



## Episode 15 Show Notes: Becoming a Transformative Leader

Amir Ghannad on becoming a transformative leader – boldly declare, courageously pursue and abundantly achieve the extraordinary.

Kyle O'Connor interviews Amir Ghannad, a leadership coach with 30 years of experience. Amir's coaching and training has empowered hundreds of leaders to deliver extraordinary results and achieve personal satisfaction and fulfillment. His career started at Procter and Gamble where he held a variety of positions in the U.S, Southeast Asia and Europe. Amir also served as plant director of Sunny Delight Beverage Company where he led the plant operations and the company's workplace excellence efforts before leading the global high performance organizational initiative at Campbell's Soup Company. Amir is an accomplished trainer of The Mind Gym and Franklin Covey's workshops Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and The Speed of Trust.

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### Key Learnings from This Episode

- **What is your background as it relates to Human Resources?** Amir's background is in mechanical engineering. He started in manufacturing plants and spent most of his career in manufacturing facilities working closely with supply chains as well as a variety of other functions and businesses. He has found the partnership between HR and the business to be productive and helpful. He discovered early on in his career that he had a desire to get into the type of work HR was doing so he was always partnering with HR folks or trying to learn more about the work that was being done in organizational development. Later on, he started developing models and training courses.
- **How did you transition from a business role to a human resources role? How did you end up doing this kind of work?** He believes you should not abandon what you are doing. Begin to practice the kind of skills you want to develop. Begin to develop the kind of work you want to do right where you are.
- **What is your passion?** Amir's passion is 'greatness'. We all have greatness. We all have something inside of us that's ready to shine, but many of us have lost touch with our purpose, skills and

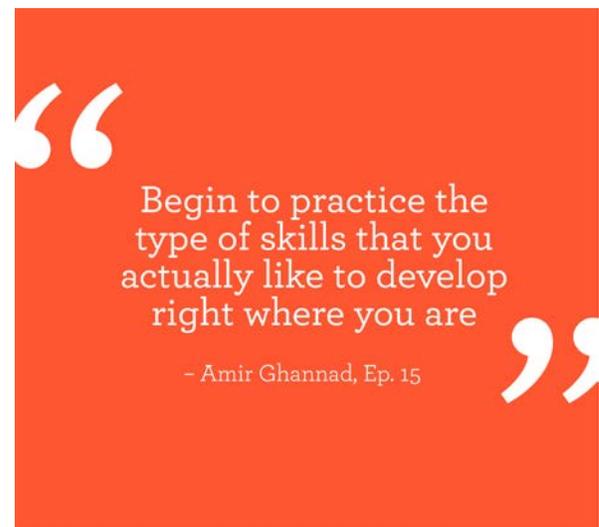


passion. All of Amir's teaching, speaking and writing is about putting people in touch with their greatness in the context of something that they are really committed to so they can fulfill their unique purpose in the world.

- Amir spent 30 years in corporate America. About 12 years ago, he encountered his greatest challenge. He transferred into a plant that was not doing well. The capability was there but not the empowerment. In 1 ½ years, the plant became the best in measures and moral. It was his most educational experience in a painful way in that Amir, as the leader, was the greatest barrier – he created barriers, he was contributing to barriers, and he tolerated them. Amir began to work on himself, got himself out of the way, and began making progress. He focused on behaviors of transformative leaders which led to his book, *The Transformative Leader*. It is a coaching tool for leaders who want to take their leadership to the next level.

Finally, Amir believes the gateway to taking responsibility is getting in front of the audience, confessing your sins, making the commitments, and then moving forward together.

- **What can someone do to work on themselves and turn it around?** It's never the size of your challenges but always the size of your commitment that determines the outcome and the level of fulfillment that you have. There are many people out there who encounter all kinds of adversity but because of their commitment they continue to move forward. Not only do they accomplish great things but even during the journey it transforms the quality of their experience because they are looking forward to something really great. Some people with challenges use those challenges as an excuse to take themselves out of the game and reduce their expectations of what's possible. Determine what it is that you're 100% committed to. Those things that we are 100% committed to don't feel like work even when we're actually working really hard to achieve them. If you're partially committed or conditionally committed then you are constantly having this internal dialogue as to why things are the way they are and that's where



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most of the pain and suffering comes from which most of the time gets us off our best game. If you are 100% committed, there is no finish line.

- **Did you have a mentor or coach directing you on what you needed to improve on?** Early in his career, Amir repeatedly received feedback that he would not accept. When he reflected, he realized everyone was right. Why weren't things working for him? For instance, he was blaming his bosses, but then he realized it was how he was relating to his bosses. It took a lot of self-reflection, a lot of courage, and lots of coaching. He focused on what he needed to do differently.
- **Do you have particular times when you are best able to reflect on your progress?** Self-reflection comes at random times. Any time he immerses himself in nature – goes for a walk or a jog or away from man-made 'stuff', he finds himself getting in touch with a certain level of clarity.
- **What are some actionable steps for aspiring HR leaders?** Some of the best HR partners/leaders Amir has worked with were those who have mastered the functional, traditional role of HR but didn't stop there. They went beyond that and became true business partners with the business leaders they were supporting. It's important for an aspiring HR leader to really establish that partnership and help define an aspirational vision of the future, independent of today's problems. So many times we're too busy playing 'whack-a-mole' with the problems we have today that even when we create a vision, it's a watered down version. Partner with the business and create a vision that is independent of today's problems. Every day look for ways to create the right context for everybody else.
- **Two Part Vision - How do you align people to the vision?** The vision needs to go beyond just the business results. It has to have certain elements that appeal to people in a way that they can relate to and aspire to. In the plant Amir worked at, they established a two part vision for themselves.
  1. **They were going to be the Showcase of Excellence:** This had to do with delivering excellent results.
  2. **They wanted to be the Cradle of Prosperity:** He could see people in the plant had health, financial and relationship issues. He always told them "we want to address every person as a whole person", and this was something that really appealed to them. They went to work on not only eliminating the stress they were feeling at work but also addressing some of the issues people were feeling. Very soon, people could see that there was something in it for them. The result was great for the business and awesome for the people in the plant.



If people know their leaders care about them, everybody wants to do a great job and everybody wants to be part of something significant and something big. Often times, it is what was in the way. They may have been disheartened by past practices. They were able to rally everyone around a common cause because they knew their leaders cared.

- **What are a few things people can do to prepare themselves for a leadership role?** Functional mastery is first and foremost. You have to commit yourself to mastering the functional expertise needed for the role. If you don't have the functional competence you are ultimately not going to have the respect as a great leader. A lot of people stop there - they become functional experts, but they don't evolve into inspirational leaders. You need to add in who you are being and how you are showing up. Set big goals for yourself and then watch to see what is getting in your way. Be willing to receive coaching and listen and understand what is getting in your way personally that is keeping you from really playing an even bigger game to contributing more to your community, your business, and your family. It's all about self-awareness. Once you have that, you can evolve into an inspirational leader for which there is no finish line.
- **What are your favorite resources for becoming a better leader?** There are so many resources around informative training – arming you with information and skills. Amir looks for transformative training – something causing him to reflect and get something out of the way. When he walks out, he hopes to look at the world and himself a bit differently.
- **Who is someone you admire or follow regularly?** A coach that Amir regularly follows is Werner Erhard. He is known for the course he created – EST (Erhard Seminars Training). One of his articles is Creating Leaders – authenticity, integrity and being committed to something bigger than yourself. It goes beyond giving knowledge – it causes you to look inward and show up as an extraordinary leader.
- **What advice did you receive in your career?** Amir had great coaches who helped him focus on what was really important to him. What do you really want out of your career? What contributions do you want to make? Be willing to take the risk.



*“Begin to practice the type of skills that you actually like to develop right where you are”.* -Amir Ghannad



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## Recommended Reading and References from this Episode

- [\*The Transformative Leader- Boldly Declare, Courageously Pursue, and Abundantly Achieve the Extraordinary\*](#) by Amir Ghannad
- [\*The Handbook for Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being: A compilation of works from experts in the field.\*](#) Edited by Nitin Nohria, Rakesh Khurana and Scott A. Snook

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## To Follow Amir Ghannad

- **Website:** [www.amirghannad.com](http://www.amirghannad.com) for Amir's weekly blog posts and other resources. All of his contact information and social media contact info is on this site. He loves to hear from his listeners and responds to every comment that's made on anything he puts on social media.

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## Amir Ghannad's Question to HR Studio Podcast Group Members

[What is a leadership challenge you are facing that you would like to learn more about?](#)



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