time with your family, you start reviewing resumes from a "mood view," with all of this other stuff weighing on you. This means you delete some, keep some, aren't sure about some, then eventually get frustrated and shut down the computer. Unqualified candidates slip through and good candidates are inevitably deleted.

Welcome to "the process." And what is already a time-consuming, frustrating ordeal for you is made worse by failing to produce valuable, dependable results.

Most important, once you get around to contacting candidates, a week or more has probably passed. The best of the best have already received job offers and are unavailable. At the very least, they have interviews lined up that will occur before they can meet with you, which will likely result in them receiving and accepting a job offer prior to your ever getting an interview.

Your hiring process should be just that – a process – predetermined, with consistent standards and steps. It should be designed to weed out not just the unqualified candidates, but also the ones who are great (overqualified) but who aren't a fit for your position. And the process should be streamlined and move candidates through quickly.

So, before you ever place an ad, make sure you have a process in place that will spell out what to do next, and schedule time on your calendar to handle the next steps.

When you make the leap of faith to hire your first employee, it's just about the scariest thing a solopreneur can do. You want a guarantee that this is an asset versus a liability. You want a guarantee that this person is going to make it more than 30 days. But hires don't come with guarantees. More often than not, you don't get the superstar you needed, so you turn to the mindset that "it's hard to find good people."

You don't want good people. You want GREAT, SUPERSTAR, batteries-included people. And guess what?

There are a lot of really GREAT people out there waiting to work for you.

So how do you get the "I know EXACTLY how to do it" people?

- 1.** Write a compelling ad that attracts only the qualified resumes, weeds out the weak and gets you roughly 50 resumes instead of 150.
- 2.** Know what to look for in a resume that screams "I know EXACTLY how to do it" and eliminates the "I need a job and will be asking you for a raise before the end of the year" candidates.
- 3.** Conduct 5-minute phone interviews before you waste your time with face-to-face interviews. Your probing, cut-to-the-chase phone interviews will lead you to the "I know EXACTLY how to do it" people.
- 4.** Conduct empowering face-to-face interviews that create dialog to get to the fundamentals of their motivating factors, mindset, missions and values.

## SideBar: The “Magic” Interview Question

One dreaded part of interviews is getting the candidate to talk.

While we have two favorite questions that usually do the trick (shared below), the magic of a productive interview is getting the candidate to reveal a glimpse of their true self, not their interview facade. The million-dollar question is HOW?

If your interviewer is a clamshell, it could be their personality or just nerves. Here are two replies you can use to open them up and begin to peel away the layers of the onion.

1. “Tell me more about that.” Example: You asked, “What made you decide to obtain your Google Analytics certification?” She replies, “I found it interesting.” You can reply, “Great, tell me more about that.”
2. “What does that mean to you?” Example: You asked, “What are you looking for in a job?” and they reply, “growth opportunity.” You can reply, “OK, tell me what growth opportunity means to you.”

An alternate way to get them to open up when it doesn’t feel appropriate to respond with one of these questions is to get them to elaborate using these prompts: “That’s interesting; and what would have been possible had you had all the resources to complete that project?” or, “What would that look like to you in an ideal situation?”

Once you get them talking, you can go a bit deeper to really see their attitude, mindset and the way they view and operate in the world:

- If they view things positively or negatively. Is every comment about how something negative happened, or is it positive, addressing possibility?

- If they are comfortable backstage or front stage. Are their examples administrative, behind-the-scenes stories or do they involve front-stage activities? This is crucial for selecting the person who will fit the role you are hiring for. As we discussed, a candidate can have an impressive resume and still not be a good fit.
- The first impression that will affect your clients. Again, a resume can't talk – your interviewee can – and as you get them talking, pay attention to whether you really enjoy interacting with them. Not only do you and your team have to work with this person every day, but your first impression will also be your client's first impression. Too often we “work too hard” to make ourselves like a candidate and give them a pass on negative impressions... but our clients won't. Plus, our clients won't see our new hire every day to give them a second and third chance to improve upon their first impression.

Once they start talking, your interview shifts, as it should, to be more about the person and less about the resume.

You can have 50 resumes of qualified candidates with the skill set you need. It's finding the right fit, and that's what the interview is designed to do. Unqualified candidates should not make it to the face-to-face interview phase with you.

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## Approaching the Interview Like a Private Investigator

We had an interviewee share this: “I went for an interview a few weeks ago for an open position in my company that would move me from a local store to the corporate office and put me on a real career path.” When I asked how it went, she said she “left feeling very upset. I was supposed to interview with the regional manager, but instead it was a panel of six interviewers. They were very aggressive with their questioning, asking and re-asking questions as if trying to trip me up in my answers. They made assumptions based on my answers that I had to continually correct, and they were overall antagonistic.” At the end, the regional manager walked her out, shook her hand and assured her she had done great. “I drove home in tears.”

The next day, they offered her the job and told her how impressed they were with her and how they looked forward to her joining the corporate team. She accepted, uneasily. Before the interview, she wanted the job badly. She knew it was a great fit for her strengths, a good next move for her growth path, and in fact she had passed on a promotion offered to her that would have taken her in a different direction as she waited for this position to open.

But where she used to feel excitement, confidence and an upbeat energy, there is now uncertainty, reluctance and mistrust. In fact, if she didn't know the company and its reputation for providing a great workplace, she probably would have passed and rethought her career. We asked her how she felt about her new job the day before she started, and she said, “Well, I wanted it so bad, but now I'm worried I'm going to work for the stereotypical man.” We assured her most business owners struggle with the interviewing process. Most are never trained on how to actually interview well. Two weeks after she started, she was delighted to share that it was going well and they were happy with her performance, but she still felt like she was looking over her shoulder, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

It reminded us of so many conversations we have had with business owners who proudly shared the “trick” questions they ask in interviews. They gleefully told us their techniques for “tripping up” interviewees. But why? Why set a tone with a new employee (because you will eventually hire one of those people you are interviewing) of distrust and trickery? Do you want your new employee starting the job with trepidation? Worried that you are trying to trick them or questioning what you are really all about?

Instead, why not spend your interviews learning more about the candidates. Determine what they are all about, where they want to go in the future, what they bring to the table. I know, I know, you need to learn if they are full of it, or not being completely truthful, and how they would handle certain situations. But if you get someone talking, you will find that out. You don't have to approach it like a battle.

In fact, there really is no “magic” interview question. There are good ones, but the magic is in being yourself and getting the interviewees comfortable and talking, so they show up as their authentic selves. Then you can clearly discern whether it's a fit or not. And any discrepancies about their experience, their story, etc. will show themselves.

Start your relationship with authenticity, optimistic energy and excitement about what you can do together. Don't start off with pre-loaded question marks. Great employees want to work where they feel connected, think they can make a difference, for bosses they respect and visions they buy into. Tricks and games won't attract the employee you want.



## Reason 3: Hiring for Skills – Not Core Values

There are many techniques to hiring, training and developing team, some of which we will cover later in this book. But no matter how many people are on your team – if it's three or 100 – there is one key to hiring that can never be ignored.

When dealing with people, and team members as people, it is hard to deal in absolutes. Sometimes people defy the rules or the expectations, but this one is a definite. The key is to hire 100% of the time based on integrity.

Webster's Dictionary Definition of Integrity: A firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values. Our Definition of Integrity: Do what you say you are going to do, when you say you are going to do it, with a 100% authentic stand – every step of the way.

Integrity can be a mind-boggling term, one that is vague and rarely understood. To give you perspective, it is sometimes used to mean "morality," but it is separate and distinct. Let us help clear up the distinction and share why it matters in the hiring process.

If a team member doesn't have integrity, it doesn't matter how talented they are, how good they are at what they do, how many hours they work or anything else you normally judge performance on – they are not a fit for your team. Not only will they eventually not work out, but they will poison your team and you will lose good team members. Worse yet, team members who lack integrity might stay and continue to be a communicable disease to every client and new team member who walks through your door. Don't continue to allow a poisonous apple to taint your workplace.

If your gut is saying "something doesn't feel right," don't even bother hiring the person. Integrity is not trainable; you have it or you don't. You can't pay for it or work harder for it – it's there or it isn't.



Let Molly put this into perspective for you with a real life example: Amy passed every interview, Kolbe matching and reference check with flying colors. Fewer than five days into the job, red flags were popping up everywhere. Here is one simple illustration – more than enough evidence of lack of integrity. It started with her first business trip on the proverbial company dime, where her room service bill was \$65 ... for one person, for one dinner. To help paint the picture, this was a single mom of two teenage boys who were about to head off to college. She was on public assistance and her annual salary was \$19,000. This was not a CEO making six figures. This was a person with the entitlement mentality that she was going to get fat (literally, with a \$65 meal!!!) off the company hog. Lack of integrity. It doesn't need to be more complicated than that, friends.

## Keys to Integrity

Integrity is a tricky thing. Sometimes the people with the least seem to have the most talent, charm and charisma. Talent, ability and knowledge are not enough – they should always take a back seat to integrity. Don't be fooled into thinking you can work around a lack of integrity.

Integrity **IS** ... when these show up in the workplace:

- Doing the right thing when nobody is watching;
- Taking a complaint to someone who can do something about it;
- Refraining from gossip; offering to help a co-worker who has a complaint instead of going along for the gossip ride and creating a truth that the “workplace sucks”;
- Their “weekend” life is totally in line w/their “weekday” life (integrity shows up everywhere in your life).

**NO** integrity is ... when these things show up in the workplace:

- Talking of cheating on a spouse/partner;
- Shopping till they drop when they say they don't make enough money;
- Slamming friends, neighbors and ex-coworkers;
- Starting conversations with, “Don't tell anybody, but...” or “You didn't hear it from me....” If you say it out loud, expect that it will be repeated.

## Declaring Integrity as a Must Exercise

As a team leader, get everyone involved and develop a set of core values for you as a team to live by. Have each team member define the core values that are important to them. Then everyone convenes (we always recommend over coffee and food) and declares what your team as a whole will stand for and operate by, and what every employee/team member will be expected to live by.

Some examples: respect for others (we treat others how we wish to be treated); commitment to family (we put our families first and support

everyone in putting their families first); community contribution, spiritual guidance and growth (we contribute to our community by sponsoring a local charity each year/do the breast cancer walk/work in a soup kitchen at Thanksgiving, etc. that will contribute to an environment of peace and greatly impact our clients and our lives).

These core values can be used to assess new team members as well as evaluate existing team during team reviews. Think about printing out and framing your list of core values so your clients, referral sources and even vendors know what is important to you as a “family and community-based business” and why you do what you do for them. Not only are you creating a place of peace and possibility, but there is also a beautiful, deliberate by-product of increased referrals. Who would read those core values and NOT want to refer their friends and family to you?

## Decide When Compromise Is Needed

Often in the hiring process, business owners have “absolutes” and then a “wish list.” We were working to find a legal assistant for an attorney who had an incredible amount of self-awareness about what he was looking for, far beyond just computer skills and technical knowledge. In our Discovery Call, this attorney shared that he is a high Quick Start on the Kolbe Index A Analysis. ([www.kolbe.com](http://www.kolbe.com)) If you don't know what that means, keep reading – the conversation applies to any absolute requirement that you may have about a new employee. In years past, the attorney had employed people who were good at their job roles but were very low Quick Starts, and the extreme difference in how he and the employee responded to change and new situations was, in his opinion, completely frustrating for both sides. The team member would end up just staring at him like a deer in the headlights. So, although he realized he didn't want someone as high in the Quick Start category as he is because the new hire would have the same strengths and weaknesses, he didn't want someone averse to him either

Of course, this is his experience of Kolbe results, just like you may have a story about NEVER again hiring an employee who has more than a 30-minute commute, or whatever hasn't worked for you in the past. It may or may not be valid, but the point of the story is that we often have strong convictions about our beliefs. Often in the Discovery Call we can reset some of those beliefs and consider other possibilities.

(For example, I know many employees who are 2 Quick Starts and work quite well supporting high Quick Starts.) But more important, this attorney doesn't share that opinion.

So who is right or wrong? No one! It's all about listening. In a check-in call last week, we were discussing the challenge of finding a mid-range Quick Start for a very administrative support position – not impossible, but certainly a smaller pool of candidates who fit the profile. As we were talking and the attorney was considering adjusting his Kolbe score requirements, he started describing what his concerns were about having

an employee with a low Quick Start rating. The anxiety in his voice tripled. You could hear his trepidation from just IMAGINING the situation.

Bingo! We immediately stopped the conversation and said, “We’ve got it. The Kolbe requirement stays as is.” His response was, “I don’t care if it takes you a year to find the right person with the Kolbe I want. I’m staying committed to it.” And there was a big sigh of relief on all fronts. We realized how refreshing it was to work with someone who had unrelenting standards on what he considered important. It just flat out never would have worked if he compromised, even in the smallest way, on what he wanted and needed. And he offered no apologies for it, which is the grandest version of an entrepreneur.

With his commitment and willingness to take a stand for the outcome, any amendment would create a level of anxiety that would lead to an impossible working environment.

That’s the beauty of a hiring “process.” You are discerning what is bendable and what is absolute. Where are the areas of compromise? If you talk yourself away from your core values, you will eventually find evidence that things aren’t working, regardless of how brilliant the new employee is. Don’t put yourself through that situation. Identify your absolutes, allow them to be challenged in a Discovery Call, and at the end, remain committed to your core values.

So what if you still aren’t finding qualified candidates?

Ever complete a round of interviews and think “Man, what is wrong? NONE of these are qualified! Last time I hired I had tons of great people to choose from. What happened?!”

The job market is a fluid, ever-changing pool of candidates. We've literally helped companies hire and had tons of fantastic candidates apply, then two months later working with a company in the same city, same position, we got nothing – nada – zip! All the stats, salary calculators, and stories from colleagues about what is available in the marketplace go out the window when you get in the trenches and start reviewing resumes. It isn't that these resources are not correct; the market just moves so quickly they may not be current information.

So what do you do if you aren't finding great candidates in your marketplace?

First, make sure that you have a well-written ad to attract the right people and focus on quality versus quantity. Make sure you are promptly reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates (within three days of receiving their resume). The great candidates go fast! If you wait a week to contact them and they have 10 interviews scheduled, they may decline your invitation to an interview. Refresh and tweak your ad daily; old ads don't get a lot of responses.

But if all those things are on point, and you still aren't getting the right candidate, there are typically four things you can adjust:

- 1.** Re-confirm that the standards you have around level of experience, type of experience, writing level, etc. are not flexible, and know that you will stay the course until you find the right candidate. It might take a while. (Or it may not, but you are staying the course if it does.)
- 2.** Be flexible with your standards in the area of type of experience. So if you are looking for someone with estate planning experience but not finding any candidates, you may decide you are willing to train someone in estate planning so long as they have the writing level and experience/skills you want in other areas. You must then know you will spend some time on the training.

- 3.** Be flexible with your standards around the level of experience. So decide that you prefer someone with some experience in estate planning, but not necessary at the level you wanted. You will spend some time increasing their base knowledge and taking them to a higher level, but you feel they do have the fundamental skills to make this growth curve happen.
- 4.** Offer a higher salary. If you are seeing amazing candidates that just wanted a salary higher than your budget, think about how much time you are losing continuing the search for the “right” candidate and what it’s costing your company. So for instance, if your salary budget is \$38,000 and most candidates who meet your experience and other requirements are asking for \$43,000, calculate the MONTHLY increase this would cost you. (In this example that would be \$416 a month plus whatever additional for insurance, payroll taxes, etc. – so say \$500.) It is worth \$500 to you to have this person on your team NOW? By having them on your team, can you bring in an additional \$500 to cover this increased cost? Likely yes; by having the experienced person you want, you can generate more business and bring in more than enough. Or can you consider an incentive compensation system that allows them to earn more if certain goals are met, so they make more if the company is making more? That’s a great way to expand your salary budget in a win/win way. If your budget honestly won’t allow an increase, then revisit options 1, 2 and 3.

If you consider flexing your standards around type of experience or level of experience, commit to coming up with a training plan and resources to get your new employee to the level you need quickly. For example, you can improve someone’s writing skills with training classes. You don’t even have to be the one to do that training! And through legal organizations you are members of (or can access) and other places, you can give a new team member a big jump start on learning estate planning with online resources, training, etc. Although it won’t be the plug-and-play experience you hoped for, you can definitely create a plan, including how or where the person learns that skill, and benchmarks for what they should

be able to do by when, so you can measure their progress. Don't just have them sitting there waiting for you to come train them! Ensure that the team member and YOU have a path and a plan to follow.

Where do you think you are with options 1, 2, 3 and 4? Do you rather stay the course to find the exact candidate who meets all your requirements and is in your salary range? Or are you becoming more concerned about hiring the "right" person, but know that you may need to invest in some training for them either in your area of business or growing their skills to the level you want? Or can you see how increasing your salary budget can get you the team member you want and how that will increase your bottom line with the results they can produce, even if they cost you a little more?

Think about your options and decide what is best for your company. Continuing without considering where you are and what approach you want to take is incredibly frustrating, because you are essentially just hoping the universe aligns and sends you the right candidate, even if you have been looking for months and it hasn't happened. Take control of your hiring process and adjust your hiring plan with an honest look at what your options are and how flexible you are, or aren't, in certain areas. Consider, then choose.

## **Chapter 2: It's Not You, It's Me**

Is what you're putting out there attracting the employees you want? Sometimes, we have realized that great employees aren't showing up because the employer isn't doing what's needed to attract them. There is a lot of accountability and self-reflection in deciding to truly do what it takes to build a dream team. It's not just the resources and time you must give to building the team; superstar employees also require that YOU show up, as the boss, and have the courage to push toward your goals. And they will hold you accountable.

Sometimes when great employees aren't staying or aren't attracted by



your hiring process, often it's because the business owner is unsure about having an intrapreneur, someone who is vested in the company, wants to retire there, and wants to contribute and grow. Those employees don't want to just show up, clock in, clock out and get paid.

Employers have to hire for that; they have to bring the right elements to the table to attract an intrapreneur. If they are not clear about what the job role is, and they're including everything but the kitchen sink in regard to duties and responsibilities, who would want the job? Intrapreneurs do not want to just clean up messes and shovel manure all day. They want a job where they know what they are supposed to do, where they know they can win, and where it's clear what they are supposed to be winning at. That does not mean they won't make sure other tasks are handled, but they are there for a purpose and they want to succeed. No employee, at least not the one who is genuinely craving and wanting, wants to just come in and do mindless busy work all day.

Employers sometimes don't know how to attract those employees. They often approach it from an old-school mentality. Employers focus on how many words a potential employee types per minute or how they do this or that. I think, "Who cares?" That's all trainable. If you get the person with the right mindset and the right heart, who cares about what your company is doing, who has integrity, and who acts like an adult and is part of your business, you can train that person in the details. Usually, by the time they reach that level of maturity in the profession, they're going to have developed the skillset that you need anyway.

Hiring and keeping a great employee is a 50/50 crapshoot. Or is it?

Studies show 50% of marriages end in divorce. We find that 50% of the team members we work with have been there for about 4.6 years, which is the average length of time at a job, according to a 2014 Economic News Release from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In our opinion, what typically creates the "lasting employee" boils down to empowering words other than "I quit."



## Connection and Communication

There are numerous studies that prove (regardless of Kolbe, introvert, extrovert, etc.) that, on some level, we are social creatures. People need people in order to be well and thrive. They need feedback, they need communication and they need to know you generally appreciate that they are there and are part of the team. And that is what we find missing, unfortunately, more than 50% of the time. In our 17 years of experience, most employees don't work out because they were hired and then left alone to try and figure it out. The connection and communication was either inconsistent or nonexistent.

The powerful blog post “The Day My Son Gave Up On Me” is an amazing read for any parent. It's hard not to ponder the question the author asks about her son: “What else did he stop asking me?” Of course, this applies to more than just our children. What have our employees stopped asking us because we bosses are always “too busy,” “running late,” or “on time constraints?” Are some employee questions annoying? You bet. And are you really too busy sometimes? Absolutely. But the overall attitude of broken promises and too busy can make our team stop having expectations of us – and stop asking us the important questions. “How do we make a difference for clients?” “How does this new service help our clients?” “Is our future as a business stable? Are we going to be OK?” And we walk in one day to an empty desk, a termination letter and their door key.

When writing our first book, we held a focus group for support team across the country. It was a giant attempt to figure out where the disconnect lies between the boss and the team when trying to reach a common goal within a small business.

We were astounded at what we discovered. We want to share our findings with you, not to scare you, but to inspire you. We hope you will hear the commitment of team with an honest, respectful cry for you to allow them to help you grow your business with joy and ease. Team members and bosses speak two distinctly different languages, which often leads to disconnect even though both sides want to achieve

the same goal. Our hope with this book is to allow you an inside look into the thought processes and voices of support team so you can better understand and communicate with yours.

The common themes of the conversation were:

- The team wants to be included in the good, the bad and the uncertainty;
- It's the inconsistent, unintentional (or lack of) communication that strangles all faith and hope, for you and for them;
- Once there is a willingness to shed light on "what's not working," then and only then can we pave the path of possibility with discernment.

Another theme that made us so very proud to be part of this industry was the deep gratitude that these team members shared over being considered important enough to be included. And not one of them took the responsibility lightly.

We've categorized the responses into three main categories. The first is, "What's your great joy? What do you love most about what you do?" The second is, "What are your biggest frustrations working with your entrepreneur?" and the third is, "If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?" So, here we have it, voices from the unofficial boardroom.

## What's your great joy?

### What do you love most about what you do?

- A.** The value of what we are doing when I explain to clients what we can do for them. It is so powerful and empowering that I can have an effect on someone's world and help them in such a big, big way.
- B.** When you step back and say, wow, maybe I didn't get everything i wanted done today or this week, but a client just thanked me for eliminating stress in their life and taking care of things for them.

- C.** We all have that social worker in us and we all really just want to help people. Especially when you see things that go right, it adds fuel to that and makes you want to do it time and time again.
- D.** When the client at the end comes out from meeting with the boss and says, “Thank you.”
- E.** When you wake up in the a.m. and you are very excited about going to work. It is such a positive thing to go to work for an entrepreneur who has this amazing ability to create things and bring you into the process. Knowing you had a part in that creation, that happens nowhere else in the world of working except with an entrepreneur.
- F.** As a woman “out in the world” (in business, the community and at home) people see you as a mom for so long. But when you go back into the work world with an entrepreneur and you are held in esteem, sought out, respected and looked up to for your opinion, it is a huge ego boost and very rewarding and satisfying. It provides such sense of importance and contribution, like nowhere else.
- G.** As women, we get lost in being a mother, in our home life, and in our job, but we’re never seen as individuals. The individual always comes last until you work for an entrepreneur vs. a big corporation. Your work feeds, nurtures and cultivates your individuality.
- H.** The partnership of it. My boss doesn’t treat me as just another employee, he sees me as a true partner, values my opinion and even depends on it.
- I.** When we set a goal and we are able to take such pride when we meet that goal and realize we all had a hand in it.
- J.** When you see an entrepreneur depending on you to make key decisions, it is very rewarding. Then you begin to look at everything with such ownership.

- K.** Working with someone who is so amazingly creative, and that they ask you for your opinion, is so very gratifying and satisfying.
- L.** Everyone has to work to live, but here we live to work because it is fun and we make a difference. You see and feel that you make a difference by the personal connection you make with the people who hire us.
- M.** It is so great to belong to this community. You're not alone. There is so much motivation in the emotions and stories the clients in this community share. It makes you want to help every family of the community.

Are you surprised at what team members think? Or does this serve as a good reminder of how to connect and communicate with your team? We hope so. What we hope you notice is the massive amount of “CARING” for the business, and for your success, behind each of these frustrations. Team members who are just collecting a paycheck typically don't care if clients are mad or things aren't done. These team members care – they are intrapreneurs in an entrepreneur's world.

The next section reveals a crucial discussion about what to do when you stop believing in your own boss. It's a tough conversation but a real eye-opener.

## **We also asked: What is your greatest frustration working for an entrepreneur?**

- A.** When I stop believing in my boss because I don't have faith/trust that they will get it done. I would not hire my own boss as a client. And I don't like feeling that way, it is disheartening.
- B.** The entrepreneur won't just let go and trust the key people in the company. If he would, I think things would run much smoother.

I realize it's his baby and it's hard to do that, but it's crucial at some point in time for the best of the business. That's my biggest frustration.

- C.** The business owner won't get out of my way. I expressed my frustrations to him in the moment and received encouragement ... then all downhill from there...things go back to the same. I really am at a loss to get his attention and I really don't think he would miss me if I left. I can't seem to communicate that to him without sounding "entitled" or risking being told "I'm a less-than-stellar performer."
- D.** We are known as the "Last Minute Larrys," and now we've all gotten in the "HABIT" of making that the standard/norm.
- E.** Letting the boss hire family; when the boss hires the wife, kids, extended family, etc. and there is no accountability in the business. The team doesn't respect them and will never say anything because they are afraid they will be out of a job. And it sucks for the spouse, who becomes the buffer because people will go "WHINE" to them hoping they will do something about it at home. Then the circular cycle begins.
- F.** Getting interrupted. I am preparing documents, answering phones and keeping the calendar and everything else. I will be in the middle of drafting and the boss is always shouting out things to me and I lose track and mistakes happen. I don't have a door or four walls around me, so I am in the constant firing line, and if something comes into his mind, he has to interrupt me to tell me right away, and everything goes downhill.
- G.** Lack of responsibility on the entrepreneur's part.
- K.** Nothing is ever as easy as the entrepreneur thinks when they initially commit, and it insults our intelligence. I feel like she thinks what I do and the value I bring is handling tasks that are simply "quick and easy."

- L.** Trying to manage my schedule, but I feel like I always need to go back to my boss to get stuff from him, and I have to stand there until he finishes it because I have no faith that he will complete it unless I hound and pounce, or eventually break down in tears. Then I appear emotionally unstable vs. committed to the business.
- M.** They destroy their weekly calendar, which in fact destroys ours.
- N.** Time management with the boss. They are very unorganized and it's very frustrating when they throw a curveball into everyone else's day.
- O.** Trying to close the loop on open items. When I am trying to pin down the business owner and I have deadlines. I submitted the same thing four times and it keeps getting "lost" in her priorities, and now I am in the red and can't move this off my list, and it looks like I am not getting MY job done. I don't like feeling like I am not doing my job.

Are you surprised at what team members think? Again, notice the massive amount of "CARING" for the business behind each of these frustrations? Team members who are just collecting a paycheck don't care if clients are mad or things aren't done. These team members care and that is invaluable.

If you want this kind of employee, an intrapreneur who cares, you also have to be willing to show up and care and be committed.

Like we said, the cycle of hiring, firing, training and rehiring is never going away. So not only should you accept it, you should embrace it with connection and communication built into your calendar, week in and week out.

This should be in the very simple form of:

- 1.** Monthly lunch or coffee date – Schedule time to personally connect and check in with each person individually on the team. This must start within the first 30 days.
- 2.** Quarterly team outing – Plan something fun as a team. Bug off early at 2 p.m. on a Friday: bowling, skydiving, Japanese steakhouse, maybe fondue. Find something that will allow everyone to bond and connect.
- 3.** Consistent individual reviews. Not the dreaded, archaic version of an employee review you might know, but an empowering, growth-oriented session. (Click here to download a free copy of the “Transforming the Employee Review” webinar.)

Roughly 50% of employees will make it to 4.6 years; 50% won't make it six months. Some you have little or no control over, but after 17 years of working with team and entrepreneurs alike, we like to believe that efforts toward connection and communication can change these statistics.

## Chapter 3: What's an Intrapreneur, and Why Do I Want One Anyway?

### The Employee Who Can Grow and Shift the Company in a Positive Direction

We use the term ownership a lot. An entrepreneur owns his role and his part in the company. “Intrapreneur” is a term we came up with for someone who may not legally or financially own part of the company, but in her heart, in her soul, and in her spirit she owns part of that company. Since she sees it as her company, that means she cares. She cares about what the client is experiencing, and about what's best for the company, and it's really a huge shift.

Traditionally and historically, employees worked to please their bosses. The boss/worker relationship became very co-dependent. The employees wanted to make sure the boss was happy with their work. They wanted to make sure the boss had a good opinion of them.

Shifting to an intrapreneur doesn't necessarily mean that relationship is lost, and it's OK if you maintain it, but the shift becomes so much bigger that's what an employer needs from an employee, and it's what's best for the company.

Sometimes the boss isn't doing what's best for the company. He may be harming it with bad habits, or by not letting go of and allowing others to help him. Businesses need employees who are really going to look with open eyes at what is best for the company. Instead of asking, “Does this please my boss?” they say, “This is harming us. This isn't really accomplishing what we need. This is hurting the client experience. Let's do this instead.”



Employers need to empower their employees and allow them opportunities to step into the intrapreneur role and really own it. A good employer knows what to do with an employee who cares. It's not uncommon for us to get a call from a team member who's crying because she cares so much about the job and the company. She likes and admires the boss, but she's frustrated that things are falling apart, clients are upset, the boss is stressed out, money is tight, and she's working late constantly and breaking promises at home. Being an intrapreneur and being given that empowerment lets her ask the questions, "What do I do with the fact that I care? How can I have this conversation with my boss? How can I take this on and show my boss that I can handle this?" She can view the company through the lens of what's best for it.

Coming from a place of caring and connection, it is really important in the beginning to have that framework. One has to find one's truth and be able to speak that truth in a very empowering, honest, respectful way.

So often, employers follow their hiring processes, check their boxes, hire employees, empower them, train them, and so on. This is where things go sideways. If the employee isn't carrying their weight, or the boss sees that the employee isn't marketing enough and doing the things that really need to be done, the employer thinks, "If my employee would only do X, Y, and Z. She's not meeting deadlines; she's blowing up the calendar; she's not fulfilling promises to the client." These are all things that hinder a business or cause it to stop growing. The crucial next step is for the employee to find her voice, to be able to speak her truth in an empowering, honest and respectful way, in a way that can really create buy-in from the business owner.

It's very hard when an employee can't tell the boss what to do and definitely can't speak up. A little voice inside her head may be saying, "Well, it's not my business," or, "Who am I to say something? I'm just the receptionist. I'm just the *[fill in the blank]*."

Often, staff are on the front lines. They see a lot, they hear a lot, they're the directors of first impressions, and they're the first points of contact for people. It's important for them to not only be vested in taking that ownership, but also to have the divine courage to be able to speak their truth in a respectful way that empowers a business.

Every time we interact with a team, we take them through the steps of learning how to speak to their bosses honestly, authentically, and respectfully. A team member emailed me recently to say, "I have a complaint from a client about my boss. I was just trying to schedule an appointment, and the client said, 'The last time I came in, he wasn't prepared. I don't have time to sit there while he's not even familiar with what was supposed to be done during the appointment; it was a waste of my time. So if you can promise me he's going to be prepared and on time, then I'll make the appointment.'"

The team member wrote, "It's not the first comment like this that I've gotten. I feel like I need to say something to my boss, but I feel like it's not my place. And I'm afraid if I do, he's not going to react well and be really angry and defensive."

Team members who feel this way eventually blow up. That might present differently, depending on their personality: They might end up crying or yelling or something else. Whatever the case, if they keep taking on more and more responsibilities, their frustration comes out in an unprofessional, unproductive way – which can do a lot of damage to their relationship with their employers.

To help the team member who wrote the email, we used the tools and techniques we had been working on, and she approached her boss without a lot of emotion. Instead of being accusatory and saying, "You've done this again; it's the third time a client has said this," she said, "I need to share this with you. I got this email from a client. Can we look at what happened and how we can make sure that whatever is happening during client meetings, they don't leave feeling this way?" The team member

and her boss actually figured out that the client in question was a somewhat unusual case and maybe wasn't 100 percent correct in her assessment. However, the team member opened the door to be able to say, "My concern is that I've heard this several times from clients, so there's something about the way that these meetings are being handled that is making clients feel like we're unprepared as a firm." That's so different from saying, "You aren't prepared."

The team member above emailed us to say, "He (my boss) was very receptive to what I had to say. He was apologetic and humble about giving the clients that impression, and we immediately implemented one strategy within 10 minutes of talking to clarify this meeting with clients. He also thanked me for bringing it up and says I have complete permission to get after him if I see it happening again. All in all, I feel very good about our talk. Even though it was a short discussion, we got a lot done and the door's been opened. He knows I'm aware of what he's not doing, and I'm not worried about bringing it up if I need to in the future." How powerful is that? Why wouldn't a business owner want someone like that who's going to address issues without being one more person getting on his case about what he didn't do? Business owners get enough of that; there is a never-ending list of things they didn't get to. It really makes a difference to have an employee who can say, "I care, and I'm worried about the impression we're giving, because we're better than that. What can we do about it?"

## Chapter 4: The 8 Steps to Empowering Employees to Step Up and Lead

A common frustration with team is that they just don't "get it."

They are good at what they do but they just miss those almost intangible extra steps that are so crucial to making sure clients are taken care of. They don't realize their tone with clients on a stressful day. They don't go that extra step to make sure all the bases are covered. They are nice, but how do you make them "get it" and go to the next level?

"Getting it" isn't a skill set or a task you can be trained on. "Getting it" is awareness that, once you experience and see the impact on the other person, you can't turn off. And to be truly aware, it has to matter and mean something on an emotional level. The hardest-working, most-qualified team member cannot "get it" without experiencing a heightened awareness through connection on an emotional level to what you do and what it means to clients.

Laney remembers the EXACT moment she "got it" 15 years ago. At the time, she was the receptionist for a small estate planning law firm. She was 21 years young and very smart and hard-working. Her boss saw a lot of potential in her and was trying to support her in defining the necessary skills to grow the firm. Of all the skills, and there are many, she learned that the absolute biggest was her boss helping her to "get it."

Early one Monday morning in late November, she was asked to come to a meeting to discuss their process for answering the phone. She realizes now, after hiring and training tons of receptionists, that this was a nice way of setting up a discussion to talk about her lack of phone skills. Rather than scolding her or giving her a written script for answering the phone, he instead told her what the firm did for clients and why it mattered. He explained that clients often called because they had a loved one who had passed away or was ill. He explained that she was the FIRST person they were talking to about this very hard experience

and how it might land for the caller if she sounded rushed or stressed, or was abrupt. He helped paint the picture of a scared, intimidated, alone prospective client calling into the office and being greeted by an abrupt receptionist after just losing her husband of 50 years.

Laney literally lost her breath. She was horrified of the thought of treating someone like that, especially someone like her grandmother. Laney was very close to her grandmother, and in fact was living with her at the time. Laney remembered losing her grandfather and was stunned at the idea that her grandmother could have called a law firm and been dropped into voicemail or talked to by someone who was “busy and just trying to take a message and get off the phone,” like she had been on many days.

She got it. Everyone who called the firm was someone’s grandmother or mother, or husband, or child. They were worried, or sad, or overwhelmed, just like her family had been at one time.

And she was the person they were talking to, the very first person they were talking to.

This made such an impression on Laney that her boss never again had to mention how she sounded on the phone. In fact, it made such a lasting impression, she has tears in her eyes as she types this.

After that, of course, they created scripts for how to handle certain types of phone calls and systems to make sure the process was followed and the client was served. Those are very necessary tools, but they don’t amount to a hill of beans if the team member doesn’t “get it.” Until then, it’s just a to-do item in their busy day, and the client loses their humanity and becomes a checklist item. After the employee “gets it,” it’s a way of being, and your team members will become your biggest advocates of making sure the client is served and honored.

Helping your team members “get it” is very easy. Simply explain to them what you do, how it affects your clients, who you serve and why they

really write you checks. Everyone has a grandmother, a mother, a husband, a child or someone they love and care about who has been or could be impacted by the problems you help clients solve. Once they see your client as their loved one, they “get it.”

And that is the most powerful training you can ever provide your team member.

Do you ever realize that the more responsible a team leader becomes, the more isolated you may feel as an attorney? Does it seem like they are too busy to meet with you or help with projects? Do you even sometimes feel like they don't need you anymore?

During our Team Empowerment call yesterday, we were discussing the concept of an intrapreneur. An intrapreneur, as spelled out earlier, is a team member who may not own part of a business legally or financially but interacts with it like an owner. They've moved past employee mentality to have big-picture conversations about topics such as ROI, capacity and profit margins. (Stay tuned for future posts on my blog about exploring how to transition to being an intrapreneur.)

Sometimes moving into that place of intrapreneurship – an exciting place of empowerment and leadership – can also be a lonely place. Often a team member will have feelings of not quite “fitting” with either side. The team begins to see them as “the boss,” and the intrapreneur slowly sees changes in conversations and levels of inclusion in team things. They aren't “one of the team” any longer. The team likes them, respects them and admires them – but they aren't a peer any longer. The attorney starts to feel unneeded by that “key player” and doesn't get as much time for “gotta minutes,” because the key player is just moving gunk and making stuff happen. And although this isn't a bad thing for someone who is moving forward, it can leave the team member feeling alone and not sure where to go for peer-to-peer collaboration and support.

Entrepreneurs experience this all the time. Steve Jobs told the truth when he said entrepreneurs must be willing to be misunderstood for long periods. We are learning that this applies to the intrapreneur as well. As a new kind of employee, they don't have a ton of resources to turn to for guidance or leadership. They don't qualify for many of the business owner organizations and don't really fit in with most of the employee groups.

When you realize you have a great team member transitioning into an intrapreneur, it's crucial that you support their growth so they don't slip backwards. They are moving into uncharted territory and need a path and plan to support their stability. Here are some suggestions:

- 1.** Schedule weekly meetings with them to check in on goals, challenges and big-picture conversations. Staying connected and allowing them access to you is essential to keeping them in the bigger picture.
- 2.** Be specific with measurable goals. We all need to know where we are winning and where we are missing the mark, and we can only do that with measurement. Build in time to review the measurements and discuss how to keep winning and how to improve on the misses. Be clear that missing a mark doesn't mean the employee screwed up or is doing a bad job. You are simply measuring, adjusting and correcting to achieve success. For example, let's say your intrapreneur is responsible for getting 30 people to each of your monthly workshops but misses the mark one month. You may find when you review the numbers that you need to change your advertising method, because one newspaper you advertise in is not returning any results. This doesn't mean the team member messed up. In fact, measuring, tracking and adjusting based on this information is a key to success. And it leaves the team member much more in control and a part of the solution than just feeling like they are failing with no idea what to do about it.



- 3.** Find a forum for them to participate with like-minded team members who are also up to big things. Most successful entrepreneurs have coaching programs, organizations, etc. where you go to hang with colleagues – both for the education and training you receive, and for the sharing of ideas and inspiration you get from your peers. Give your intrapreneur the same resource and see how they flourish. Simply letting them know they aren't alone and providing them a community of like-minded intrapreneurs is a gift of priceless value that will deliver a tremendous ROI.

We have created an online 8 Module Team Empowerment Academy to provide this forum to intrapreneurs. The modules are:

## **MODULE ONE: The importance of your employee providing value – creating instant ROI**

We've outlined the eight steps to help business owners empower their employees. The first is an important one: helping your employees understand that they must always provide value to the company. We call that creating an instant ROI. In this module, the employee will clarify the most important activities they do in their role, and the measurements around those activities.

Team members are not often measured, which can give them a constant anxious feeling of, "Are we winning or failing?" That's why people slip into the mindset of, "Well, as long as my boss seems to like me and be pleased with my work, I must be winning." That's a very ineffective way to measure performance. It's very subjective and fails to reveal whether the employee is doing the company any good. It also makes it difficult for an employer to evaluate an employee other than in a subjective way.



In the beginning, we get clear about the roles. What is the purpose of each employee's role in the company? What do they need to accomplish so the company moves forward and is taken care of? This isn't about the boss, it's about the company.

Team members sometimes feel a bit nervous because they don't want the spotlight on them and are resistant to being measured. We assure them that they're being measured anyway. What changes is whether it's subjective or whether it's clear and everyone knows the expectations.

You can compare it to a basketball team. Everyone knows what a basket is. Everyone knows how many points you get for making one. Everyone on the team knows his role and what plays are going to be called to get the win; there are even backup plans. That's how people should go into work.

It takes away a lot of the subjectivity. If a team member has money issues and has to miss three days because her child is sick, she no longer has to worry that her boss will be irritated and fire her, because now the boss knows what she does. He has the team member's performance measurements, and the team member displays her value.

This system redirects a lot of the emotion that can exist, channeling it instead into productivity. Employees should put their emotion toward their passion, what they're doing for their clients, and the difference they're making for them, not into worrying about what the boss thinks of them or what their role is.

We walk them through the concepts and exercises they can do with their bosses in order to understand the top three things they must do and achieve in their roles and how that will be measured. Team members want that. We talk to employees all the time who say they love their bosses but just don't feel like they can win. They're tired of being on the losing team. It's heart-wrenching for people, so employers want to let them know what the company is trying to accomplish, what winning

means, and how that's measured. Then a discussion can be had about how to get there.

## **MODULE TWO: Making an impact by using each employee's unique ability (including yours)**

This part of the process is where we incorporate a tool called Locating Your Passion Keys. We incorporate the unique ability from Strategic Coach and the Kolbe A Assessment from Kolbe Corp. Business owners pay motivational speakers lots of money and send employees to conference centers to fix or motivate them, but that motivation only lasts for a short time because it's not linked to their passion. It doesn't really get to the root and create something from the ground up that will last.

We hear over and over again, "I don't know how to motivate my people. I can't keep them motivated; they do great for a week, and then they fall by the wayside." Our process helps to unlock all the passions that people have and their creative talents, in addition to figuring out their blueprints and the DNA of how they innately operate when it comes to fight or flight, when they're pushed against the wall and have to make a decision or take action, when they have to come up with the solution.

Once we have that imprint, we move into discovering how they can make an impact in their roles. This process is about first locating and identifying an employee's unique ability – her passion, her blueprint – and then honing that.

Sometimes employers think, "I can't track or measure passion, so I'm not going to make an investment for that in an employee." We lobby hard for the idea that you absolutely must invest in this for every role in your business.

We wrote a great blog post about why employers ideally don't want to motivate their teams. When you motivate an employee, then you constantly have to motivate them. If you tap into employees' passions instead and help them see how their passions can be expressed and fulfilled in the workplace, then they're empowered to take ownership, to innovate, to really own their role and contribution to the business, then they don't have to be motivated. In fact, on days when the employers are lagging, the employees motivate them. When push comes to shove, even if the employees are tired or burned out, they're going to hang on in the conversation because they need to figure out how to move forward as a company. Passion often shows up as laser-like focus and commitment, because it matters to a person.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter about my first job at 21 in an estate planning law firm, the realm of wills, trusts, disability, death – none of that resonated with me. It just wasn't the world I was in – it wasn't my passion – so for a long time I cared mostly about my boss's opinion of me. I liked him, I respected and admired him, and I enjoyed my job and liked people,

so I wanted to be nice to clients. However, because I didn't understand what we did, I didn't realize how sometimes my actions didn't reflect what was best for the company.

My brusque and short phone demeanor with people wasn't intentional, but I was trying to get stuff done. Without realizing it, I was annoyed that the phone kept ringing.

My boss, instead of scolding me, found a way to appeal to my passion for helping people. "I appreciate that you're trying to get work done, and I'm happy that you have that work ethic, but all you need to do in that moment is listen to (the client). If something else doesn't get done, that's OK. Just be present and make that person know that we're listening and that we're going to help her. She's grieving, and she's scared, confused, and overwhelmed."

His words hit me like a ton of bricks because of my closeness with my grandmother, and my memories of how heartbroken she was when my grandfather passed away. She had never handled all of this legal and financial stuff, and she was overwhelmed. My boss's words and that memory hit my passion for helping people and trying to lighten their burdens somewhat and help them find a path through their dark times. Never again in my life did anyone have to tell me about being present on the phone and making sure the client felt heard and knew we were going to help them get on a path to being OK. My brusque and short phone demeanor with people wasn't intentional, but I was trying to get stuff done. Without realizing it, I was annoyed that the phone kept ringing.

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I became a leader in our company and then trained people nationally on how to interact in that role and with those people on the phone. That's empowerment. Employers should help their teams enter programs that allow them to identify their employees' passions and how those tie into their roles in their companies. Employees need to discover how their unique abilities, their Kolbe, their Strength Finder, help them work into the right role. Then they can use those wonderful gifts they have in such a way that their bosses don't have to constantly motivate and inspire them.

These conversations don't need to take a lot of time if they're done right. The one with my boss was maybe 15 or 20 minutes. After that, it was me yammering on about how excited I was now to be in that role, that I got to be the first person to talk to people when they called. The effective part of the conversation was 10 minutes.

As a business owner, I don't want to talk to anybody about why she's showing up five minutes late or silly things like that. I don't want to have those conversations because we're all adults. I want to have conversations about employees' passions and how they can help our clients. I want to know whether my employees understand why clients hire us, the amazing difference we make in their lives, and how the employees can be a part of that.

Most business centers I know want to have that conversation all day; that's why they're in business. Most entrepreneurs, at least the ones whom we work with, are in the personal services world. That means they work very closely with people; they want to help people, and they are good at helping people and communicating with them. It's interesting that, when they then turn to work with their employees, they throw all of that out the window and say, "I don't know how to communicate with them."

Yes, they do! They're amazing with people. People pay money to work with them; they're called clients. Employers need to take those same skill sets for listening, problem-solving and creating confidence that they use all day with clients and turn it toward their teams. They'll be amazed at the results.

Employers shouldn't go small with their teams. They're way more than secretaries. They're way more than phone answerers. Employers just have to help support them in discovering that and give them the safe space to do that, knowing they might stumble, knowing it's an exercise, and knowing that it's not going to be pretty on the first go-around, but that they're learning to use those muscles, and they're learning to have the courage to speak up.

## **MODULE THREE: How employees can always provide value while systematizing roles for consistency**

The third module revolves around how an employee can always provide value while systematizing the role for consistency. At this point in the team empowerment program, people know what their roles are. They understand the top three things they do that matter to their companies, and they know what their measurements are. They're really clear about how their personal passions, and what matters to them, play into the company.

Now they have to get work done. They need to know what they can do with all of that once they're sitting at their desks. That's when we examine

how to continue to maintain the value they provide while systematizing their roles. How do we put in systems that enable them to be more effective and consistent? Employees don't want to hit a point of going crazy with all the work they have to get done, and then things that they've worked hard to implement start slipping away. So Module Three focuses on the day-to-day. As an employee sitting at your desk, how do you make

your job systematized and consistent; how can you operate effectively while still getting the meaning and value that you need?

## **MODULE FOUR: Having your team help you focus while working smarter**

The fourth module teaches employees to help their bosses focus while working smarter. This goes back to the conversation about how to have those impactful, crucial, honest, respectful, empowering conversations. It's a system for keeping them on task and helping the bosses stay focused. We teach very practical day-to-day methods for helping their bosses stay productive, while also providing a structure for the creative time bosses need for innovation. We teach the employee how to ditch the "babysitting" role with their boss, where both parties are frustrated and deadlines are still being missed, by using methods and structures to not say no, but instead to find ways to make it all work.

## **MODULE FIVE: Control your workplace, don't let it control you**

In the next module, people learn to control their workplaces and not let the workplace be in control. This module is about helping the employee learn to thrive in the unique role of supporting their boss while also having their own individual contributions and goals. Once employees realize that they're in a 360-degree dynamic wherein they have their own production work to do, yet they have a boss they're leading and supporting, it can be difficult to balance both of those. Employees can start to feel like they have whiplash and the workplace is really controlling them. We offer techniques for putting boundaries in place, for helping keep the boss focused and going in the right direction. Employees learn how to pull all of it together so it's manageable, and employees can feel like they're in control of their work weeks, rather than their work weeks just beating them up along the way.



## **MODULE SIX:** The eight keys to an empowering conversation

This module teaches how to really communicate while being honest and respectful. We have an entire process to help employees understand what it means to have an empowering conversation, one that causes people to feel motivated. Any time you work closely with other people, the ability to have an honest but respectful conversation is a must. Having the tools to have these conversations avoids unnecessary drama, meltdowns and misinterpretations, and it keeps great employees from quitting because they don't know how to be heard.

## **MODULE SEVEN:** Having employees become leaders who find and take ownership of their job and role

The seventh module focuses on how employees can become leaders. This process really starts to focus on what it means to be a leader and how to go about leading. Again, when an employee is still in a production role, this can be a bit tricky. We cover numerous techniques revolving around both the concept of a leader and what that really means, and how employees can step up and be leaders while working hip-to-hip with their coworkers.

## **MODULE EIGHT:** Making your dream team come true and making sure it doesn't fall apart

The last module is about making a dream team a reality and making sure it doesn't fall apart. At some point during team development, business owners start to get nervous when things are working well. There's an old saying about waiting for the other shoe to drop. They walk around with a level of anxiety, thinking, "This is too good to be true; this is going to fall apart."



Typically, at the 90-day mark, there is a meltdown or breakdown. We've had business owners tell us we can set our watches to it. They can't understand the dynamic, but it seems like every 90 days, something's falling apart – somebody's quitting, somebody's getting fired, somebody dropped the ball on a huge project, etc. This module focuses on how to take everything the employee learned and keep it in play, so it doesn't fall apart.

A favorite quote of ours is the African proverb: "If you want to go fast, travel alone. But if you want to go far, travel together." That's really the essence of this entire process. It's about working within people's passions and with their unique abilities, but also bringing that together and systematizing it. It's really about making the dream team a reality, keeping it going, and making certain it's never going to fall apart.

## Chapter 5: How to Empower Your Employees to Step Up and Lead

If we've learned one thing through years of coaching teams that makes the difference in creating teams that achieve their goals and last, it's keeping your team in a forum for empowerment and learning. The best way we've found to deliver that is through the Team Empowerment Academy™.

*“Inspiration comes forth from within. It’s what the light burning within you is about, as opposed to motivation, which is doing it because if you don’t do it, there will be negative repercussions. Motivation is making me do something that I don’t really want to do. Inspiration is having the clear picture of what I am wanting and letting universal forces come into play to get the outcome.”*

*- Abraham-Hicks*

Funny how sometimes we receive unexpected gifts in the strangest way. Ten years ago I lived in downtown Denver and had the greatest hair stylist in the city. She was the most expensive, took the longest time (three hours) and it was a bear to get in with her – but when I left I felt like a million bucks. She was more than a “stylist.” Fabulous hair was just a strategic by-product of what I received when I made it to the chair every six weeks. But that ended once I hit my 30’s: Along came babies and “the burbs.” Like most working mommies of two kids in the burbs, I found a new stylist in a very strategic way: the most convenient one I could find to make my life 1/10th easier.

Fast forward 10 years and welcome to social media. I recently reconnected with “Kimmy” on Facebook and remembered why I paid double the price, spent double the time and had to book months in advance – and didn’t ever think of canceling that appointment. Kimmy’s “wall” on Facebook was captivating, with beautiful photos of her work, positive quotes and inspirational YouTube videos from the work of Abraham and Hicks, “The Law of Attraction.”

Needless to say, I am a returning client of Kimmy’s and am reminded daily of why I am now traveling 40 minutes for a cut and color. No, we’re not going to get started on a diatribe about social media. What we want to discuss in this section is The Law of Attraction.

Every day I wake to a different “Law of Attraction” YouTube video link from Kimmy in my text messages. None of them is more than 12 minutes. This week, while chauffeuring my kids to sporting events, I opened up one of the texts from Kimmy on “Motivation vs. Inspiration.” I almost fell over as I heard the most amazing way to articulate what Laney and I have been trying to communicate with our “Keys to an Empowering Conversation.”

The essence of the message was the startling difference between motivation and inspiration.

Motivation typically has a soul of “because I think I should.” O.M.G. ... Laney and I have been saying this for years! You can’t motivate people; you can only inspire them. Pep talks only last for so long. The teachings go on to say that motivation is PAST tense. “You don’t want to motivate your employees to work hard for you. You want to shine the light on the purpose and the intent.” That gave me an “ah ha moment.” Motivation is really fear-based. Motivation, if you really think about it, typically has an underlying tone of manipulation. If you don’t do X, then you won’t ever get Y. You’re trying to convince the other person of why they should want “it” and how to “get it.” It is like constantly having to reignite a flame. Then the “motivator” begins to get frustrated, starts reading every book they can get their hands on to see how they can get better at their motivation tactics. They start signing up for every webinar and workshop offered on “motivating your employees (or husband or children) to do \_\_\_\_.” It doesn’t matter what’s filled in the blank, just please teach me how to motivate them to care. And that is the crux of why motivation is a failed paradigm. When you find yourself having to reignite the fire and retool your toolbox with different, better tools to “help them along,” you know you’re swimming upstream and stuck in the motivation trap.

Inspiration, on the other hand, arises from a feeling of “because I WANT it.” Inspiration is ease and flow. And when you spend two minutes on ease and flow because the engine is already in place and can reignite on its own, that is inspiration. Inspiration is present tense. There is nothing anybody has to do but a lot of what you “want to do.” When you are talking with an inspired person about an idea, a project or something future-based that you can’t even fully articulate, they chime in with “and then what about if we...” Or they say “I love the idea! Right now let’s finish the project we’ve already committed to, and let me start poking around on Google about this new idea. I think I have some ideas, but for now, let’s put it next on our project list. But I see where you’re headed and I’m excited.”

Think about it. Think about the past few conversations and interactions you have had. Were they motivation or inspiration? It has become so crystal clear to us. And WOW, what a freeing feeling that there is actually a definition for the difference between the two. If you can be awake to when you are motivating or inspiring someone, including yourself, you may realize that you just aren't that committed to something you've been trying to motivate yourself about. It's not the right fit. Move on and find what inspires you. Imagine a life of flow and ease when you only accept inspiration in yourself and others. It really is that easy.

Give your team the forum to find their inspiration WITHIN your company so they can be long-term superstars.

The program is virtual, with eight modules and two bonus modules. Once a purchase is made, the buyer has immediate access. It's an extraordinary program for team members to use for the rest of their lives.

We hear business owners say they don't know how to train employees. They don't know where to start in empowering them, other than with answering the phone or processing documents, or whatever their jobs may be. We've walked in their shoes; let us teach them.

The program is something that business owners can use for their on-board processes with new employees. It can also be used as a company retreat. It can be kept in reserve, and pieces of it can be revisited for a period of analysis and conducting a rapid improvement process as the business grows. It's something that they can incorporate into their business for the rest of its existence.

A unique thing we bring to the table is that we have been employees under entrepreneurs for many, many years. Fortunately, we were employed by entrepreneurs who were willing to have those conversations with us and let us learn these things together. It wasn't always pretty, but both sides stayed committed.

We have now become entrepreneurs, so we understand what it's like to be the entrepreneur and have the pressure of payroll and those other decisions. We can uniquely bridge that gap. We speak employee-speak; we know how to talk to them in their language, and we know what it's like to be in the trenches. It can be difficult to train employees when the employer has never been in that role; they're just not speaking the same language. They don't have that shared perspective.

## Here's How to Empower Your Employees to Step Up and Lead

Are you a business owner who is frustrated with balls constantly dropping, or with finding, hiring and training staff, or with a lack of skill set among team members necessary to take your business and revenue goals to the next level?

That's where we come in. We help people just like you train and empower your employees to be intrapreneurs who come "batteries included" and won't leave you high and dry when it matters most.

**Step 1: Enroll in The Team Empowerment Academy™.** This is the ONLY nationally recognized VIRTUAL certification program that trains business owners and THEIR TEAMS for business success mastery.

[www.hiringandempowering.com/product/the-team-empowerment-academy/](http://www.hiringandempowering.com/product/the-team-empowerment-academy/)

### **Step 2: Contact us for a FREE Smart Hire Diagnostic Call**

to help you define the role you are hiring for, to determine who will produce immediate results, and to learn how to find the superstars with the right attitude, integrity and core values who want a job to call "home" for a lifetime.

[www.hiringandempowering.com/product/the-smart-hire-solution-process/](http://www.hiringandempowering.com/product/the-smart-hire-solution-process/)

**Step 3: If you are ready to move at an enhanced pace,**

VIP Strategy Day is for you. This is a customized private consulting day in your office focused on business expansion and controlled growth.

**[www.hiringandempowering.com/we-speak/](http://www.hiringandempowering.com/we-speak/)**

Most entrepreneurs dread the “office stuff,” such as hiring, training, leadership, building, growing and action plans. They wish there was a way to outsource the whole process. Now there is. Contact us and we will take it from there so you can focus on what you do best.

**[www.HiringandEmpowering.com](http://www.HiringandEmpowering.com)**