

Making Work Human: Lead People Well and Get Results with Moe Carrick | 109

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.

[00:00:29] Listen up, folks. While work is made up of process organizations are made up of people. That's right. Weird, messy, emotional people, human beings. So, operations leadership isn't just about managing operations or improving processes. It is also highly dependent on leading people.

Jamie Parker here. On the last episode, we opened the door about leading people and soft skill potholes with Elisabeth Swan. We're digging into this further with today's guest, Moe Carrick. Moe and her team helped leaders and their teams courageously confront their challenges and do it more gracefully and efficiently than they ever imagined they could.

For more than 30 years, Moe has helped people get more clear, more motivated, and more focused on the results they want. She's the author of the book *Brave Space Workplace Making Organizations Fit for Human Life*, and the co-host of the podcast *Let's Make Work Human*. Now, Moe and I met in 2020 when we were in a mastermind together with one of my coaches, Susan Hyatt. That's right, 2020 that year. And I was so grateful to know Moe that year and to be in her presence through all that adversity.

[00:01:51] You know, the way people show up and interact with people during adversity tells a lot about their character and was especially important for me because not only was that, you know, a pandemic year, but that was also the year that I lost my dad. It was, you know, just one of those years. Here's what you should know is that Moe is brilliant. She's been at this people centric leadership development work for a while and is someone I look up to as I navigate how I work with clients and partner with them to help them solve problems, get results, and build sustainable organizations through engaged people.

I want you to tune in and be sure to stay on until the conversation's about really two things. Number one, when do you want to pay? And number two, the conversation about leading and engaging frontline team members, not just knowledge workers, through this whole people centric leadership approach. All right, Ready? Let's dive in.

[00:02:54] Hi. Moe, welcome to the show today.

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[00:02:56] Hi, Jamie. So good to see you. Thanks for having me on.

[00:02:59] Yes, it's been good to catch up and learn more about all the things happening in your world. And I'm so excited to introduce you to our listeners today. So why don't we start off in you. Tell us a little bit about the work you do. Who do you help solve? What problem?

[00:03:13] Awesome. My company is called Moementum Inc and we are all about creating the conditions for human thriving at work. I'm on a mission to restore humanity, to work, kind of one magnificent people leader at a time. And we do that through some of our core programs. We also do that through custom consulting and coaching with organizations. I would say most of our sweet spot organizations are going to be privately held, family held, not necessarily public health, although we do have some bigger companies in our portfolio, but companies that are maybe at that intersection where they're big enough to need leadership and culture development, but not so big that they have a lot of internal support.

[00:03:52] Yes. And that's such a big group of organizations out there.

[00:03:56] And this really is the heart of our economy in so many ways.

[00:04:01] Yeah, absolutely. Well, great. Well, we would like to start off by just learning a little bit more about you and your ideas of leadership. I want to ask you about a value, a mantra, principle, a quote, something that really embodies your beliefs about leadership.

[00:04:18] I love that. I've been thinking about that a little bit because you had cued me up for that question. And I really think it comes back to something I find myself saying all the time, which is that people are what make organizations great, you know? In today's economy, where competition is fierce, we have in every sector, we have certain sectors, of course, that are really struggling like health care and education. We have other sectors that are still impacted from COVID supply chain issues and everything else. The quality and the people who come to work in our facilities and remotely every single day is what makes our competitive advantage, it's what makes us able to support our customers. I think that really embodies everything that I do, because if we really believe that that's true, then we've got to figure out

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how to activate their talents for success and treat them in ways that bring out their best, you know. So that drives a different set of behaviors. If we really act like people are what make our organizations great.

[00:05:19] Yeah, I love this reminder too, especially for continuous improvement minded folks out there where we love process, like we just love process, and we just make all these processes great.

[00:05:29] All you process people out there. Thank you. Yeah.

[00:05:34] And so sometimes we get so caught up in the process, we forget about it. Or for those ops managers and executives out there who are, you know, it's like their job is to deliver results, right? That is, am I successful or not? Well, did you deliver results or not? Is usually the way that they're managed and led. So, in both ways, we will sometimes forget that people make both of those possible. Both. I mean, the process, even from a process standpoint, I guess that process doesn't work if you don't have great people in it.

[00:06:05] Right? Right. And somebody who understands the process, who believes that the process is going to help them, who knows how to execute well in that process and who actually enjoys performing that process. So I think that there is a synergy there, but I know exactly what you mean. We all become, I think every organization. I do it in my own organization. I get so focused on the results and the processes and the efficiencies that I'm trying to gain, but I sort of miss how that I get there, which has so much to do with human motivation, inspiration, connection and, and just really humanity.

[00:06:40] Yeah, Well, let's talk about some of the how then. So let's say, you know, our listeners are out there and saying, okay, I'm with you, I believe this, but you know, maybe I don't know exactly how or what that looks like or how to maybe lead from a place of connection or people centric leadership versus maybe some you know, I know I always tell people my listenership is but I always tell people that I'm a recovering command and control manager and I'm recovering still in process. Right. Like, I still have to be very intentional because I will default back in a heartbeat. So let's talk about it. Where do you want to go with this?

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[00:07:19] I love that Jamie, too, because I think I'm probably the same. I haven't thought of myself that way as a recovering command and control. But, you know, command and control is really nice and tidy, right? Because it works quite well, it's pretty efficient. It drives from the top and it has less ambiguity. You know, if we just can tell people what to do and control the ways in which they do it, then we can guarantee more excellence. The problem I see with that and where we spend a lot of time at Moementum is that it does require that command and control leader to be somewhat heroic. And I really believe that the best leadership that's unfolding today that activates the talents of people is not heroic.

In fact, we even call the journey the no hero's journey. And continuous improvement, of course, is based on the principles as well, that ideas come from the work itself. In order to believe that, we need to believe in the innate capacity of our people to solve the problems that they face every day, we need to give them structure and process in order to do that well and efficiently. But if we really believe that they can use their own creativity, discretion and judgment to solve problems, we can design our processes in such a way that activates them fully to use the processes to get work done, which means that they feel more engaged and they feel more connected.

Now, the reason I think that matters is that we are in an employer crisis right now where with being so recently off the great resignation, where we know that people left organizations primarily due to toxic culture in the post COVID recovery efforts that we're all doing, employees are being extremely discerning with where they want to work and how they want to work.

[00:09:10] They're really looking at every sector and every job to say, you know, is that going to fulfill me? Does that have meaning for me? Do I feel like I could work with that boss? And I think that most of us know our company through our immediate supervisor. So that person becomes primary in our satisfaction at work. In our satisfaction at work. By the way, Jamie, is not just something we measure, it's what determines if we come back to work the next day. You know, our satisfaction is our guarantee. If my employees are feeling satisfied and engaged in their work, I can trust that they're going to come to work tomorrow, which is what I need to implement my purposes. Right?

The way I think we get that is by creating leaders who are good for people, leaders who can lead, explicitly focus on building connection with their people as their immediate focal point really for the entity. Those skills are not the same part of our brain as the skills that help us be efficient and define effective processes. So I think it requires a lot of people, leaders to have their lean and continuous improvement

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chops and their results oriented chops, but also to know what is it that I need to do, How is it I need to show up to create connection, to create competence, to facilitate discovery, help people solve the problems they face, and have people feel as though they enjoy their work. So that's yeah, we can talk more about what those skills are.

[00:10:45] Yeah, I'd love to. So, thinking about the difference that, hey, these, these are different skills. What are those skills that leaders need to develop within themselves to be able to build more connections and lead that way?

[00:10:59] Yeah, I think there's a couple. The first one that comes to mind, of course, for me is the skill of self-awareness, like really understanding who am I? I think of this work as mostly having two questions: Who am I and who am I with you. Who am I is in terms of really understanding what I am good at? What am I not as good at? What do I suck at, you know, and what triggers me? Where do I feel insecure and understanding my trigger. And I'm talking about a trigger that could prompt defensiveness or even shame where I'm aware enough to know, Oh man, this thing that went wrong has really gotten under my skin and I need to deal with my emotions around that.

I think self-awareness is really important, especially when it comes to the realm of emotional intelligence, which is a broad skill set, as you know, but it includes things like decision making, reality testing, stress, tolerance. It doesn't only mean flowers, unicorns and rainbows can talk about feelings. You know, it means I understand my own emotional footprint and I can notice my notion, my emotions, and use them as a source of data to make good decisions in the moment. I think that is a skill set, that level of self-awareness.

[00:12:14] Who am I with you then begins to be and how do I now understand? Be curious about and connect with my people so that I know what do they need to feel engaged to feel like they're doing a good job? You know, Jamie, I'm sure you see this in your work all the time. I'm always amazed. You know, 99% of the people I've worked with in my career wake up in the morning wanting to do a good job. I think sometimes people, leaders, we make up the story that, like people don't want that, you know, they're all sociopaths or they don't want to do a good job. But we really believe that most people want to do a good job. Then it becomes our job as their people are to figure out the conditions in which those skills can be activated. And unfortunately, I think for us as people leaders, it's different for every person. Yes, Darn it.

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[00:13:06] I know. Gosh right.

[00:13:09] You were supposed to give me that answer, that one answer I needed.

[00:13:13] Totally. Totally. And that's where flexing, being able to know employee A OR. John really loves it when I'm giving him a lot of detail and a lot of clear direction and boundaries. And Mary really wants more room to problem solve on her own and she doesn't want me to be up in her business very often because she's autonomous. I must be able to understand those conditions as well as. Of course, the other conditions with things like personal life, schedule work, specific work, location, some of those kinds of things. I think if we focus on those two buckets, who am I and who am I to be with you? I think we can make a lot of traction in leading for connection.

[00:13:55] The second piece, I would add because of this. That work would be incomplete if I also as a leader did become really good at saying the hard thing. Difficult conversations, whether they be feedback or conflict or conflict resolution, are the number one thing that get us in trouble, that work we don't like and we're not comfortable talking about what's hard. I think if we're going to be an effective people leader, we must get some chops for how we're going to work through the hard conversations.

[00:14:31] Yeah, it's interesting that you bring that up because it's what I hear probably from every client. I don't think I've ever had a client not say, Hey, this is a gap for us. One of the things that was interesting for me as I started working with more organizations is that I assumed, I mean, it sounds like a really dumb assumption as I'm saying it out loud, But like, I was coming from a place where, other people were like me, which is I will have that hard conversation all day long. I'm just not maybe effective at it. Like I could do it better the way in which I have this conversation and so a lot of what we're working on at first was this way. How do you have that conversation? And the first time I was working with a client on it, I kind of skipped over the need to have the conversation and the courage to have the conversation in the first place because it wasn't something that I personally struggled with and then realizing that, Oh, actually there's a lot of folks out there who are avoiding those conversations.

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[00:15:28] Yes, Yes. Thanks for that courage and vulnerability. And I would say I see the problem, something they land all over the spectrum of difficult conversations. But I think in addition to avoidance, one of the things we sometimes see is that people might be hardwired more like you or even me, because I'm like, you, like, I'll jump in, like, get me in there, you know, let's have it. Let's two by four with each other.

The problem is I blow people away. So going into conflict, blowing it up in the next sitting doesn't help. We have a way to go in. Hold, hold, hold, resolve, and come away intact. That's a lot harder than either avoiding or blowing it up, you know, because in that space we must really be capable of empathy. We have to really be able to be honest with ourselves and with others, and we have to be able to own our part.

I think good people, leaders that are committed to activating the talents of their team, they develop muscles for that skill, which of course then when they practice helps their people have those skills as well, which means that their people will talk to each other about what's hard, not bring every single issue they face with each other to the manager exhausting for the manager.

[00:16:46] Yeah. If you were thinking about helping a listener who maybe needs to have some conversation, hard conversations, and they're wondering, like, is there something that I can leave with? What's maybe a tip or a recommendation or something you could provide folks that maybe need some work in this area?

[00:17:03] I would say my biggest tip would be to do some work on understanding the emotional footprint that's making this hard. Do some work on understanding. The emotional footprint that's making this harder. What I mean by that, Jamie, is that any conversation we have that's difficult is difficult for one reason because of the feelings we have associated to that situation. If there's no feelings, it's not difficult.

[00:17:35] I understand why I can have those conversations.

[00:17:39] Yeah. So, we have to become capable of noticing what the heck am I feeling including these? Unsavory feelings. Like I'm feeling insecure, I'm feeling threatened, I'm feeling afraid that I don't have the answer, as well as the possibility of what the other person might be feeling. Are they feeling ashamed?

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Are they feeling unworthy? Are they feeling incompetent? Are they angry? What's happening? If we can get better at that and it's never going to be one thing, it's going to be a messy, complex bundle, then I think we can actually get some traction because we're talking about the real thing. And I think what often happens is we aren't talking about the real thing. We're talking about the intellectualized facts of the case, which are not what's hard about it.

So that's a tip that I have. And there's a really good resource to the Harvard Negotiation Project has put out some very good resources. My two favorites are difficult conversations How to Discuss What Matters Most, a book by Douglas Stone and his team. Also, they recently came out with a book called Thanks for the Feedback, which is also very good, very concrete tool set for really getting in there and getting out intact from hard conversations.

[00:18:52] Yeah, fantastic. When you talk about self-awareness and then also hard conversations in all of this, I definitely hear vulnerability. Like you must have some level of vulnerability to be able to tackle both of those things.

[00:19:09] Yes, unfortunately. And you know, I personally don't love vulnerability. I'm using Dr. Brené Brown's definition of vulnerability as I even use the word, which is anything we do. It's not anything we do. It's the emotion we experience when we step into uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. Dr. Brown is not the first one to make the connection between trust and vulnerability. Patrick Lencioni, for example, talks about five dysfunctions of a team. We know that when we show up with one another. Even when it's hard and our palms are sweating, we build trust one layer at a time. But most of us, especially us as people leaders, would prefer to have it look all buttoned up and to have the answer and to be able to solve the problem. I think especially in Continuous improvement work where we're very focused on problem solving.

I think it's vulnerable just to even hold the possibility in our brain that we don't necessarily know the answer. That can feel destabilizing. But if we're willing to stand in that place, which of course is beautiful for continuous improvement as well, because that's how we discover the unanticipated solutions. But to say I'm willing to show up as a leader, not having the answer, needing help and wanting to let you see me fully, then I think we create a connection that really matters.

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[00:20:38] Yeah. So let me ask then, because I guarantee you we've got some listeners that are hearing this right now and saying, okay, this sounds all great and everything but right. You're talking about you're talking about emotions and you're talking about connection with people and giving people space so that they can thrive and being really customized. And that just sounds like a whole lot of work. But really my job is to get results. I can't have both for the leader out there who's thinking, I don't know how to do both, or these are in conflict with each other. It's not, you know, okay, great, we're just going to be so nice and everybody's going to love working here. But, you know, we're going to go out of business because we don't get results. What do you have to say to that person?

[00:21:21] Well, the fear is real. Like, I understand we have metrics we have to perform, otherwise the business or the entity won't be able to succeed. So, I get that. I think it's real. Any of us living in an organization and working are beholden to getting results. I think for me, the reframe that I would offer your listeners is it's all about when you pay. It's all about when you pay. And a good metaphor for me. I was recently talking to my team about a program we're launching in 2023, and we were talking about should we do payment plans? Should people be able to pay all they can pay all at once, or they can pay over the course of six months or whatever? And I just took the price of the product, and I divided it by six. I'm like, I don't mind if I do partial payments and one of my team members like, no, that must cost more because they have their money for that time, so we added. I'm like, Oh, okay, so if you want to finance the product, then it's going to cost you more. So, you either pay less now or you pay interest later?

It's the same with our interactions in terms of the results that we're going for. We can invest money at the front end, money in the form of time, attention consciously leading to bring out the best in our people. We can spend time in the beginning, which can feel like a lot of time. Maybe we have longer one on one meetings as we're getting to know a new employee. Maybe we have team meetings where we invest in building partnerships. That does take some time and effort, but then we're going to save money down the line because we've already paid and we've got a strong foundation of trust and connection so that when the going gets tough and we have a conflict, that team can move through that with ease. They have agreements, they know how to talk about the truth to each other, they give feedback.

Now, if we don't want to pay, at the beginning, we just so focused on results were too busy to do that tending. Ok, that's all right too. It's an option. We can finance it. But don't delude yourself that you're not going to pay at the end, right? You're going to pay and you're going to pay more, right? More because

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you're going to have to repair and trust it's violated is harder to repair than trust. That starts out healthy in the first place. So you're going to pay later with demotivated employees, employees churning out of your organization, which we all know is extremely expensive conflicts, discrimination claims against each other, that's how we pay when we aren't setting our teams up for healthy interactions from the beginning and investing a little bit along the way. We're going to end up paying catastrophically with something that will really cost us in a broken team or an employee who is really not thriving in our system. So, for me, it's just do the math. When do you want to pay?

[00:24:12] Nice analogy there. I love it because sometimes we don't think about the payment we're going to have later on like, Oh, but I'm in the moment now.

[00:24:23] Yeah. I think most of the time we don't. I think most of the time we don't. And, and that's what I get the call, Jamie. Yeah, I get the call, like my team is off the rails. Nobody trusts each other. I lost another supervisor, and we have quality issues and I'm like, Oh, boy, this is expensive interest. Yes. You know, and when I asked them, Why did you, how did you get there? And when we look in the rearview mirror, we can see the rabbit trail, the breadcrumbs. We can see them. Well, we were under a lot of pressure. We had to do things fast. We had to move. We hired a lot of people really quickly. We had new supervisors. We never trained them. I'm like, Oh, okay. So you chose to pay later?

[00:25:00] Yes. Well, I have one more question that I want to pose to you before we start to wrap up. For a lot of the organizations or the kind of sectors that I'm working with, they're either manufacturing or service operations. So, whether that's like giving some sort of service, delivering some sort of service. And one of the things that happens is they say, you know what, I'm pretty okay with all of this connection, people centric leadership when we're working with, you know, maybe their folks in our offices and our support staff and our managers because their jobs have more autonomy built into them. It becomes hard, like I don't understand how this translates when we're working with our front line. So these are the folks who might be interacting with the customer all day, the patient all day, they're physically making the product, and their job just doesn't have that level of autonomy in it. The frontline teams do the job this way and Most of your time is spent doing that work that creates value. What are your thoughts around how you can still build this type of leadership if you're a front-line supervisor or somebody who's interacting with folks who are creating that value.

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[00:26:09] Yeah, I love that. I mean, at the front line, the jobs are clearer, right? We know that the higher you go up the food chain, the more ambiguous and turbulent the leadership duties become. But at the front line, when I'm an individual contributor in particular, my job is clearer. I'm perhaps hourly, I have clear sops, I'm following, etc. That is all real and true. Doesn't mean that job is less than in fact, if we invert the pyramid, we know that's really how we get the best results. Where that bottom line is connecting to our customer in a really healthy way with what they build or perform. I think the thing we must remember is that those people in those jobs are still human beings. They are vulnerable to the same needs as the leaders elsewhere in the system, but they're not as apparent sometimes because usually we have less time interaction with them because the jobs are more circumscribed. They come in you're on a production orientation, you come in these number of hours, you perform. You have to make this many calls, so you have to produce this many widgets.

In many situations, manufacturing, for example, but even in places like health care, we are automating or systematizing some of those things that human beings used to do. So when we do that, that's great, do that, get that efficiency. If you still have a human being doing that job. There's a reason, right? Either you can't afford to automate it yet, or that human is bringing some dimension, no matter how small of creativity, discretion and judgment that matters, that at this point your system does not think a machine can do.

Honor that, acknowledge that, and treat that person like a human being that has a brain that thinks and feels. Because if you can treat that human being, no matter how circumscribed their job is, well, they're going to make the right decisions. They're going to use their creativity, discretion, and judgment in the parameters of their job when it really matters. And you are going to be grateful for that. Right. But I think sometimes in the face of efficiency, we dumb down the humanity of those human beings. And of course, what happens I mean, you've seen this. I'm sure it's if we dumb it down too much, the job becomes uninteresting for any human. And because why would I do such a stupid job? Yes. You know, and so and so it is incumbent on us, I think, to be able to describe why this job is still done by a human and to help that human feel the value that they're providing. Because there is a reason usually why.

[00:28:46] Yeah, I love that. That's what a great activity for folks to do is to go in and describe exactly why this job is done by a human. What are they bringing to that table? What is? where is it? Whether it's

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decision making, creativity, problem solving, whatever it is, and how much that clarity will help you engage and lead those folks?

[00:29:03] Well, absolutely. And two quick stories. I know we're going to run out of time, but that come to mind for me. One is, do you ever listen to Hidden Brain, the Hidden Brain podcast? Yes, I love that podcast. He has one called Bullshit Jobs. He did it years ago and he goes, and he talks to people who don't know why they're doing what they're doing. And these are not happy people. Like we all need to know that we're doing something that matters. So, I think one of the things that frontline leaders can do is to help their people really understand why this thing you're doing matters.

That was illustrated really well a couple of years back. There was a 60 Minutes episode or something about Amazon, and they were showcasing new robotic automation that had happened with the pickers. They had these machines that were picking the products off the warehouses, shipping them, and they interviewed a guy that was on the machine, you know, and he was great. He's like, it's been so fun for two years. We've been testing this thing and this machine's amazing. And I loved it because I've learned so much. Then the interviewer said, well, and so what happens next? He said, well, I'm looking for a new job because the machine is so good now that I just sit here. it's no longer of interest to me. I thought that was really powerful and I never knew the outcome because of course it was an interview. I was always curious like, did Amazon retain him? Like, did they find somewhere else to put this person that had been so activated in this pilot once that job became automated because I hope they did. That was a good example for me of the cycle and how it unfolds.

[00:30:34] Yeah, fantastic. Thank you, Moe.

[00:30:36] Yeah, great questions. Thank you.

[00:30:38] All right. Well, before we wrap up with our last question, we just want to, if you can, share with our listeners how they can connect with you.

[00:30:45] Absolutely. So, we have a podcast that just launched last year. We just had our first this year, our first season just wrapped up. It's called Let's Make Work Human Love to have people tune in and

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listen to that. My website is MoeCarrick.com and I'm also on LinkedIn. As you know, Jamie, we just came off Instagram and Facebook, which is an interesting process for us, but we're very active on LinkedIn and you can certainly go to the website directly. I publish a weekly newsletter called Show Up with Moe that has tips and tricks for people, leaders like your listeners to tune in and it's free. And you can subscribe at the at the website.

[00:31:20] All right. Great. We'll put links to all those things in our show notes. So, Moe, as we wrap up, what words of encouragement or advice would you leave our listeners with today?

[00:31:29] Just keep showing up because you're enough. I think as people leaders, we really do sometimes think that we must have it all figured out, that we have to be superhuman. I think good people leadership is actually not as much about that as it is that we're willing to show up with an open-hearted mind every dang day. And to do that, we must remember that we are enough, that we have enough and that we know enough right now.

[00:31:57] Awesome. I love it. Thank you so much.

[00:31:59] Thank you, Jamie. So great to see you.

[00:32:05] So great. You know, those hard conversations are only hard because of the feelings. The emotions. Yeah. All right. I have two questions that I want you to work on from this conversation. Ready? Two questions that I want you to work on.

Number one, when do you want to pay? So, think about for you and your team. When do you want to invest the time, energy, and effort with your team? Because if you don't do it now, it's going to cost you more later. And for ops executives listening in, think about the same thing for your team, about investing in developing your ops managers or ops directors' leadership capabilities. When do you want to pay? When do you want to invest in developing their skills, in following up with them, in giving them the time, having the conversations, asking them for feedback, giving them feedback, having the hard conversations, helping them to develop through practice and through actual work. Because if you don't do it now, it's going to cost you more later. So, question number one, when do you want to pay? All right.

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Question number two, Why is the job that your team member is doing? Why is that job still being done by human beings? What is that added value, that decision making, that creativity, that problem solving, that knowledge and information, whatever it is that extra value might be that your team member is bringing to the table? Think about this particularly as you think about engaging your front-line team members, the folks that have less autonomy, the folks that are doing work that is more prescribed.

[00:33:52] Can you name it? Can you identify it? And how can you use that to better see the value that they're bringing to honor that, to give them recognition and to connect the dots for them? So that's your second question. What's that extra value that your team member is bringing to this job? All right.

Remember that you can find links to connect with Moe at our show notes

processplusresults.com/podcast. This is episode #109. I still love being in triple digits, by the way!

We're going to close out by asking what about you? What is your brain noodling on? What are you taking away from this conversation? Write it down and then share it or teach it to someone else so that you can anchor that learning. All right. That's it for today. We're going to continue this series where we're dialoguing with people that I know and respect in two weeks until then.

