



Episode 66 Show Notes: Why and How To Become An Effective Strategic HR Leader

As a strategic coach and keynote speaker, Ash Seddeek works with executives to advance their leadership impact through communications, messaging and storytelling. He currently works with Cisco's innovation startup teams to help them craft compelling value proposition narratives, clear business models, and to develop winning investor pitches. Ash shares the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Strategic Leaders based on his coaching and book research. He discusses how HR leaders can adopt these habits to position themselves as strategic business partners and internal consultants within their organizations.

Ash is a bestselling author and talks about the emphasis on sales and leadership communications with his book, *MEANING*, and his second bestseller coauthored with Jack Canfield, *Road To Success*. He is a leadership mentor with Women Unlimited and a communications expert with the American Management Association where his Own it Win it Crush it Success blueprint is featured in the Success Skills for the Next Generation program.

Key Learnings From This Episode

- **The Importance of Strategic Leadership.** Organizations understand the opportunity presented when its leaders think more strategically. The question becomes how to close the gap between the performance and viewpoint that strategic leadership provides.
- **The 7 Habits of Strategic Leaders:**
 1. **Take time to reflect.** Ask the right questions.
 2. **Create tension, lead change and execution.** Challenge the status quo, look for tension. Tension is the gap between current conditions and what they could be for our target audiences/customers.
 3. **Create meaning.** Developing a vision, managing the climate, and the narrative; know that it's an ongoing effort.



4. **Be relentlessly impatient.** Find value in moving fast and value creation. Be relentless about the finish line to achieve success..
5. **Communicate and create alliances and networks.**
6. **Build capacity.** Everything happens through other people.
7. **Get out of the way** so others can thrive

Now Let's look at each habit in a bit more detail:

- **Habit #1: Take time to reflect.** Carve out time to work on the business – not in the business. When leaders have time to reflect, they identify things to discuss with their leadership team. 'Reflection' should be recognized as a value. Establish 30/60/90 day touch points - 'have a meeting with you', a reflection meeting that will get you thinking. *'How are we doing strategically? Are we in the best formation? Are there things we can optimize? Are we putting the resources in the best places possible so we can get the highest return on those assets?'* With regard to the CEO, *'are we tapping their time to the best of our abilities? If we put the bulk of our time in the day-to-day, are we potentially missing out on billions of dollars in value that we don't get to capture?'* (Download the Meeting with Self 30-60-90 Days Strategic Leadership Tool on the show notes page.)
- **Habit #2: Create tension, lead change and execution.** You create positive tension when you identify the steps needed to get to where you are going. As a leader, you are creating change constantly and this creates tension in the organization. First, acknowledge it. Then outline how well the organization is doing, acknowledge and reward it, and then continue to remind people of the vision and the North Star of where the organization is going and give them vivid details of that future. You can say *'that's what we are going to see when we get there'*. This way the positive tension converts into excitement – *'how do we want to craft or redesign it?'* After we talk vision, then we can start to focus on how we execute. HR leaders need to embody those values and help their leadership teams articulate and not lose sight of the vision and the execution discipline needed to achieve it.
- **Habit #3: Creating meaning.** People want to understand where the company is going and how to get there. Vision is important, the leader needs get in front of his/her audience to reduce anxiety. Anxiety starts to build when people do not hear from their CEO or leadership team. The leader needs to 'speak' to the conversation taking place in everyone's mind. A CEO's speech may include the following sections: *'I know what you're thinking – are we there yet? Here's what we've been able*



to accomplish, here's where we are, and here's where we continue to track.' Also, share with them where they fit in that picture of the future.

- **Habit #4: Be relentlessly impatient.** While talking vision is important, keep an eye on how good your execution engine is, and how better it can be. Make sure you are getting to closure through good program and portfolio management, change leadership and management, and communication with stakeholders. Make sure you have a team that can execute and meet timelines.
- **Habit #5: Communicate and create alliances and networks.** HR leaders can help where blind spots exist by identifying situations where someone may need to connect with other leaders in order to succeed. HR becomes the facilitator to make connections. Leaders will begin to see HR in a different light – as the strategic business advisor that helps identify where to optimize. Create conditions for success – think about how you can help your client succeed.
- **Habit #6: Build capacity.** HR leaders know that you can get things done only through people and they more you help them see their potential and inspire them to be more and do more. (See Ash's MEANING book and particularly the chapter on Nido Qubein and his work at High Point University for more on this). HR leaders already have this as a key focus in their talent development efforts and they can highlight its importance even more to the business line leaders they work with. Disengagement costs the USA 350 billion and the dividend outcome resulting from development people more is they will feel the investment in them as a key indicator that they are valued and as result, you'll see them contribute more.
- **Habit #7: Get out of the way.** When leaders enjoy being the 'savior' – parachuting in to save the day - people will create conditions and plan around that. Identify where emotions are coming from and recalibrate them to enable others to succeed.



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WHEN HR SPEAKS THE ORGANIZATION'S LANGUAGE, LEADERS VIEW HR AS STRATEGIC BUSINESS ADVISORS THAT HELP THEM UNDERSTAND WHERE TO OPTIMIZE.

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Sit on the sideline and watch how the game is being played, step in to coach when need but, otherwise, get out of the way and let the organization create success.

- **Strategic HR leaders Are Internal Business Advisors or Consultants.** HR leaders who contribute at a more strategic level see themselves differently. Rather than saying, *'I am your HR partner'*, they say, *'I see myself as here to help you create and achieve success. I'm here to help you create and build those conditions for success through talent development, talent acquisition, building rewards, and recognition, etc. My whole intention is to make sure we are creating conditions for success for the organization.'* Your language will be different, and you will be creating deliverables strategically connected to the end goal that everyone is trying to achieve.

- **How can HR leaders bring some of these habits to their work?**
 - Build a map of the organization (e.g., Finance, Marketing, etc.), and think about the metrics these departments need to drive. As HR leaders, you can use the strategic language of these metrics to communicate with each function.
 - Tie the HR goals with the function's metrics to demonstrate your understanding of their goals and where they want to move the needle.
 - Talk about how to build talent to ensure they have enough capacity to reach their goals. Connect the goals with the metrics of the business line. Go to the table understanding the metrics - research, reflect and gather intelligence from within the organization.
 - Partner with the leadership, share what you've heard and strategize, from an HR perspective, to ensure you are aligned with where the organization is going. Now one needs to give you permission to do so.
 - Take charge and drive. You'll be surprised how the business leaders will appreciate you being a true partner in creating organizational conditions for success.

Leadership teams value the insight they get from their HR teams because they know that is their blind spot. When HR speaks their business language, they will view HR more as a strategic advisory resource that is a key catalyst for their and their organization's success.



Recommended Reading and References From this Episode

- [Executive Greatness Institute](#)
- [Meaning: How Leaders Create Meaning and Clarity During Times of Crisis and Opportunity](#) by Ash Seddeek and Leslie A. Rubin
- [The Road to Success](#) by Jack Canfield and Ash Seddeek
- Meeting with Self 30-60-90 Days Strategic Leadership Tool ([download on show notes page](#))

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