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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.

[00:00:28] Before we jump in to today's episode, I want to recognize and thank Meg from Meg Ray Media for her contributions and impact to this podcast. Meg has edited the audio and made cover art for probably 100 episodes. And more importantly, Meg helped me get this podcast off the ground, which is a lot of moving parts to coordinate and a lot of work to get done and something I would not have been able to do on my own. And she's been a great sounding board as I've learned this medium. So while Meg won't be editing the podcast anymore, her work here has had such an impact. Now you can find Meg or work with her at Megraymedia.com. And that's Ray with an A, so megraymedia.com.

All right. This is the season of Big News. Last episode, I shared the news that we've hired consultants to join the team, which really helps us create more value for clients. And the next big news. Well, turns out I will be spending a lot of time in Evansville, Indiana, over the next year. Now, listen, I'm keeping my house in Colorado. I'm not selling it. I'm also coming back for Broncos games and to see friends and to work with clients here. And I will also have a temporary rental home in Newburgh, Indiana, which is the next town over from Evansville. In fact, this is the last episode this year that I will record from my home in Colorado.

[00:02:00] And by the time you hear it, I will already be in Newburgh, Indiana. Now, this possibility has been in the works for a few months and I am super excited. We're still serving all of our clients. We're still taking on new clients. And I will also be close to one of my clients to do some short term, deeper level work with them. I also am 100% confident that this is exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. You know how sometimes the universe seems to be conspiring against you? Like obstacle after obstacle comes up?

Well, this is one of those situations where the universe seems to be lining things up perfectly, even if it doesn't seem like it in the moment. Even if it seems like obstacle, obstacle, obstacle. But then those all just get cleared. They just cleared. Get cleared and the right thing happens. I'm like, Look at that. This is perfect. This is perfect. This is perfect.

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So I know this is exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. And I want to share with you a little bit about what's been happening in my world the last few weeks, how uncertainty can kind of impact performance and examples of process waste in both physical and thought processes. And I think, you know, I'm just going to tell you the story of what's been what I've done, like where I've fallen down, where I've had some success.

[00:03:21] But I think you're going to be able to see parallels to your work. So as you're listening to this story, you know, don't just think about it as like, oh, this is a moving story. Think about it like, oh, how does this what are the parallels to the work? How does this show up in my work? How does this show with my team's work has to show up in our operations management team's work?

Okay. All right. So when I decided to offer to make this temporary Indiana based assignment, I thought, oh, this is going to be easy. I'll just rent out my house furnished, you know, some corporate rental or something. Then I'll rent a furnished place in Evansville. You know, I'm just going to put my clothes in my car and drive out. And you know what? Since it's cheaper in Indiana than Colorado, I'm probably going to make some extra cash in the meantime. Ha ha ha. None of that is true.

Once everyone involved in the decision was a solid yes, it was time for me to start the process renting my house out furnished. Turns out it's a much bigger challenge than I was expecting. Not impossible, but not a guarantee. In fact, I called five property management companies. Three of them wouldn't take it furnished at all. It had to be completely vacant. One of them would take it furnished, but only if I committed to being gone for at least two years.

And one said she would take it, but warned me about how hard it would be and it might take longer and we might not get as much money for it, and we might have to make concessions. It didn't exactly instill confidence, but she was the only one even willing to take it. Well, guess what? Renting a furnished place in Evansville? Yeah, not so easy either. Which baffles me, because aren't there be like people like me on both sides of this fence? But here we go.

There are Airbnbs and furnished places in Evansville, but those folks were really just not willing to reduce their rates for longer lease terms. Right. It was like they were still wanting high numbers, right? I went to

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one that was a contender like I was when I went out to go visit. I thought for sure this was it. This was going to be the one place I was going to live at.

So here's what it was. It was a big old house, like three or four stories or something, and it had been converted to apartments. So there were now actually seven apartments in this big old house. And it was furnished, had two bedrooms. One was actually a decent size, one was smaller, kind of like more like an office at one and a half bathrooms.

[00:05:35] But it turns out it was close to a main road. So I didn't love the traffic like it wasn't a deal breaker, but I didn't love it. It was a little dingy. The neighbor's dog barked the whole time like hello and the deal breaker ready for it. There was one shared laundry in the foyer for all seven apartments. Look. No, go. I'm in my forties. I am not open to shared laundry, so I figured I'm going to have to get an unfurnished place.

I'm still not going to move all of my stuff out for a year and then turn around and move it right back. That does not make sense. No one likes moving that much, so I knew I'm going to have to, like, buy furniture, right? And I'm cool with that. It'll give me a chance to, like, stalk Facebook marketplace. So fine. So decision made. I cannot find a furnished place. The only thing I can find at this point is unfurnished. Cool. Good to know.

But finding a place? Yeah. Not as easy as I thought it would be either. So. And yes, part of this is like me being picky. Okay, fine. But the suburbs in Evansville to me are kind of like the country, right? Like, sure, there's a Chili's and there's a Best Buy and stuff like that.

[00:06:49] And there is an apartment complex and then it's like open fields, right? So it's lots of driving, lots of open fields, and it just didn't feel like the right place to make home base for this temporary assignment. It just it was like, I mean, didn't rule it out, but like they just didn't seem like the right thing to do. So I was really looking at downtown Evansville and Haney's corner, which is the art district.

So as I'm looking at these apartments, though, in these areas, guess what? They are tiny. Most of them are one bedroom. Most of them are like 700 square feet, 800 square feet. Like I looked at some because I

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was like, well, this is on Main Street. It's perfect. It's so cute. It'd be great, but it's just too small, you know, when you think about it. I do a lot of work from a home office, right? And I've got to have a dedicated space. Even this one on Main Street, I'm like, Oh, I'll bring a rent, an office space across the street. I'm going to rent a dedicated office space across the street. But it's still I was like, it just still isn't going to work. So I'm searching, I'm searching, I'm searching. And I ended up with a backup apartment. It was a new build, a new construction. It was about a mile from downtown. It's two bedroom, two bathroom, and it's scheduled to be ready for the move in in mid-June.

[00:08:04] Now, you and I have both probably had enough experience with construction to know ready by mid-June means it's going to get pushed to end of June and then push to mid-July. And so there was some uncertainty with this about like when's it actually going to be ready? And on top of it, it still kind of felt like I was settling, like it was okay, it would work, but it wasn't quite what I wanted. So I still had one reserved because at this point this is my best option. I applied for a couple of houses near University of Evansville.

Never heard a word back. I applied for a house in the suburbs that seemed like it might be okay. Like I wasn't sure if I was going to take it, but the market was so competitive that if I knew, like I couldn't just decide later if, you know, if I wanted it, I had to get the application in right away. So I put the application in and I was like, If I get accepted, then I'll decide, do I want the house or do I want the apartment? But I'm not even going to worry about making that decision until I actually get this. Because remember, I'd applied to two other houses that I never heard a word on, and then a new house went on the market like it had only been on the market an hour or two before.

[00:09:08] It had only been listed an hour or two before I saw it. Like I'm calling the guy and leaving a message and sending an email. This was it. This was the house that was perfect for this temporary assignment. Now, there was this week of torment of waiting, like from the time I talked to him and applied to hear if he selected me because there were other people that applied the first day as well. There are multiple people applied for this house the first day it was listed, but I did get it.

Now I'm still in Denver right now. I have not even seen this house yet. But let me tell you, it's one mile to downtown Newburgh and there's a trail that takes you there. It's an old house built in the 1930, so it's

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going to be quirky and have all that little character. And it sits up on a hill overlooking the Ohio River. The next podcast I record will be from the office in a room with windows on all sides looking out over the river. And I think it is going to be perfect for a short term temporary assignment. It will be perfect for me to do the deeper work I want to do with the client. It will also be perfect to get those creative juices going, and it will be perfect to be able to bring my team in for some strategy sessions.

[00:10:18] But you know what's funny? Three days later, like three days after I signed the lease, two weeks after I applied. The property manager of the house in the suburbs reached out to tell me that my application was approved and they're offering me that house. Who? I am so glad that they kind of dragged their feet and that I hadn't signed a lease on that house and then saw the river house. Right. Like I would have been kicking myself.

So the universe is helping to line things up exactly as they should. It might have felt like a disappointment at the time when I didn't get the House and University of Evansville. And I might have thought, Oh my goodness, I can't believe they're going to rent to a bunch of 19 year old students instead of to me. But this house that I'm in is way better, way better than the University of Evansville house that I didn't get. It's way better than the backup apartment that I didn't sign a lease for because they pushed back the delay of this construction. It's way better than the house and the suburbs that took them two full weeks to decide and make an offer. So universe. Thank you. So this whole process, as you've, you know, kind of heard me talking about it, has been mired in uncertainty.

[00:11:30] I didn't know if I could get my Colorado house furnished or furnished, so I didn't know if I needed a storage space or I didn't know what I needed to do to prepare. Like, the only thing I really could do at the beginning was pack up some personal items like photo frames and stuff like that that I knew couldn't stay in the house and I knew I wasn't going to take. So it wasn't a ton of stuff, but like there were a few boxes I could pack and I could start de-cluttering. So that's all I could do at the beginning. Like, I knew, you know, I wanted to take action, but that was it. And that was because those were the only things that were not dependent on the answer. Like those things had to happen regardless and they were not going to create extra work. Those things had to get put in boxes. Those things had to get donated out. Now, I didn't know where I was going in Indiana, right? Furnished or unfurnished, one bedroom or two room dimensions, queen size bed. I didn't know when I would be moving in mid-June and end of June in

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July. At this point I had decided before I found this house, it was like, okay, well, I guess I'm not moving till the end of July or maybe the mid-July like July 20th or something.

[00:12:31] And so I actually booked I'm going to Mexico for vacation. I booked my Mexico flight from Denver. I ended up changing that to fly out of Nashville instead. But, but yeah, I like kind of resigned myself to that. So by the way, more rework booked in one, then I had to switch it to another one. And so I was stuck in the middle of a big pile of waiting waste. I was waiting and waiting and waiting and it really sucked.

What I learned is that I do not do well with uncertainty at all. Remember in the last episode I told you that I'm a fact finder, so it totally makes sense that uncertainty is highly uncomfortable to me. I don't know which one is the cause versus the effect, right? Like is uncertainty highly uncomfortable? Therefore, I'm a researcher or I'm built, I'm wired, I'm created to be a researcher. Details person. Therefore, uncertainty is uncomfortable. I don't actually know how that works, but this waiting waste was really terrible.

And I want you to think about like, where are there? Where is their waiting waste in your mind or in your team's mind? Where are their decisions unmade? Where is there uncertainty? Where is it that this might be happening for your team and recognize that it might be causing some mental stuff right.

[00:13:48] Now, As time was moving forward, we were getting closer to closer and I like I needed to take some action. If I waited until every decision was made and all the uncertainty went away, I would not be able to get everything done that needed to be done right. I would end up with like, Oh, here's one week to get it all done. You know, as this was happening, it was like, okay, well, what can I do? What's not going to change? And this is where I had both successes and failures. So I had some successes at packing things up for storage that I knew I wasn't taking with me. Right.

And at the time, I didn't know if they would be stored in my house or if they would be stored in a storage unit. So they just stayed in the living room, right? They were just stored in the living room because I didn't want to carry them anywhere. I didn't want to transport them anywhere. And then after I learned they could be stored in my home, then I. Then I waited then to transport them and they were out of the way. Like I wasn't having to work around them. I wasn't having to walk around them, you know, they didn't get

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in the way of production. There was there was open space available. It wasn't quite one piece flow because I didn't pack a box and then take it to storage, pack a box and take it to storage.

[00:14:58] There was still some batching here, but it was pretty limited batching. It was, you know, I wasn't having rework, right? So I was pretty successful at making sure I didn't have some of that rework. But then I got ahead of myself before this last house had come up on the market like it didn't look like I was going to have any other choice but to end up in that backup apartment, that new build apartment. So I went and got the floor plans from them. I figured out what furniture would work. I found some pieces on Amazon or Wayfair or Facebook marketplace, and I didn't buy them, but I saved them to my cart so that I could buy them once the decision was made and we actually had a move in date, you know, like when you stage all these supplies or when you start doing pre-work or you build part of it or you're thinking work, right?

In this case, this wasn't really like producing anything. This wasn't physical, but my mind was filled with this, right? Since this apartment had big walk in closets, I found some pieces in my house that would make perfect storage solutions for the for the closets, like, oh, my goodness, these closets are going to be perfect. And I put them into a pile and then, by the way, I stack stuff on top of them.

[00:16:10] So, right. So then I had this change. I'm not moving to that apartment. I'm moving to a house. It was built in the 1930s that rooms are weird shapes. They're small, they're narrow. A lot of that furniture I saved in my cart. Not going to work in the house. So that was waste. I now I've got this rework all that time spent researching and thinking about it gone. And there aren't any big walk in closets. So those pieces I set aside, I did have to physically go dig those out of the pile and move them to the storage room.

So we had more waste. And while there are plenty of places that I was successful at, you know, where I stopped myself like, Oh, I can't do that, I can't do that, I can't do that. There were a few things like this where I didn't stop myself and there was rework and I, you know, like I understand flow, right? Like I understand the concept of flow. I understand the concept of waste. I understand the concept of, you know, not like doing like not pushing downstream what you're not ready for.

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But I just I still kind of fell into the trap and did some of it. And so it wasn't horrible. But I did have some rework. And, you know, it was interesting to me because while there was some physical rework, you know, they told you about some of the storage, there was some batching.

[00:17:23] It was the biggest issue was the stuff in my head. It was the mental capacity. It was figuring out the room dimensions and what size, bed and dresser and whatever would fit. And deciding this and deciding that and worrying about this and worrying about that. And then having all of that mental thought and mental preparation and mental worry not be relevant.

So here's my question for you. Where have you had some of this rework or waste show up in your own work or your own life? Maybe it's physical, but I also want you to think about the thought work to like all that thought, work that went into it. Thinking, work the stuff happening in your brain. Think about for your team. Where is their thinking waste? Because we're working ahead, because we don't have decisions, because we're pushing things downstream.

Where are people jumping ahead and making decisions or taking action before you really should? Or where do you have uncertainty that's causing excess processing? Or where are you stuck in a pile of waiting waste because there are decisions that aren't yet made. I want you to just create awareness for yourself where this might be happening for you and then reflect on what lesson it may teach you. Until next time.