

## **Rabbits, Raccoons, and Resolve in 2020 | 018**

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.

Hello, hello. You ready to hear about rabbits and raccoons today? Surely you're curious. Well, as we approach the close to the calendar year, I wanted to do a little recap of my year, including the biggest lesson I learned and how it might help you too. So I'm going to tell some stories, walk you through my year. Hang in there, it will be worth it.

Now 2020 kicked off on fire. In both January and February, I was able to be on-site with a client that I love, and I was able to spend time with my family in Georgia, and I also met some fabulous women who became friends at a retreat in Savannah. It was awesome, even though it was a little stressful. I think there was like a five-week time period where I was only home five or six days the entire five weeks. But not to worry, because as we all know, I've had plenty of downtime later in the year.

In fact, on March 3, I had neck surgery. I was in the hospital less than 24 hours before my friend Tonya was able to help take me home. And considering it was neck surgery, the recovery wasn't too bad. I spent about a week essentially just moving between the bed and the couch. And then the second week, I was able to start taking walks but I still had to have a friend chauffeur me around because I was weaning off those pain pills and muscle relaxers. The great news is that the surgery was a success. And what I didn't know at the time is that I just barely got in before elective surgeries, if you will, were put on hold.

In fact, just when I was coming back from recovery and getting ready to travel again, in the US, the public was really beginning to realize that COVID-19 was way more serious than the flu. In a matter of one week, every single client travel was canceled, and every single speaking engagement was canceled. A couple of my clients were able to continue on with virtual delivery, but maybe on a smaller scale than originally planned, and a couple of clients canceled engagements completely. So there was this kind of immediate loss of income. And I know there are lots of people that experienced this.

Now, up until that point, most of my clients found me through my training workshops at conferences. So it meant that my lead generation pipeline disappeared. Like in that week, every single speaking engagement canceled, lead generation pipeline gone. But I had resolve. I knew that I could experiment and iterate my way through the challenge and 2020 kept on happening. In April, I had a sewer backup and had to do a partial basement remodel to the tune of \$17,000. Luckily, most of that was covered by insurance, though, of course, they dropped me promptly when it was renewal time due to the claim, so, you know.

In May, my dad had a heart attack and died. And I flew to Georgia and spent several weeks there, in part with my family and in part handling all the things that have to get done. It's not an easy process. I mean, my parents were still married and living together but they had separate bank accounts, and just getting

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utilities moved over to my mom's name and her bank account so it would automatically withdraw from her account instead of his, it required a death certificate, and he had to jump through hoops. So there's lots of administrative stuff and details that I was helping my mom with. And because of coronavirus, we didn't hold a traditional service. But I spent those few weeks at home with my family.

Now, while I was in Georgia, the restoration company was at my house in Denver replacing the carpet in the basement and doing all the things, and my friend Liz stopped by a couple of times to check on the house or to get packages. Now when I returned home, I had to put the basement back together because all the remodel had been done but the furniture and the things, all the things were shoved into a single room. So I was putting all that back together kind of going up and down the stairs.

And at one point - this is hours into this process - I was walking down the stairs, started walking across the room when I caught a glimpse of it out of the corner of my eye.

I jumped. "OMG, what is that?"

I don't think it's a rat. Let me get a little closer.

It's a baby rabbit outside my house, a baby rabbit in my basement. What is up?"

I tried to capture it in a box, but it hopped away and got behind my washer and dryer. So essentially, I closed the laundry room door so that hopefully it was trapped inside. My city's animal control came out, and I got to tell you, this guy was fantastic. He was lovely. So city of Littleton Animal Control, props to you.

But he came out and he brought a trap, and he showed me how to set it. And I checked it the next day and nothing was there. So I'm like, "Okay, let me refresh the lettuce and the veggies and stuff that were in the trap. And I'm going about my day, and I'm sitting on my couch upstairs. So I live in this ranch house that has a fully finished basement. So I'm sitting in the main living level, sitting on my couch, looking out the window, doing my thing, and I caught the movement out of the corner of my eye again.

And there went this baby rabbit hopping all the way across my upstairs living room. You've got to be kidding me. So this time I got a box and kind of got it-- He actually went to a corner, which was really helpful. So it kind of ended up in the corner, and I got it in the box and was able to get the bunny rabbit into this box and kind of close the lid enough to where it wouldn't be able to get out.

So my super friendly animal control guy came back out for me again, awesome, right? And I'm like, surely this is not the same rabbit because I shot that laundry room door. What did he do, hop up all the stairs to get up from the basement? I don't know. So we went down to the laundry room and he's in the utility room

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and he's digging deeper than he did the first time. The first time we just kind of set the trap. So this time he's like, "Let me figure out what's going on." And here's what he found.

Number one, he found a dead baby bunny. So he pulled that out and removed it because it was way back kind of between the walls. And he said, "Yeah, you still have at least one more living down here." He's like "I couldn't get to it. He's kind of in between these little walls area down in the utility rooms so I can't get to it. So let's move this trap to a better location." So he took the dead one, and he took the live one to release it to a new area, and now I've got the trap moved to a better location. And the next morning, okay, bunny rabbit in the trap, so he came and removed that one as well, and there were no more rabbits. But here I was, I had three rabbits living in my basement in the laundry and utility room. Where in the world did they come from? I don't know.

So I have this wildlife company come out to do an assessment on the house, and they're not 100% sure where they got in. We did go ahead and put some wire closures over a couple of potential openings like dryer vents and all those kinds of things. But they also said there's a possibility that they got in through what's probably a tiny little crevice by the house that's underneath the deck. So we can't see it. And it's a ranch so my deck isn't up high. It's just about a foot off the ground. And we can't see back there; it's too far. And we don't want to tear apart the deck just to find out here. So the wildlife company said, "If you have continued problems, then we can tear the deck apart. Or then we can get all the animals out and do this whole wire enclosure so they can't get back in or something else." But they said, "For right now we just think you just need to wait and see." I'm like, "All right, cool."

So all right. I'm halfway through the year, right? This is through June, this is in June when all the rabbits are happening. So let me check in. How you do there? You hanging in? Because at this point, I've done a ton of travel. I had a basement remodel because of a sewer backup. My dad died and I've had rabbits living inside my house through the first half of the year. But the year sure as heck ain't over. Because you see, in July, I see, let's call it evidence, piles of waste that a raccoon is chilling around my house. Now I see this, I know it's there. It's not particularly high on my list. There are raccoons, there are animals around what are you going to do, right? I have lots of rabbits that live in my yard, all that kind of stuff.

So one morning, I am going out, and this in July, and I'm going out to the back, out my back door. And I don't have a sprinkler system, so I got to do the old school, you know, turn the sprinkler on and off at the water spigot. And so I'm going on to turn the sprinkler off and I leaned down and that raccoon sucker was staring back up at me from inside my window well, let's say, I don't know, maybe four feet from where I was. I'm like, "Oh my goodness." In the middle of the day. Well, I guess it was the morning, but it was daylight. This wasn't nighttime. And later on in the day, I saw him back in the window well because I walked down the basement, and I could see him from inside. From inside I could see through the window and see that sucker sitting there. And then later on the day, I walk out and he's just chillin' on my deck, just chilling out. And then later, I go out and on one of the chairs I have in my backyard, he's just hanging

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out there. I'm like, "What is going on?" This is all daylight. Aren't raccoons supposed to be nocturnal? Why are you hanging out in my backyard during the day?

So I start walking toward him and he runs away, and guess where he went. Yep, underneath my deck. Look, I'm not a wildlife person. I don't live on a farm. I don't live in the woods. I don't like to camp. I live in the suburbs. And while I respect wildlife, I prefer to not have them all the way up on me. But mostly, I'm nervous because what if those bunnies did get into my house through a small opening underneath the deck that I can't see or get to? Could the raccoon tear its way inside the house? I mean, we've all read or heard the horror stories of the raccoons tearing off the things on the top of your roof and getting into your attic, right? Well, could he do the same thing from underneath my deck? Now I looked up having this professional come out and do this big whole raccoon removal process. I'm like crazy expensive, right? It's going to be like a grand just to get rid of the thing.

So a friend helped me out. And so he set a trap right where I saw the raccoon go under my deck. Now, the first morning, nothing, right? Nothing there. So he refreshed the bait that afternoon. The second morning, I went outside, and I could tell there was something in the trap. I'm like tiptoeing across the deck. And guess what? They were two. Two raccoons in the trap, little kid raccoons in the trap. If you want to see all the pictures of this stuff, I will put them all up on my website. So go to [processplusresults.com/podcast](https://processplusresults.com/podcast) and then find episode 18, and I'll put these [pictures 12:15] up.

So now I'm like, "Okay, I have these two raccoons." So my friend comes over and he's relocating them. This is all humane stuff. So he's just relocating them in a place that they can reside and not live under my deck. But I'm also thinking, "If there are two, there's maybe more." Who knew that I was going to be Googling "How many raccoons in a litter?" I didn't know this stuff. I'm Googling all kinds of things. So we reset the trap, nothing. And for two mornings it was empty. And then the third morning, another raccoon in the trap. Like what? So he takes that one back out as well. And we came up empty a couple more mornings, like, empty, empty, okay. But one evening, I was outside in my backyard a little bit later and I saw a fourth raccoon in my yard. This one hissed at me like [hiss], all right, probably man that I took his brothers. But we never could trap it. For days after days, it was not going to fall for the same trap. So I think it moved on, like found somewhere else to hang.

So that was July. All this raccoon business started going down in July. Now, also in July, my family visited me. So I normally live alone but now I had six additional people in the house with me because I had my mom, my brother, my sister in law, my niece Emery, my sister in law's aunt, uncle, Uncle Don and aunt Janie, we're here. So now instead of having one person in the house, we got seven people in the house. And we're getting ready one morning, an alarm and alarm goes off on my phone. You see, after that whole sewer backup basement thing in April, I bought a water alarm. And my phone said it was going off, so I ran downstairs and water was just starting to back up through the floor drain. "All right, everybody out of the showers! Don't use the water!" So I was able to catch this but I'm like, "What in the world? Why is the water backing up already? So while my family went out and did their thing for the day, including, by the way, going to The Inventing Room Dessert Shop, which I talked about in the last episode with the

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glow in the dark boxes. They went actually to go and get a hands-on training or class there where they did tastings and stuff.

But anyway, so while they were doing that, I stayed behind to meet a plumber and he cleared the sewer line, but he said. "Hey, there are major issues that need to be addressed." So a couple weeks later, I had a few different companies come out and review it and give me recommendations and quotes. And it turns out, I had to replace my entire sewer line from my house all the way to the main line all the way to the other side of the street. That's 13k in case you're wondering, \$13,000 repair right there. So I hired a company, but then we went into a waiting pattern because it had to go through the permitting process with the city. And that process was delayed even further because they were trying to figure out all this work from home stuff. They weren't in the offices.

Now, August comes, I'm still in my waiting pattern. But August comes, and I go on my first work trip since February. I was masked, I had all the precautions, I even traveled with a thermometer and checked my temperature every day. And it was so good. It felt so good to be out on-site working with a client again. When I got home from that trip, my AC wouldn't turn on. Turns out there's a furnace motor that needs to be replaced. Oh, my goodness.

In September, I finally got that permit for the sewer and the sewer work was done. Now, I live on a residential street but it's a busy residential street. It's actually a double yellow centerline. You know what that means? It means I had to pay for flaggers to be there to manage traffic all day while the work was done. And I was like, "Oh, my goodness, I'm so glad that my neighbors are actually going to work and are not trying to work from home right now because of the jackhammer through the asphalt." But it's done. It was done. The company was fantastic. So that's what's been going on the home front so far this year. Want to know what's going on now?

Well, my garbage disposal stopped working. So just this week, now I got to call someone to come out and do my garbage disposal. And that fourth raccoon, he's back. You see, I saw some fresh "evidence" around my house again, but I couldn't tell where he was. Or is he living up back under my deck? Is that the deal? I don't know. So Amazon Prime Day, I bought an outdoor camera to add to my ring system and that very first night, the raccoon walked by. But then for like 10 days, nothing. Ten, 12 days, never caught it, never caught it, never caught it. It was catching bunny rabbits. It was catching raccoons on the motion sensor but then it came back, then it caught it again. And so now it's not an every night thing. I'll catch it on the camera every now and then but then he's gone. So I don't think he's living under my deck. I think he's just coming to chill, but I don't know. So let's just consider Fourth Raccoon, a work in progress.

And I continue to work through my year of firsts without my dad - my first Father's Day, my first birthday, and now our first set of holidays. And through all of that on the home front, remember that I was trying to experiment and iterate my way to a more diversified business model and lead gen model? Remember all that optimism I felt back in April? Well, that optimism was wavering. Frustration was kicking in, some occasional thoughts of "What am I doing?" or "I'm not cut out for this", or imposter syndrome, "Who am I

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to--?" And I was really starting to tire of failing forward or learning through iteration or whatever you want to call it. And I imagine this is what some of our teams feel when we come at them with improvement or we try to do improvement to them. I imagine this is what some of our teams feel when we throw it over the fence to them without helping them through the learning process. I imagine this is what some of our teams feel even when we do everything right. Because when you're working through the unknown, it's often not easy. It takes courage and commitment and tenacity.

For me, my network of women entrepreneur friends, remember those women I met in January, they were my rock through all of it. They were the ones that kept me in the game. They were the ones that kept me accountable to myself. They're the ones that gave me encouragement and grace along the way. And they were the ones that I could borrow confidence from when I didn't have it for myself. And we have to do that for our teams too. We have to encourage them and help them stay accountable to their commitments, and believe in them, even when they don't believe in themselves.

You know, folks are out there talking about how ready they are for 2020 to be over as if some magic thing happens on New Year's Eve that will reset for 2021, but we all know that's not how it works. We're still going to be battling a pandemic. We're still going to have economic impacts from that pandemic. We're still going to have racial inequities and social justice issues that need to be worked. And who knows? I might even still have that damn raccoon hanging out in my backyard. But as I think back through my 2020, through a year when I faced more adversity than I thought I could handle, this is the biggest lesson I learned. Ready for it? Here it is.

My biggest lesson of 2020 is that I can do hard things. I can do hard things. I can survive through hard things. I can learn and turn hard circumstances into a better future.

And here's what I want to say to you.

You can do hard things too.

And if you need it, you can borrow my confidence in you.

What's the biggest or most impactful lesson that you learned this year? I'd love to hear it.

Until next time.

As we close out the calendar year and plan for 2021, this is a great time to evaluate what Lean or leadership development your Operations team needs. Ready to explore options? Then let's chat. Schedule a call at my website. Just go to [www.ProcessPlusResults.com](http://www.ProcessPlusResults.com) and click the "Schedule a Call" button.

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