

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

We throw around the phrase “set intention” quite a bit, but what does that really mean? And how is intention different from goals?

Welcome to Lean Leadership for Ops Managers, the podcast for leaders in Ops Management who want to spark improvement, foster engagement, and boost problem solving - AND still get their day job done. Here's your host, Leadership Trainer, Lean Enthusiast, and Spy Thriller Junkie, Jamie V. Parker.

Happy New Year! The new year is often a trigger for us to take time to reflect and set goals. So it's kind of this thing in the air, this feeling. And we're going to stay in that lane today but take a different spin as we dig into the area of leading with intention. And today we're talking with my friend Katie Anderson, author of *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn*.

I always love to hear Katie's perspective and watch her tenacity as she serves the Lean community. And in this discussion, I actually connected the dots that I'm not sure were fully connected before. So when you listen to this episode, you're going to hear my aha live as it happens. And Katie's also going to give a free resource to you our listeners. So be sure to stick around until the end for that. All right, let's jump into the good stuff.

Jamie: All right. Well, I'm so excited to be joined today by Katie Anderson. And we're going to talk a little bit about intention, and New Year and all the great things. So Katie, welcome to the show.

Katie: Thanks, Jamie. I'm really thrilled to be here with you.

Jamie: All right. Well, before we jump into all the good stuff about intention, if you could just maybe introduce yourself to the audience, I'd love for them to learn a little bit more about you.

Katie: Great, thanks. So I am Katie Anderson. I am a facilitator, a coach, a Lean practitioner, and now an author of a new book titled, *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn* which I'm sure we'll talk about a bit more later. And I came from a background in healthcare where I started to learn about how to do improvements in operations and moved from doing just process improvement to really focused on leadership development and competencies. And I started my consulting practice seven years ago so that I could work with all different industries and leaders at all levels of organizations to really help them lead with intention and achieve the operational outcomes that they want as well.

Jamie: Awesome. I love it. And so you started this firm, and then you had an opportunity that many of us have never had.

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

Katie: Well, this is total serendipity. So sometimes things in our lives come our way, where the stars are completely aligned and it's amazing. So I had just started my consulting practice, less than a year into it, my husband had an opportunity for us to move to Japan for his job.

Jamie: Yeah, that's fantastic, especially kind of having this Lean background and then being able to have an experience with mentors that go so much deeper.

Katie: Yeah. And also, what was really fascinating to me when I was living in Japan, and now I've gone back-- Gosh, I've been back probably over 10 times. And I take people to Japan, in non-pandemic years on deep immersion, week-long immersion trips to go learn about Toyota and many other companies and leadership practices. But one of the things that was really fascinating to me was to really discover that my preconceived notion of sort of that all of Japan was going to be run like divisions of Toyota, is totally not true. And so to really go into the nuances were what are some things that were really uniquely Japanese, or, I guess, helpful about the Japanese culture in terms of how the Toyota Production System and the Toyota way was developed? And what are some things that actually they were those principles or countermeasures for in Japanese culture? So that was super fascinating to me.

Jamie: Yeah. I love it. I feel like we could have a whole conversation just about that.

Katie: Yes, for sure.

Jamie: Maybe next time.

Katie: Yes. We can dive into that next time. We got to get back into being intentional.

Jamie: That's right.

Katie: Although the hook to intention, and maybe this is our segue. When we first moved to Japan, I knew that I had an opportunity that was super unique and that I was going to be very intentional about how I used that opportunity. And I hit the ground running and I went out and met as many people as possible and made connections and went out with purpose to go learn, and purpose to share those learnings with others. That's the time that I started writing my blog. So that it wasn't just learning for myself, but also intentional learning for a broader community as well. And so that concept of intention, which we're going to dive into today, is really important because it helps us define who we are and how we want to show up.

Jamie: Yeah, well, let's dive in. If you're listening to this podcast on the day that it releases, then we are just two days away from starting a new year. And for a lot of people, I think, especially this year, I don't know why we have this whole idea that when the clock changes from 2020, somehow, that's all in the past. And I know that's not the case, right? But I think, especially this year, people are

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

really looking forward to this idea, this fresh new start. And a lot of times the work that we're doing-- So there's this thing in the air about, hey, I want to be purposeful, and I want to actually make plans and be more present but I think we're going to take a little bit of a different approach than what is typically done at the start of a new year or a new quarter or a new birthday, or whatever time it is, whatever that trigger is for you to really come back and think about that. So today, we're really saying, "Hey, so what is intention really?" And I asked you on to talk about this because you do so much work about leading with intention. And so let me start by asking you what that even means.

Katie: The word intention has, for a long time, been an important one to me, but really took on a sort of deeper nuanced meaning during the time that I was living in Japan. And the reason before the word intention was important to me is I equated it to being purposeful, deliberate about making a choice to behave a certain way or be a certain way. And so a little funny backstory is that when I moved to Japan, I hadn't yet created a business logo and I certainly didn't have any business cards. I mean, I rarely hand out business cards in the US. And so I had business cards made, but I didn't have a logo. So I said, "Put the word for intention, but written in Japanese on my card." And so it came back with this the Kanji script and I later learned that this is a very powerful word in Japanese. And it comes in part from characters meaning heart and direction. And I took that to really have this sort of more refined nuance to signify that intention for us is about understanding what's important inside of us, who we are as people. What are our values? Who do we want to be? And then how do we align our actions in the direction of being that person or fulfilling that purpose? And to me, it's more profound. So really, that sense of being purposeful and self-aware of who we want to be, and then how we're showing up to really, truly be that person. And then what are the things that get in our way, that are not aligned with that sense of who we are, who we want to be? And to me, that really is really transformative when we create that awareness for ourselves for improvement and change for ourselves.

Jamie: Yeah, just listening to you kind of really brings this up because I think so often, we're just kind of thinking intention, and we almost use it like intention and goals and purpose, and we kind of use all of this interchangeably. And it sounds like you're saying, "Hey, this is a different type of meaning with these nuances than maybe what we sometimes use it for, which is more like, what are my goals? What am I trying to achieve today?"

Katie: Totally. And I think there's a strong link between goals and intentions, but they have a really important and subtle difference to them. So I see intention as being really connected with that heart if you think about what's deep inside of us, who we want to be, what our values. In many ways, our intentions are about how we interact with the world and with other people. And so how are we showing up as a person? And you can have some goals about what you're going to do to be able to align your behaviors in that action, but I see goals as more cerebral, so more associated with the head, whereas intentions or are associated with the heart. Goals are ones that we set, we analyze, we understand. It's like when we think of PDCA, the plan, do, study,

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

adjust cycle of continuous improvement, this is what we're trying to create - move towards targets and goals. They are measurable, they are achievable - hopefully, they are achievable - and they can help us fulfill our purpose, but they're more external and related to the sort of things we want to achieve rather than who we want to be. And I think that's a really important differentiator and yet, they're very strongly linked as well. It's important to have goals of what we want to achieve, and the targets to show if we're making progress along the way.

Jamie: Yeah, I'm listening to you talk, and so I have a couple of coaches that I use for different areas of my life. And I had a coaching call with one this morning, and we were talking about it, and she uses this mantra that she's been using for years that helps her then figure out "How do I want to show up?" So she's-- "I'm a CEO, who takes exceptional care of herself", right? And so when it's like, "Oh, am I going to get up in the morning and go do my run or not?" or whatever, you know, even if it's not that, even if whatever it is, she can use that as that directional piece because that's who she wants to be. That's the type of woman she wants to be.

Katie: That is a fantastic example, Jamie. So she's saying, "I am or I want to be this person. So my intention is to show up embodying this . . ."

Jamie: Yeah.

Katie: ...Purpose or a value or how she sees herself. And then what are all those actions that she needs to take? And so maybe if she's hitting the snooze button all the time, a goal to maybe move in the direction of fulfilling her intention or living her intention is, "How many times am I getting up when I said that I was going to get up?" And so that's a measurable goal that's aligned with fulfilling the intention of who she wants to be.

Jamie: Yeah. And it's so, so awesome. I'm just connecting all of these dots as you're talking like wait a minute, I just had this conversation this morning because she's been using that for years, and has challenged me of like, "But what is yours? What is your guiding kind of identity?" And so this is all coming together awesome for me right now. I hope others of you are listening and having those same aha moments.

Katie: Yeah, no, it's great too. We hear that word, like "set your intention" so much. And especially in yoga practices or other things, but it really is like, "Who do you want to be in this moment? And then how do you need to show up to be able to fulfill that?" And I talk about intentions can be on sort of a meta-level, like this example you just provide is more like, "Who do I want to be on sort of the highest level of how I am?" Or there could be at the micro-level of "In this specific interaction, what is my intention for, or my purpose in this interaction, or my intention for how I'm going to show up? Because we have different roles or different hats for wearing or different purposes we need to fulfill in different moments. And I think this is what I find is one of the most challenging things for leaders at any level in organizations, or people in more of a consulting or

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

coaching role is, “When am I the person who needs to be telling, to be setting the direction, to be more directive? And then when am I more in a people development role? And then I need to show up in a very different way.” And so almost what I recommend people to do and this was very important for me when I was trying to shift some behaviors for myself, is to take what I call an intention pause even like 15, 20 seconds before shifting into a new Zoom call or going into a meeting. “What’s my purpose in this moment? What’s my intention for how I’m going to show up for this person or in this interaction?” And you can re-anchor on “What are those actions or behaviors I’m going to take that align with that?” And it can be really transformative for staying connected and grounded in your purpose in the moment. And also, if you’re trying to make some changes in how you’re showing up, it can be really helpful and enabling for creating new habits.

Jamie: Yeah, I'd love that intention pause because I do think especially this audience, these are Ops Managers, they're out there, they're on the floor, it's the 15 million things coming at you. And I do think it's very easy to get into the hamster wheel where you just go, go, go, go, go, go, go, and that 20-second pause could make the difference.

Katie: Absolutely. It helps us reset from being just reactive because most of our habits as humans and when we're reacting is to be more telling and to be more directive, just giving the answer. Let's get through it to be more proactive and really conscious about how we're showing up and deliberate about how we're behaving. And in some ways, it can be calming too, just our life, things feel so busy and chaotic sometimes that it's easy to just sort of-- I like how you described it on the hamster wheel just going, going, going, going and we lose sight of that self-awareness about what's going on around us. And so those even just micro intention pauses can be really powerful.

Jamie: Yeah, fantastic. So thinking about that, too, so we've got the possibility of using these intention pauses but I know this is something I've struggled with, and I imagine some other folks listening in have as well, is that I might say, “You know what? This is who I want to be maybe at a meta-level, or for this week, or how I want to show up, or even today. Today I'm going to show up present. I am going to be whatever it is that I say.” And I will write it down, and I will read it out loud. And I'm saying, “I am setting this. This is who I am going to be and how I'm going to show up for the day.” And then the next thing you know, I turn around, it's six o'clock, and I'm like, “What the heck! That's not how I showed up.”

Katie: I know. Well, and this is where we need to break it down into goals and targets and really clear plans for practice because it's too hard to change a whole value or all of a sudden switch into something else. It's about then breaking it down and understanding “What are those behaviors and actions that align with who I want to be with my intention? And then what are the things that I like that are actually enabling good habits? And what are ones that are maybe more limiting or triggers that happen for me?” Like, “When I'm under pressure I become more directive.” Okay, so then what's one thing that you're going to practice deliberately - or with intention - to work towards

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

getting better at showing up as the person that you want to be? Because it's too overwhelming to just be like, "Oh, I'm going to be all these things." So what's the one small thing that you're going to practice? And that's where we can do even sort of the micro PDSA or PDCA cycles of improvement for ourselves. So even as you said, write it down, and then at the end of the day, reflect on how you did. And it's okay if it didn't go as planned. That's an opportunity for learning and adjusting as well. But we can't change everything all at once so what's the one thing you're really, really working on? I'm saying this and I'm reminding myself that at the same time because I'm always--

Jamie: I do, I think sometimes there's this need or this desire to get this permission for that because it can be hard. I think sometimes we have so much we want to change and improve, and we can see it, right? That's when you know it's like, "Oh, my goodness, I can start to see all of this now." So you know you're making progress and learning how to see it, which just means that sometimes, I think for me, I just like, "Oh, this and this and this and this, and I've got to change this about me," or whatever. And then, you know.

Katie: Yeah, and it happens gradually, but when you put intentional and deliberate practice to it, then you really can see improvements. And it can be overwhelming at times, especially when you start to realize maybe there are things that you do that are habits that are really not aligned with who you want to be or how you see yourself. And that can be hard sometimes. Okay, well see this as an opportunity for doing something different. And sometimes even just having that self-awareness starts making some changes into itself.

Jamie: Yeah. And I think for Ops Leaders, especially where you probably had some history with more of that command and control style or some background that's typically what we've grown up with, and you've had more of that telling, more of that natural state, and you've identified and you've recognized, "Oh, you know what? I can better serve my people if I choose to sometimes, not all the times, but sometimes be in that development space, and being able to really make that choice."

Katie: Totally. And I am a recovering or still recovering teller. I'm an extrovert and I love to jump in, and in my enthusiasm for getting ideas and helping people when it's not my responsibility to be solving a problem, I'm missing out on things or missing out on an opportunity to help their learning. And so I've had to chip away at that for myself, like really practice - and I have to do this today - to not interrupt people, especially when I get excited to lead with asking questions first before immediately giving my answer, and giving space for thinking like counting to 10 after I ask a question. And it's super painful, but these are the, I guess, countermeasures I've put in place for these habits that are still deeply ingrained in myself. But it's practice and having that sense of intention and who you want to be can be really helpful in sort of staying the course.

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

Jamie: Yeah. So let me ask you about the book. So *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn*, and this idea of leading with intention, would you say that there may be any stories or connectors that are explored in that book that have some relevance here?

Katie: Absolutely. And so again, the subtitle of this book is *Lessons from Toyota Leader Isao Yoshino on a Lifetime of Continuous Learning*. And there are a few things in there that really relate to this sense of intention. The first is actually at the organizational level, where Mr. Yoshino shared with me in one of our very early conversations when I was still living in Japan, I was trying to probe like, "What's the secret to Toyota? Why are they so successful? How come they've been emulated in terms of its culture around the world or tried to be emulated?" He said, "There's no secret to Toyota." And then finally, one day, he said, "Well, there's no secret to Toyota except its attitude towards learning." And really, fundamentally, everything they do comes back to a deliberate and intentional practice of learning. And they see themselves as an organization that builds people so that they can build cars. And so that's a really different intention of who they want to be at a company, cultural level, and that permeates all the way through for generations. And they still have to put deliberate practice to that. Mr. Yoshino, in the book, talks about sort of how every 20 years they've had to put into place new leadership development programs that kind of, as he called it, re-tighten the belt to reinforce those leadership habits. But that's, again, intentional decisions by the leadership about fulfilling who they want to be as a leadership culture.

That's at the organizational level. And there are countless stories at the personal level about showing up with intention, but one that comes to mind, I mean, there are so many, but the one that's coming to mind right now is an experience that Mr. Yoshino had when he was probably similar ages as you and I - I won't call that out but in our mid careers - and he'd had a long-held goal, like a lifetime goal. And actually, it was probably that of his purpose, which was to be an international person, but his goal was to go move to the United States. And he finally, after 20 years at Toyota, he got the opportunity to move to the San Francisco Bay Area. And he was thrilled, and his family moved with him. He had a wife and three grade school daughters at that time, but he moved. And he was super excited and quickly realized that his job was not as glamorous as he had expected. And he considers himself he was like a gopher. He was getting cats out of trees, and he was basically doing the jack of all trades types of stuff. And he was pretty bummed out and he was kind of spiraling into a kind of a bummed out state. These are not his words. He did not use "bummed out" in our conversations. But for the first six months, just kind of getting really down in the dumps about everything and kind of starting to have a negative attitude.

And then he realized, it wasn't an epiphany all at once, but he had this realization that he had a choice. He could either be frustrated and bummed out and have a terrible experience for the next two and a half years or he could decide to be a different person. He could be this bummed out person or that wasn't aligned with who he really was or what he wanted the experience to be. And so he made an intentional shift in his mindset and he decided to set a goal to help him get aligned

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

with his intention of who he wanted to be, which was a people-centered leader that was engaged and took advantage of opportunities. And so he set a goal for himself and for his team that he personally was going to be the number one gopher in all of Toyota internationally, and his team was going to be the number one. So they shifted their mindset to they were always going to say yes or seek to fulfill all of their customers' requests to the utmost satisfaction or exceeding satisfaction. And because he set that goal for himself, he actually created the opportunity to fulfill his and live with intention. And he led with intention there too, which was aligning with the true purpose of himself, which was to have a great international experience, to be a good leader, to deliver great service to his customers. And so that was an interesting connection between how setting a tangible goal allowed him to make behaviors or make a mindset shift that then would align with who he really saw as how he saw himself.

Jamie: Yeah. So kind of it's, like two way.

Katie: Yeah, two way. And so he also was leading with intention there because he was really clear that he wanted his staff too to have this greater sense of purpose in fulfilling who they were opposed to just someone doing kind of task-y types of things. Like, no, I have a really important job at the organization, and that shift is so powerful. And it's how we define ourselves, that sense of intention. And so he chose that he wanted to not define himself in this negative way, he wanted to align himself with being able to be this positive person.

Jamie: Yeah. I love it. So inspiring and, I think, applicable to all of us at different points in our lives, for sure.

Katie: Yeah, for sure. We all have had times where we've had disappointments and things like that.

Jamie: That's right.

Katie: Well, we can't change our situation, but we can change how we act and react to that situation and what we do with it.

Jamie: Fantastic. All right. So what would you say if there are folks listening in saying, "Okay, I'm learning a little bit more about maybe this difference between intention and goals, some of the nuances, and I want to take the next step here." What would be some next steps that someone could consider?

Katie: Great. Well, there are a few things that can be very helpful, which is first starting to process for yourself, write down who do you want to be? What is important to you? And then doing some self-reflection on "What are the things that I do that align with that? And what are some of the things that I do that maybe don't align with that or get in the way with me being able to align with that?" And then doing a simple, I would say what I keep going back to, the PDCA, which is

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

choosing one thing that you want to improve on, setting a goal for your improvement, and a clear plan for some practice, and going through with deliberate practice. And I have a very simple template that helps. You can use it or just use it as a framework that helps support daily practice of setting an intention, a plan for practice, and then importantly, a plan for reflection on how your practice went, and what are you learning - going back to this concept that it's all about learning - and what are you going to adjust for the next day. So I'll share that with people at the end. But taking just 10, 15 minutes to create space to process, to set an intention, and to reflect is very powerful in creating improvement and being able to really live and lead with more intention in your life.

Jamie: All right, fantastic. And what would you say are maybe some closing thoughts or words of encouragement, recommendations? What is that last little piece you want to leave folks with?

Katie: Oh, my gosh, is that we all have opportunities for improvement. And what I consider to be the most important thing is to connect with a sense of purpose for yourself and take that time to reflect on "Who am I and who do I want to be?" and use that as inspiration to help you move forward and to live and lead your life more purposefully, deliberately, and with intention and that we all have opportunities for improvement. So it's not about beating ourselves up, but it's about seeing each experience as an opportunity to continuously improve and get better and together, support each other in that.

Jamie: Fantastic. So Katie, tell us again, the name of the book, where we can find the book, and where we can learn more about you.

Katie: Great. Well, the book is *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn: Lessons from Toyota Leader Sal Yoshino on a Lifetime of Continuous Learning*. I have a website for the book, which is just learningtoleadleadingtolearn.com, which has links to buy it. Or you can go directly to Amazon, which has the book in both ebook and paperback format, and other places as well. And then you can reach me at my website which is KBJ Anderson. My initials are KBJA so that's where that came from. Katie Andersen was not an easy URL to get so I'm <https://kbjanderson.com/>. And as I said, we'll have a special framework and template for you to practice and use with intention to improve yourself and to create some deliberate practice for yourself.

Jamie: All right. Fantastic. So that's <https://kbjanderson.com/>

Katie: Yes.

Jamie: And if you go to our show notes, we'll of course have all the links so you can easily find those there as well. Katie, thank you so much for joining in on this conversation. This is fantastic.

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

Katie: Thank you, Jamie, and Happy New Year to you.

Jamie: Isn't Katie fantastic? You know, two or three years ago, I was out in California with a client and then doing some work with Gemba Academy workshop on Gemba walks. And Katie was there as well so our paths crossed. And pretty quickly that first day of meeting we really clicked and connected on different areas with kind of backgrounds and learnings and values. And so I hope some of that came through today and that you were able to see all the great things that I see in Katy as well.

Now, before we talk about your next step, let's do a quick summary. So I love this distinction. Intention is connected to the heart, the who we are, which means setting an intention is setting who you want to be, while goals are connected to the mind, more of an outcome of what we want to achieve. And this idea here that intention can be at the meta-level, Katie used that language, that bigger, overarching definition of self, but it also can be at the interaction level. What type of person do I want to be? How do I want to show up in this interaction? And of course, everything in between too. So this idea of setting an intention for an interaction is really what we're doing when I talk about the five leadership interactions - recognizing that they're different and deciding how we want to show up in that moment, knowing that we're going to have all five types of interactions every single day. So if you want to learn more about the five leadership interactions and how they exist on a continuum of telling to asking to listening, then check out episode 14. It's called "Don't Succumb to Command and Control". And you can find that episode at <https://processplusresults.com/podcast/014/> . So that's <https://processplusresults.com/podcast/014/> .

And of course, Katie shared some great ideas about taking an intention pause, some steps we could take to reflect, and encouragement to start with one thing.

So what is your next step? And how do you get that daily reflection template that Katie offered? Well, let's talk about it. Your next step, I want you to reflect on one thing that you want to set an intention for. It may be your big, overarching intention, like my coach who says, "I'm a woman who takes exceptional care of herself." Or it may be picking one area and setting an intention around that. For example, if you've noticed that you spend more time on the telling side of the leadership interactions continuum, and you want to be the type of leader who spends more time asking and listening than telling, then define that and set an intention there about who you want to be, the type of leader you want to be, and how you want to show up. It's up to you but reflect and pick your one thing.

Now, if you want to go further, I encourage you to download the daily reflection template that Katie is offering to all of our listeners so that you can develop the habit of reflection, and accelerate your learning and personal improvement. To get that daily reflection template, you

Intentional Leadership with Katie Anderson | 021

head over to Katie's website. It's <https://kbjanderson.com/ops> , that's O-P-S, ops. So again, that site is <https://kbjanderson.com/ops> .

Now, of course, that link and links to everything else we talked about today will be in our show notes. So if you don't want to remember that, just remember to head over to our podcast page at processplusresults.com/podcast. Until next time.

We are in a season of giving. So I encourage you to think about who in your network might benefit from this podcast, and give them the gift of development by sending them a link to your favorite episodes, or just to the podcast in general. That link is <https://processplusresults.com/podcast/> . And I wish you, your families, and your teams all the best this holiday season.