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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.

Hello. Hello, I'm Jamie Parker here. I hope you enjoyed your Independence Day and are having a fabulous summer now. I'm in a new space now and, the room gives me echoes and stuff with the audio, so bear with me. This audio might be a not as ideal as we'd like it. Bear with me on this one. We'll see what we can figure out for future episodes.

But speaking of summer, you know, for a lot of folks, summer represents fun. And growing up it was, you know, a break from school. So when [00:01:00] a lot of vacations happen now, I guess it depends on where you live and your personal preferences. But for a lot of folks, the weather is nicer and you spend more time outdoors in the summer.

How fun. Right. On the idea of fun though, how often do you characterize your work as fun? What about your team? How often do they characterize their work as fun? I made a bit of a shift in my client workload and time recently by moving into a fractional role with a company. Now I'm still serving clients that hasn't stopped.

I was just at Ohio State University teaching there. I am heading out to New Jersey to work, do a working session with a client a year next week. Right? So all my, this client work still happens, but I pulled it back a little bit. I'm doing a little bit less of that. That way I can dedicate a, you know, kind of a big chunk of my time to working inside an organization.

And what I have to tell you is I've been doing this for a couple of months now, and I [00:02:00] am having so much fun. It is not easy. It is not easy at all. At times. It is frustrating and it is challenging. It is stretching me for sure, but it's fun and mostly because it's the right fit for me. So I remember a while back, we'll go back a a little ways, and I was working on an in the business project with a client.

So this was not my normal advisory services, trusted advisor services, that I usually do. This was me in the weeds sleeves rolled up, executing with their operation leads in a product line. And let me tell you, it was a hot mess, like hot mess, craziness. There were challenges and issues and conflict and all kinds of things.

It was crazy. I. And so one day, one Friday, I was doing an end of the week wrap up with the coo and he was in the car driving with his wife, so his wife was in the car and was able to hear the [00:03:00]

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conversation when we're doing this. End the week wrapup, and I'm like, Hey, here's, here's what's happening. Here's what happened this week.

Here are some of the gaps, pain points, issues, challenges, problems that came up and how we address them, which actions we've taken here are some of those problems and pain points that are still existing that we're gonna be working on next week, just going through the this and the this, and the this, and the this, right?

And it wasn't just like one or two things, you know, it was a big old pile of stuff. And so I'm explaining all this. I'm walking him through everything, giving him an update. And his wife is hearing all this stuff, right? Patient, she's a lovely, lovely woman. She's listening to all this super patient and, and towards the end of the conversation and she's like, you know what?

Well, Jamie, it is Friday, so hopefully you can go out this weekend and have some fun, right? And I laugh. I'm like, oh goodness. You know what's so crazy? Like, I'm gonna sound like a crazy person right now. Is that this is fun for me? Like, I know with everything you've just [00:04:00] heard, it might sound like it was just a dump of issues, but it's actually really invigorating and fun for me.

Of course. She's like, oh my goodness, okay, you crazy lady. Like, I probably actually sounded just like her husband, who I think is a lot like me, you know, having fun tackling these big challenges. But you know, like I, I know, I recognize that I might have sounded a little crazy in that moment. So here's the thing, work challenge, fun is different than summer fun, right?

So I am, what I'm not saying is that that's all the fun you need this fun at work where it's like difficult and challenging and stretching you and all of those things that, that replaces the other fun and joy you have in your life. Of course I still wanna prioritize social, fun and personal fun. You know, I love going out to sporting events and I went to First Friday and I went with a friend to a baseball game, and my niece was in town and we went to some escapes room escape rooms, right?

All that stuff is critical. So I am not saying that work fun holds the [00:05:00] same weight or is equal to the fun you have with your friends and family. I'm not saying that you should replace fun in your personal life with fun at work and just become a workaholic, right? That's not what I'm saying. What I am saying though is that fun should not be reserved just for after work hours.

I believe that I deserve to have fun at work. That work should be enjoyable, that you should have fun at work, that the operations managers on your team should have fun at work. Now, of course, 100% of the

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day is not gonna be fun, right? Like we're not gonna have fun every second of every day. Just like in our personal life.

We don't have fun every second of every day. But if you're not having fun every week, then there's a problem. Now, what does fun look like for you or for the people on your team? Well, that's different for everyone, right? Everybody is an individual, and so the answer to that [00:06:00] is gonna be different. For me, going after a big challenge, like, oh, we're going after this achievement and this, this challenge, this obstacle, this thing.

How in the world are we gonna do it? That is fun and it might take us years. We might be going after that challenge for years, but as long as I can figure out how to keep that relevant, I can have fun doing that. For me, going after a big challenge is fun. Like saying, Hey, we want to achieve this thing. We don't know how we're gonna do it, and there's gonna be obstacles and I don't know, we have to figure it out, even if it takes a year or two years to do.

If I can keep that relevant, I can have fun doing that for me, developing people to grow beyond what they thought was possible. Oh my gosh. So much fun, right? I gotta figure this out. It's a puzzle. And for me, getting creative, trying to figure out new and better ways. How in the world are we gonna do this?

This is fun, [00:07:00] right? You've heard me potentially talk the past about like my registry murder boards. I love putting together the puzzle pieces. Not as fun. I love challenging my brain. That's fun. Now it's hard. It might be really freaking hard. It will stretch me. I will grow in knowledge, capabilities, and character.

As a result. Some days I will go home and I'll be like, oh my God, that was so hard, but I also get to go home feeling well, damn, I wanna do more of this. You know? That's why this fractional work that I'm doing right now is such an important step for me. I love getting back in the seat, getting back in the action, not just advising from the sidelines.

I get to do both. Oh my gosh. How perfect is that? Now, I will tell you it is stretching my time management. My podcast producer is carrying the brunt of that with me getting these episodes to her later than I'd like to. Definitely later than she'd like me to. Right? That's a problem I have to figure out how to solve.

I am making mistakes. [00:08:00] I tell you what, I'm like, oh man, I didn't do that one. Right? Oh, golly. Misstep. There I am learning so much and I'm having fun. And so this brings me to you. What is fun for you? How much fun are you having in your work? Once you think through that, take it to the next step. What about for your operations leaders on your team?

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How much fun are they having and what could you do about it if it's not enough? All right. That's it for now. I'm gonna head off for the next two weeks and go have some fun, and I hope you are too. Until next time.