



**Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, Episode 53
Feeding Intrinsically Starved Employees: What? Why? How? With TTISI Chief Strategy
Officer, Ashley Bowers -- Produced By Suzie Price**

Transcript

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Suzie Price: “When you have someone who's emotionally or intrinsically starved, it doesn't matter how many systems or tools, or if you will, how much dirt you use to try to fill that hole, you can't fill an intrinsic hole with systemic information.” That's a quote from Ashley Bowers, the Chief Strategy Officer of TTISI, and that's what we're talking about today, intrinsically starved employees. Can't wait to share the information with you, Michael hit it.

Intro: Welcome to the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, a show designed for leaders, trainers and consultants who are responsible for employee selection and professional development. Each episode is packed full with insider tips, best practices, expert interviews and inspiration. Please welcome the host who is helping leaders, trainers and consultants everywhere, Suzie Price.

Suzie: Hi there. My name is Suzie Price and I'm with Priceless Professional Development and you are listening to the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, which is my joy to produce for you. And this is our 16th year at Priceless Professional Development in business and we're focused on helping Senior Leaders build an energetic, committed, drama-free, wake up eager workforce. And we do that through hiring science. We help organizations put the right people in the right seats using candidate assessments and benchmarks and getting clarity. That's a key part of motivation and energy and making sure you don't have intrinsically starved employees is a key part in making sure you've got the right people in the right seats. And then once you've used some of the resources that we share with you on that, you take that same information, the assessments, TriMetrix in particular, and you use it for onboarding. And then you allow their assessment and that information to help you do a better job of leading them and managing them and helping them with their growth. And it works throughout the lifecycle of their employment with you. And so that leads to not only do we help with hiring science, but we coach leaders, we train leaders and we work with teams. So we do that through all of our consulting tools, coaching tools. We also do that through our books, our monthly newsletter, this podcast and something new that I've started doing, the Wake Up Eager Wednesdays. So we're all about wake up eager here and it's the art of science of helping you bring the best of who you are to your work, into your life so that every day you do wake up and you say, “Hey, I like where I'm at, I like how I'm living, I'm using my talents fully.” Our whole mission is to help people get to where they want to go and we're just passionate about that here. So thank you so much for tuning in.

Suzie: Today we're talking about episode number 53, it's *Feeding Intrinsically Starved Employees*, that's the title. And it's, you know, what is that? Why does it matter? And how do we feed intrinsically starved employees once we understand what that looks like and why it matters and we're doing that with TTI Success Insights, Chief Strategy Officer, Ashley Bowers. The show notes for episode number 53 can be found at pricelessprofessional.com/starved, pricelessprofessional.com/starved. Some key points of what we talk about today, we do talk about what that is, intrinsically starved employees, and Ashley gives three actions. They're simple but not easy actions leaders can take to change that dynamic and we also pull in the



idea of Glass Door and the impact that's having on employees finding their voice and as Ashley says, we need to listen to that voice because they're going to share it. So the goal is for them to be sharing it with you, not on this Glass Door employee review site, if there are things you can correct to be able to do that. We also talk about my new favorite set of words which is having high interpersonal versatility, high interpersonal versatility. What is it? How do you build it? It's a key element of success for leaders and for people feeling successful and being successful in their life personally and professionally, so we talk about that. And then I enjoyed in particular and I think you will too, Ashley's sharing about her influences in her life, some of her favorite books, which we will have all the links to those books that she mentions at pricelessprofessional.com/starved. We'll also have a transcript of this episode there. Ashley shares some other key tips and there was a bunch of nuggets there in regard to her some of the information she shares about her leadership journey.

Suzie: I want tell you a little bit about her background, it gets talked about here in this episode, but 17 years with TTI Success Insights, she grew up in the business, started there early on and is currently the Chief Strategy Officer there. There was a four-year period where she went to work, I think it was four years, went to work for Home Smart as a Chief Operating Officer and she talks about how much she learned through that experience. Ashley and another colleague, Lisa Aldacert, both trained me in TriMetrix, probably in 2006, they came to Atlanta and they had a training program here and that was my first full ray into understanding the power of TriMetrix and what it measures, especially the "Under the Hood" portion of the assessment. And we use a car analogy here. And so under the hood is things you can't see but it's how you think and make decisions. And I was so super excited after that training session, I was pretty new in my business, about a year in, and I knew that the TriMetrix tool was going to be a key part of my business and that I was very much in harmony with what it was about. And it was my tool of choice going forward and it has been. I've written, *How to Hire Superior Performers* book, it was on that. The next book I'm writing about how to activate greatness, relates to that. So great ties to Ashley over the years and to TTI Success Insights and she represents them well here in this episode. So without further ado, let's get to it.

Suzie: Ashley, thank you so much for being on the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast. I'm going to jump right into our question and then let you kick us off with some important information about the idea of employees who are intrinsically starved. Tell us what it is. How do you know? What's the impact? And what are three things leaders can do about it?

Ashley Bowers: Well thank you for having me. The idea that employees are intrinsically starved really comes from this age of technology and automation and everything we have going on in our lives, the complexity and the chaos that we are surrounded by on a daily basis and we've done so much to automate and distance ourselves in order to increase efficiencies that we're losing that human interaction and employees are looking for purpose, they're looking for managers who care about them as an individual and care about how to take them to the next level. It's not enough just to say that you know, you want to be friends with people and you're going to add all the fluff and the things into the organization to quote unquote build the culture. They want to know that their work matters. They want to know that, how they're contributing to an organization, how they are making a difference. They spend a lot of their time in and around work and with the people that they work with and so they're looking for that deeper connection to their coworkers, to their leaders and ultimately to the company. And we tend to put systems and tools and processes in place. And so I always like to say when you have someone who is



emotionally or intrinsically starved, it doesn't matter how many systems or tools, or if you will, how much dirt you try to fill that hole with, you can't fill an intrinsic hole with systemic type of information.

Suzie: Yes, yes. And the word intrinsic, if you think about, all of our folks listening who know TriMetrix and we measure intrinsic/extrinsic/systemic, intrinsic is infinite and it's all about feeling and being. I love what you just said, "You can't feel an intrinsic hole with systemic tools," cause systemic tools are foundational but they don't fill the "being" part, the "feeling" part. That's good. So how do you know if you have this problem and what's the impact?

Ashley: I think as you look at it and when you look at information that is out there about your company, what are other people saying about your organization? What are they saying on social media? What are they saying around the water cooler? Do you have people leaving the organization? Do you have people striving to go above and beyond? Looking at employee net promoter scores and would they be willing to refer other people to work there? Is it an environment where they feel like they are being nurtured? Do you have open communication? Are you hearing the negative about your organization? Right? Do they feel like they have emotional safety to come and talk to leaders and to try to make a difference in the organization? Do they treat it as if it's their own, you know. There's articles that have been written about the renter's mentality versus the owner's mentality, you know, and what kind of mentality do your employees have? And if they are in that renter's place, it's probably because they're not being satisfied from an intrinsic or an emotional perspective.

Suzie: And when you say net promoter score, how can a leader find that, or understand what their promoter score is?

Ashley: Yeah, so the book is built on a question, originally that started more from a customer satisfaction metric and people were looking for a leading indicator versus a lagging indicator. And so the research turned to, what if we asked our employees how likely they were to refer another employee to work here? And that's the question and it's on a 1 to 10 scale. So you can send out a quick Pulse Survey doing a Google form or a Survey Monkey and just simple, yeah, how likely are you to refer a qualified candidate to join the company?

Suzie: Very good.

Ashley: And there is a formula behind that, that will give the score and I would really encourage, you know, reading *The Ultimate Question* before implementing it because there's definitely a right and a wrong way to do so and how to glean additional information from it in order to make changes in your organization.

Suzie: All right. We'll put a link to that in the show notes, the book. That's great, great, great, great. Okay. What's next?

Ashley: So the other thing, you know, really looking at Glassdoor and the impact that that's having on organization, as an employer I have a love hate relationship with Glassdoor.

Suzie: Explain what it is for anybody who's listening and doesn't know what it is.



Ashley: Sure. So glassdoor.com is a job board. It's a board where employees can go and review organizations. They can review what it's like to work there, they can review management, they rate the CEO, they can review the interview process as well as the onboarding process and they can post salary reviews. I mean it's very difficult as an organization to get anything changed on the website once it's up there. And so it's really a forum for employees to discuss, you know, if a place to work is good or bad or somewhere in the middle. From an employer standpoint, you know, you don't have a lot of control. So you could have had a situation where an employee was terminated and they're upset about it and they're going to go out there and blast you on Glassdoor. There's really nothing you can do about it. But what you can do is to work with the employees in the organization who want to cultivate that environment and want to have other people come and join. And so they're going up and they are posting positive things and you're putting some social pictures of employee relations to events and things like that up there. So there are definitely actions that employers can take to increase their ratings. So overall the company will be ranked on a scale of 0 to 5, and it will track it over time and show trends of going up and going down. And so really looking at the comments for what are the pieces within them that you can make a difference on, you know, where are the small areas that you can improve? If you go at it with a mindset to defend everything that's up there, then that's just what you're going to do and you won't make an improvement. But if you can take all the negative comments and say, you know, what's one thing that I could improve in the organization based on this negative comment? Over time, you'll start to see that change. And as you start to see that change, you're going to get in more qualified candidates as you're looking for new people to join the organization. And you're going to see just your entire culture start to rise. So it's, it's a good measurement for what the outside really believes about the organization. And it's just one of those things where the truth hurts at times and there are three sides to every story and it's only one side that's showing, so if you can do something about that side and the perception of the employees. Because after all, perception is reality and if that's how they're perceiving the organization, that's what you have to change. Whether it's true or untrue is really irrelevant, it's their perception of the truth and that is what you have to change.

Suzie: Right. So when you think about intrinsically motivated, you would know you have an intrinsically motivated population if Glassdoor is blowing up and it's all negative? Right? You wouldn't know for sure, but you've got a good bit of insight there, right?

Ashley: Absolutely.

Suzie: How many people are using Glassdoor I wonder, you think a, wonder how popular it is? It's amazingly popular, somewhat popular, I don't know?

Ashley: I would classify it as amazingly popular. And the reasoning being is now because of they're buying ad space on other job boards, so Indeed is the largest job board out there because it pulls from all different sources, a lot of human resource information systems automatically post to Indeed. And so you'll be searching and suddenly there's an ad that says, "Oh, look at this company on Glassdoor. What's their rating?" When Glassdoor became popular, people would say, "Well, you know the company I want, they don't go to Glassdoor." Well, Glassdoor is finding them. So it's not something that we can kind of dismiss any longer, it is something we have to address. That being said, Glassdoor has consulting tools and things like that to change the rating. I think that there's a lot of things by, you know, really focusing on the human nature of the business and understanding what makes your people tick and how to



communicate with them. I think you can make amazing changes that are super impactful and not pay to have those made.

Suzie: Yeah. And it's, I think I heard you say it, I am not going to quote you correctly probably, but you said something about, the employees are talking and we need to listen, basically, they're gonna talk, they're going to go to Glassdoor and talk. So...

Ashley: Yes.

Suzie: So you better listen.

Ashley: Yes, their voices are not always heard but they are heard by us.

Suzie: They are going to be heard. Yes, yes, yes. And I liked what you said about, the question, are you hearing the negatives? You know, so I always say it's like if a manager complains about hearing a lot of complaints, I'm like, "Oh, you need to be thankful, it means they trust you, they're telling you what's going on or what's bothering them," you need to listen.

Ashley: Yeah, anytime we do employee surveys I always say, if it's all rainbows and butterflies, they're not giving us honest feedback, if it is all gloom and doom, their probably so disengaged that they are not going to come back from that. We want the feedback that has constructive items, some negative items and some positive items all mixed in because that's somebody's real view of what's going on in the organization.

Suzie: Right, right. And if we go back up to intrinsically starved employees, what would you say are the top three things leaders can do? You've touched on it, but since you see, have an eye into so many organizations and then having run an organization yourself. If you said, "Okay, these are the three things. If you think you have employees who are intrinsically starved, you've gotten caught up in the tech efficiency and systems and process, and you know this is a weakness." What are the top three things they could do?

Ashley: I think that it is actually pretty simplistic, it doesn't have to be overly complicated to actually solve this problem, you have to want to solve it. But number one, I think that leaders need to be real and be authentic, be transparent with their employees and their team members, and not put on the facade of what they think leadership is supposed to be. And just be real, be someone that people feel like they can connect with. And then secondly, be intentional about making a personal connection with each employee. And that doesn't mean that you have to be best friends and hang out on the weekends and travel together, all of those things. But you can know their family structure, you can know what their personal life goals are, you know, you can know their history and you know where they've come from and how they plan to get to that next level and connect with them at that personal level where you know their kid's names or their pet's names or what's important to them and you really care about them as an individual and that they feel that from you. And then third, I think it's really important to share our failures. You know, we don't have to have it right all the time as a leader. And in fact we don't have it right all the time, so we need to stop pretending that we do. We need to talk about when we make mistakes or where we have accountability in a situation because at the end of the day, we're the ones that have the power inside the companies to make the changes. And so if we're not seeing something or we're not making the right changes, that's on us. And we need to make sure that



we're sharing in those failures to that we're building up that kind of emotional piggy bank, if you will, for when we do make mistakes and when we, you know, we don't do things the right way, that they know can come to us and connect with us on that deeper level and say, "Hey, things aren't going right," but trust that we're going to make a change about it because we're okay with saying that we did something wrong or you know, we could have done something better.

Suzie: Right. That's great. And it's high personal accountability basically, where there is a mistake, I own it and we always see that as a trait in high performers. So it is such a shift for a lot of folks, because it is like, "I need to be perfect, I need to look perfect," but if a leader does this, then it gives everybody else permission to do it.

Ashley: Right. The vulnerability is huge.

Suzie: Yeah. How did you start to become more vulnerable?

Ashley: You know, it is interesting...

Suzie: Because you are a high achiever. And you like to get stuff done, and I'm sure you have struggled with this, have you?

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely. I was at TTI for 17 years and decided that I was going to make an exit in 2013 and so I knew where all the skeletons were buried, I knew the answers to every question, I had been here through all the transitions and everything, so there really wasn't much that I had to ask like, "How do I do this? I need help." Right? I didn't. Those words weren't normal in my vocabulary back then. I left and I went to run a real estate conglomerate and that was a franchisor, a technology company and then obviously in the real estate space. So I didn't know the technology, I didn't know franchise law, I didn't know real estate law and it was very humbling over the first few months as I was going in trying to change the culture, that's kind of what I was tasked to do and I couldn't answer a question, I couldn't, you know, really make a decision without talking to six or seven people to understand all the elements of the organization. But yet I was brought in with this, you know, high level of authority and the title and in this responsibility that I needed to be making those decisions and moving those things forward, I was the first person outside the industry to come in, you know, at that type of level. And so my only path to success was to get extraordinarily real with people, to be vulnerable and to try to figure out what line level staff members would be willing to lock arm-in-arm with me to help me figure out the base level of how the organization functions. And I literally sat on a floor in a closing department counting checks and you know looking through closing documents to do tally marks on vendors that were utilized for each of the closings and literally on the floor. And just, I saw the impact that it had, where suddenly I would have, you know, these line level employees coming to my office and saying like, "Hey, this is going on in the organization, did you know about this?" And really like leaning in and you find those people who want the best for the organization, but they never had a voice. It just changed everything that, you know, I had known about leadership, you know, I didn't need to have this brave face all the time, if it wasn't about me being perfect and getting it right, it was about me helping everybody moved to the next step and kind of figuring out sometimes what that stuff was along the way, you know? And did we need to take a half a step for, do we need to take a step and a half or do, you know where do we need to go?

Suzie: Yep. That's great, that's awesome. And I've seen that in you, I've seen, not that I have been around you a ton or know for sure, but have seen what you're talking about and you be more open. Part of that is maturity too, for me personally, I am much more open and much more relaxed about all my failures or problems, you know, I'm just more transparent. So maybe that comes with, its experience, this is an experience that you had and for me it was experience like, "Okay, it's okay and, and actually the less you act perfect, or try to look perfect, the more relaxed you are, the better everything is." So that's awesome.

Ashley: It is funny how completely forced out of your comfort zone and into a whole new world actually makes you so much more comfortable in your own skin.

Suzie: Yeah, yeah.

Ashley: It is almost counterintuitive, it's like I get really uncomfortable and then I become super comfortable with who I am as a person. How did this work? You know?

Suzie: Yeah. I've actually had people say to me, "You're different." I think, you know, I made a shift somewhere, I wasn't fully aware of it, but the feedback tells me so, so still have work to do, but...

Ashley: I have a couple Value Added Associates were like, "Old Ashley, new Ashley, how would you have responded and now how would you respond using it for leadership development?" I mean obviously they are really close with me so they feel comfortable saying those kinds of things.

Suzie: Yeah.

Ashley: But it has been a running conversation in a few different product development meetings and things like that where we have our associates in with us. But it's great because we can all talk about it and it helps us all learn. You know?

Suzie: Yeah, that's awesome, I appreciate you sharing here too. So let's talk about my new favorite words, and you said them when you were speaking at conference, and I had to write it down, I underlined it and I highlighted it, so to build it up, high interpersonal versatility, high interpersonal versatility. What is it and how can leaders figure out, you know, where they are in this set of words that I like so much and how can they grow? Help us understand this.

Ashley: Sure. In a nutshell, I think it is that ability to be in essence a chameleon, but sometimes the word chameleon has a negative connotation, like you're being fake, and you know, you're changing who you are depending on a situation, and that's not high interpersonal versatility is, it's truly being able to adapt and mold to the situation, the level of employee, the topic at hand in order to make them most effective outcomes happen. And I think again, you know, in that real estate experience, having \$10 an hour employee conversation to the next meeting, you know, having a franchise prospect in the room to the next meeting, you know, talking to industry professionals where I knew nothing and had to sound like I did. It's that muscle, right? It's that muscle that we have to continually work to understand, you know, that self-awareness, you know, what's the situation, how am I regulating, what's the situation with the other person? Do I understand their emotions and what they're looking to achieve? Can I adapt my behavioral style

to their behavioral style and match that in order to create the best outcome. So it was using, you know, obviously everything that we do here at TTI with the assessments, like kind of all in conjunction with each other, making sure that you're bringing, you know, if my dominant scale, you know, on the TTI scale is 100%, I can't show up that way in every situation in every day. In fact, most situations don't require that a hundred percent dominant style. So you know, when is it, like what tool that I have within my makeup as a human being do I need to be utilizing at that time and how do I pull that tool forward or push that tool back in order to have the best outcome, in that given situation.

Suzie: So some tips for folks who have completed the TriMetrix assessment, I'm thinking and you can dialogue with me on this Ashley, but so if you have a really high D-I-S-C or a really low D-I-S-C in regard to, you know on the wheel you're far on the outside, that means you have a strong tendency, so could go look at that and say, "Okay, am I managing that?" That's one. If you have passionate or extreme or indifferent on the motivators, you could go look at that. That would be where we might get entrenched sometimes because we, if you score passionate or indifferent that means you have a strong tendency so that's harder to manage to, so that could be one you know where somebody could go assess, "Okay, let me go look and see if I'm overdoing my high theoretical," which would be me or you know, other things. And also on the Acumen part, maybe it would be, it could look like, I don't know, I'm just throwing some possibilities out there so people could go back and look at their assessments. But it could be the understanding others, if that's a little lower, that might show a gap, right? Basically?

Ashley: Yeah, or even if it's higher with a positive bias, right? We tend to see the sufficiencies versus the deficiencies in people. So are we totally optimistic about someone's ability in actually setting them up to fail?

Suzie: Yeah. There we go, yup.

Ashley: As a leader you think you are moving them forward and doing all these great things for them, but do they even want to be there?

Suzie: Yeah.

Ashley: What does that person want in their life, at that moment? And then how do you lead towards that and being okay with it. I think earlier in my career, I was never okay with it, right? I'm high commanding as well. And so, you know, everyone should want to be at the top of that corporate ladder and everyone should want these great things. Well not everybody does and that's okay. But our ability as leaders to constantly adapt to that in a very authentic way is important. And so I think a few things leaders can do is one, I mean self awareness is huge, you know, understanding the assessments about ourselves, understanding the rest of the makeup, you know, kind of how we became who we are from our early upbringing and you know, all the failures and successes that we've had that have formed who we are and really being okay with that information but never allowing any of that to be an excuse for how we behave or don't behave in a situation, and sometimes we get a lot of information about ourselves and it's like, "Oh well it's okay, you know, I have a high D so I was allowed to yell at that person will know." Well, no, it isn't, that's not ok.

Suzie: Yeah, yeah. Don't you noticed that as people learn the tools, it's like it's starts with, "I'm trying to understand it," and then the understanding is that sometimes people can stand in that place, where it's like, "Oh, I'm a high D, it shouldn't matter, I'm not going to manage." No, that's not what this is about.

Ashley: That's not the objective of the exercise.

Suzie: And then the next phase is, and it's harder to do, it's easy to talk about, you have to pay attention, manage yourself. So it's like you said, and with family past stuff too, you can understand it but don't use it as an excuse. But anyway, yeah. So the next phase is to actually adapt, right?

Ashley: And I think having that accountability partner inside of your organization is key, like, "Who is that trusted person?" You know, if you are an Executive, is it your Administrative Assistant? Is it your right hand or left hand partner within the organization that after the meeting can say, "Hey, like I know you're working on this and that came across really authentic, like you actually heard what they said today," or that person who can stop you in the middle of meeting and say, "Hey listen, you're not actually hearing what's being said, hold on, you're in your own space." And having that trust relationship where you know there is a key person in the organization that knows you're trying to develop and work towards being more versatile when it comes to interacting with other people that can help you through it because sometimes it's hard to see, especially if it is a topic we're passionate about.

Suzie: Yup, and under stress too so we can manage, I can manage myself all day until I get under stress, which I'm either tired or I'm feeling insecure and then all of a sudden I know, "Out the window, monkey brain takes over." And I'll do it myself, full tilt. That's great. I liked the trust relationship and you, do you have people that you have that kind of relationship with at work?

Ashley: I do. And actually on different teams I have different people, so just depending on if it's like the general leadership team, I have my person who I go in and have my check with, "Was I okay with this, could I have acted differently in that?" And then I've gotten to a point now where I'm pretty comfortable even going to the person I had the interaction with afterwards and saying, "Hey, we had this interaction, did I come across this way because this was my intent," and then we can dialogue through it. And that helped grow, especially with, you know, being back inside the Organization for the last year, getting to know everybody and getting to know their styles.

Suzie: And note, anyone who is listening, that that's building high trust, that's a high trust building behavior.

Ashley: That's what helps you be successful.

Suzie: Yeah, exactly, exactly, where we say, we've got each other's back, it's all good and oh I think I might have done something. That's exactly what you were talking about, about being vulnerable, being aware. That's great. Anything else about high interpersonal versatility that you want to add on or say, that I haven't let you say yet?

Ashley: The only thing I would say is that if you are trying to work towards that, don't beat yourself up when you take a step backwards, it's not easy to get to that point where you're really

okay being that vulnerable, it gets easier the more you do it and if I'm completely candid, if I wasn't thrown into the situation that I was thrown into, I don't know that I would have ever gotten there. The first year and a half, there were multiple times a week that I was in tears talking to a trusted colleague on the way home, "I can't do this, they don't like me, they don't respect me. I can't do this." And you know, that unwillingness to give up and I really believed in the owner and what he was trying to achieve. I just kinda kept that laser focus. So don't, don't beat yourself up too hard if you have the hard days, cause sometimes they happen and we're still human no matter how great we get it at leadership, we're still human.

Suzie: Yes. And that's the beauty of leadership, you never know when you're done and you're never done because you always have the opportunity to evolve. That's great, I appreciate you sharing that and that's a great point. And like what you did, you found somewhere to express and vent it and you used that to say, "Okay, now it's time to dig in and focus once again." That shows your resilience. Which is awesome. Okay, so we're going to talk a little bit more you and your career and I think that this will be helpful because it helps other leaders learn about, other leaders. So let's talk about who has most influenced you in your life and career? And tell us a little bit about what they said or did or shared that was most useful for you.

Ashley: So I have two actually in that category and one that I was trying to develop that I feel like she taught me more than I taught her. But the first one I want to talk about is my Aunt Sherry. So I grew up in family business, my grandparents own beauty supplies before the days of the Ulta's and all of that. Yeah. And so we have these beauty supplies, 13 of them at one point here in the valley and then I have cousins that have them in Texas and such. But growing up, I mean that's all summer, all holidays, I mean from school, you know, we were in the stores and I think I actually got my first official paycheck when I was like eight years old from one of the beauty salons.

Suzie: Oh, you're kidding me. I never knew that, that's cool.

Ashley: From the time I was about three years old, they all have stories of me separating out the credit card machine, which was when you had to like go back and forth on the carbon paper and separating out the Visas and the MasterCard's and American Express cards, cause I knew what number they started with and I was like three or four. So that upbringing, it's always about the company and the owner of the company and you put that person before your own needs, I think shaped a lot of who I am as an employee and as a leader. And probably shaped the expectations I have of my employees, which are pretty extreme. You know, if you take care of the organization, the organization will take care of you. And yes, sometimes does that fail, sure it does, but I think that it helps you succeed more than not. And I think it really helps keep your eye on the purpose. And the reason you know that you're in the position that you're in and I think that's a quality that my leaders have always talked to me about is that I, they always feel like I put their company before myself. And I realized like I've learned that from my Aunt, whether it was in her personal life and how she took care and still to this day take care of her husband, her children, obviously, nieces and nephews and grandchildren at this point, but also how she always took care of the business. And I just really admire her as an individual. So yes, she is a role model.

Suzie: Yeah, Aunt Sherry. Put you on a path.



Ashley: She did and still does. She's that person I go to when I need straightening out. So yes. Professionally, the VP of Operations that was at the Real Estate company when I first went over there, what I realized very quickly is that, you know, she had grown up in the organization very similar to how I had grown up here. And what I realized in her though is that she was always trying to figure out which leadership style she was supposed to emulate. And so was it the owner, was it another Executive? Was it the COO that was there before me? And the more and more that she and I spoke, the more I saw this trend in her and I think it was in my coaching of her to just be the leader that she is and figure out her own leadership style and not try to be what's written a book, not try to be what she's seeing in other leaders, but just to be authentic and figure out how she best leads, was when I was finally able to like take my own advice and do that for myself. My ability to kind of take that company where we did in the time that I was there and I don't know that if I didn't have to coach her through that, that I would have ever seen it in myself.

Suzie: How about that, that's awesome, that a great story.

Ashley: You learn from everyone around us.

Suzie: Yes, yes. And it is so fun to be a teacher and a facilitator and a coach because we get to benefit from all of that, by learning about ourselves. That's awesome.

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely.

Suzie: So what books, training programs, education, what's been most instrumental in your development along the way? What stands out? Maybe what books do you recommend the most? Tell us a little bit about that.

Ashley: Yeah. So throughout my career I have always been a reader, I typically have five or six going on at any given time. And I love taking the pieces that resonate most with me and kind of applying that, I tend not to go all in on one concept and I kind of pick and choose and build things. So I think there's something to learn in everything that we read. If we go into any situation with that perspective, like what's the nugget that I can get out of this, of either something to do or just stop doing or to avoid. If you have the right mindset, you can learn from any situation. But one of my favorites is actually called *The Traveler's Gift* and it was written by Andy Andrews. I was at a National Speakers Association convention years ago and he was a keynote speaker there and talked about the seven principles of leadership. And it's just like principles of decision-making. And the premise behind it is sometimes we get so focused on our big decisions but a lot of times it's the daily small decisions that make the biggest impact. And so the book is a fable and David Ponder is the character in it and he gets in a car accident and he goes back into time when he's in this coma and he visit seven people from history.

Suzie: Oh, how cool is that? Great concept.

Ashley: Yeah, yeah, and you learn something from each one as you go through this. And so it's a phenomenal book. I always go through it with all of my leaders because I think it helps people figure out their own leadership style and how they make decisions. If you can get all your leaders making decisions based on the direction of the company and impact really, like how it's really going to change the organization first and foremost, I think then you can kind of mold from



there and you can give them the other skills. So it's one that I love to recommend and it's an easy read and I've yet to meet anyone that's come back and said it that was not a valuable use of my time. So, that's one of my favorites.

Suzie: I appreciate you sharing that. I've not heard of that, it is on my list. Anything else that is on your favorite or is that your best one?

Ashley: That is actually my favorite. I am a big fan of *Rocket Fuel* and *Four Disciplines of Execution*, kind of anything operational, on taking different pieces and *Scaling Up* by Verne Harnish is a favorite as well, and I love how they are so many different resources for looking at cash and people and stuff on the website that you can utilize to have a conversation, those are probably my top ones right at the moment. I have got a list of them. I'm just starting *Dare to Lead*, I haven't read it yet, but I've been told by several people that it's going to be my new favorite, but I haven't finished, I just, just started it, so I don't have an opinion yet.

Suzie: Okay, cool. So let's just say them quick because I'm not sure I am going to be able to catch them on the recording either, so one of them was *Rocket Fuel*. What was the other two?

Ashley: Yeah, *Rocket Fuel*, *Four Disciplines of Execution*.

Suzie: Oh, okay, *Four Disciplines of Execution*.

Ashley: Verne Harnish, *Scaling Up*.

Suzie: *Scaling Up*.

Ashley: Those were the three that I mentioned.

Suzie: Okay, and which is the new one that you're reading? Is that the *Scaling Up*?

Ashley: The new one is *Dare to Lead* by Brene Brown.

Suzie: Oh, Brene, okay, awesome. We'll put links to those in the show notes. Perfect. So when you think of the word successful, who is the first person that comes to mind?

Ashley: My Grandfather. My family has been very instrumental in who I am as a person. Yes, my Grandfather is that person for me that I still question, like would he be proud of this decision? Would he be proud of this choice? So he's definitely my barometer, and keeping myself on a straight arrow and I cannot say, I can always answer yes to that, you know, but when I think of like success, he was very successful in construction. He and my Grandmother got married when they were 15 and 16 and they were married for 59 years when my Grandmother passed away. Absolutely the love of each other's lives. So just from the role model of their marriage, of him as a father, as a grandfather and then, you know, as a businessman, you know, he was very successful with work, he was very successful with the beauty supplies when, you know, they opened up that business, always well grounded. You know, they went through the depression. So I'm very mindful of debt and finances and things of that nature. Yeah, just taught me how to be the person that I wanted to be and like what success meant from a full picture.



Suzie: Personal and professional.

Ashley: Yeah, there's all these aspects that matter and you have to keep them in balance and that's where I'm not always the best, I struggle with the balance, you know, there are things that I bring into that mix to make sure that we're having that and they're definitely things that he taught me and my grandmother taught me. But definitely he's the one that I always measured by.

Suzie: And I think one time we were at dinner and I have an imagine in my mind, I might be incorrect, but did he smoke a pipe or something, and you had a memory of you sitting on his lap and how he smelled or something? Yeah?

Ashley: Yes. I would sit on his lap outside and he would smoke his pipe and I would sit on his lap, in like his Lazy Boy thing and we would watch The Prices Is Right.

Suzie: That's what it was. Yeah. And when you think about the kind of that legacy you want to leave, I mean I am often thinking about that, it's like, am I being with the people that matter? So that those are the memories, you know?

Ashley: There is a picture of me and my Grandfather dancing at one of my cousin's weddings and it's in every meeting that goes with me.

Suzie: Oh, he is with you and I'm sure in spirit, he is in all those meetings going, "You go get 'em girl." That's awesome.

Ashley: Trying to make him proud.

Suzie: That's awesome, I love that. Okay, so we talk about waking up eager here, this is the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, I've got a Wake Up Eager newsletter, I've go Wake Up Eager Wednesday. So what are some things that you do to wake up eager and I usually talk about them, mind, body and spirit. What are some of your top things that you do to wake up eager?

Ashley: I think from a mind and mental clarity standpoint, I am big on planning. I have a vision board to kind of keep that focus and keep that image with me at all times so that we know where we are going and what's important and trying to make sure I focus on the long-term and not the short-term. Definitely, I mean, yeah, we plan to do lists at home. We plan vacations out six months in advance to make sure that we're getting our rest periods and not, you know, that it's not all work and really, you know, had planned those experiences. Body, that's not always great but definitely love to workout and have found that going to the gym after work really kind of de-stresses in de-clutters, you know, everything that I have going on so that then I can go and be present at night with my son and you know, and do the family time and the things that we need to do from that perspective. And spirit, you know, the family connections and community. We've found ourselves in a phenomenal neighborhood with great neighbors, a bunch of kids, I mean we all travel together. We are really raising our families together, which is amazing.

Suzie: That's awesome.

Ashley: That's very helpful in so many different ways. I do try to plan our vacations for the experience, you know, and people tease me with my Disneyland spreadsheets that I have. It was a very big part of my life growing up, my grandparents took me every year, my aunt and uncle took us after that. And so that's something that Noah and I have enjoyed together on a yearly basis and we, you know, pull different people in. And so now, you know, he'll sit with me on the couch and we'll be planning out dinners, then this, that and the other, and we just have a lot of fun with it and it's just kind of our happy place. But I try that with all of our vacations and just make sure they are an experience and I'm present and making sure that that quality time really counts.

Suzie: Awesome. So question for you on the planning, on the days, I'm imagining, I know how busy my day is, and I am one person in my business, now you are catering to not only the business of TTISI, but also 2,000 consultants who are tapping in, I don't know what the number is, but something like that, tapping in, so how do you plan your days? Do you have any tips there so that you know, that planning fallacy, we always think we can do more than we actually can. How do you keep on track with that? And you talked about the long-term, but how about day to day? Any tips there or anything? Insights?

Ashley: Yeah, so one of the things we did as an organization this year is, we said internal meetings can only happen on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Suzie: Oh, I like it.

Ashley: And we were constantly moving from meeting to meeting so we would have these half hour, 45 minute stints where you essentially just get wrapped up an email. I'm like, "You're not really getting anything done." And so we said all internal meetings have to be on Tuesdays and Thursdays and the exception would be three or less people that are actually like solving a project problem or something like that, could get together outside of those days. And that's really helped clear the field quite a bit. And you know, I support a lot of VAA's, more kind of in like an ongoing accountability and coaching relationship. And so all of those are the second and fourth week of every month and I don't have them on the first or the third week of every month, so that I can clear calendars for that. Yeah, the calendar very much kind of formed based on what it is that I need. I love, this so simple, but I love the Google tool where if it's a 30 minute, it actually does 25 and if it's an hour, it actually does 50 minutes because it just gives you those few minutes in between meetings too, you know, health break and just you know if they do run over a minute or two you're not behind.

Suzie: Is it Google calendar?

Ashley: Yeah, it's a time efficiency button in settings that you can turn on and it automatically puts all your 30-minute meetings at 25 minutes and all your 60-minute meetings at 50. And so that really helped out a lot.

Suzie: Okay, that's a good nugget. Lots of good nuggets, but that's one I like, and I like the structure that you've set up for the business and for your schedule, we have to do that, if we don't take charge of it, somebody else will and we probably won't like the outcome.

Ashley: Right? Absolutely.



Suzie: Okay, so some fun, get to know you questions. I'm looking at our time here. What actor or actress would you have play you in a movie?

Ashley: Sandra Bullock.

Suzie: That's why you picked Sandra; I like her, why did you pick her?

Ashley: So her acting in *The Blind Side*, I like her in general, but in *The Blind Side* specifically, my husband and I watch that and he feels like it's written about me, and I know it is a very accurate picture of the Mom, Leigh Anne Tuohy, and stuff, but her demeanor and the way she says things, I think it would be phenomenal to watch her demonstrate my less favorable characteristics in a movie, I think it would be pretty comical.

Suzie: How fun. That's neat. Okay, so what about, what is your favorite possession?

Ashley: So my favorite possessions are my porcelain dolls. I have a couple of porcelain dolls that were from a collection of my Grandmother's and we would pick them out and order them when I was a little girl and I am adamant that they stay out in our house, they are in the guest bedroom because everyone thinks that they are creepy. Everyone thinks that they are creepy, you know, different people that were really close with, they'll, you know, if they've stayed in our guest bedroom, I will find them in the closet when I go into the guest bedroom afterwards. I love them; I do not think they are creepy.

Suzie: They have funny faces or something?

Ashley: They are just porcelain dolls; they are definitely a possession that is near and dear to my heart.

Suzie: That's nice, that's nice, even though they land in the closet or in a drawer sometimes. What advice would you give your 25 year old self?

Ashley: Stop trying to prove yourself. I think when we are younger in our careers, regardless of age, I think when we're younger in our careers, we're so busy trying to prove that we deserve where we're at, that I think we behave in ways that maybe are undeserving of where we're at. Good. You know, just let things happen, stop trying to prove yourself. It'll work out the way it's supposed to work out and you can't force it. And I think I had a lot of sleepless nights and a lot of stress that I put on myself that really wasn't necessary. I think the result would have been the same if I would have just gone with the flow.

Suzie: Wonderful. If you could have a billboard anywhere, where would it be and what would it say?

Ashley: So it would be a compass pointing due north that would say, "Most people are good." And I think it should be on every highway. You know, I think if we just turn off noise and realize that most people come to their day with good intent and focus on that intent and maybe not sometimes the delivery or the word choice, I think we would all be a lot happier.



Suzie: I love that. Very good, focus on intent, not delivery or word choice. All right. We're coming to a close, I know you've got things to go to, if there was one bit of advice or wisdom you want every leader to take away from this discussion as we're talking about intrinsically starved employees and how to change that dynamic, what's your last bit of advice or wisdom?

Ashley: Lean into your people, they are there for a reason, they want to make a difference, it's a lot of time they put into the organization, lean into them and just see where it takes you. What's the worst thing that could happen? You know, we do it with our kids, so why can't we do that with our staff and our people and just lean in and let them shine.

Suzie: I love it. So it has been awesome having you on here today. I appreciate you giving your time and sharing your many talents. Best way to reach you?

Ashley: abowers@ttisi.com or definitely connect on LinkedIn, happy to answer any other questions. Thank you so much for having me. It's been an absolute pleasure.

Suzie: Awesome.

Ashley: I appreciate everything you do for us.

Suzie: Oh, I appreciate being a part of it, it has been the key part of my business and life, and I hope that continues for many years to come. People could reach out to you for one of your favorite things to do is strategic planning, correct?

Ashley: It is.

Suzie: Get a little bit of a little commercial around that or it doesn't have to be a commercial, but like a little summary of what it is. You call it messy strategy, but what would that be if people are needing help with that.

Ashley: I love to look at an organization and really just diagnose and really just get information from the bottom, up, and sort of turn your traditional strategic planning upside-down and make sure we're hearing from the employee group and see really what can be accomplished. And yes, we call it messy strategy, I believe the strategic planning process shouldn't be this perfect linear process that you're walking through step-by-step and wondering when you're supposed to talk about certain topics. I think it should be a little all over the place, a fun and exciting endeavor to ultimately create a plan so the execution throughout the organization can be anybody that wants to really kind of work on how they operate inside the organization.

Suzie: Awesome. Thank you, Ashley. You're the best.

Ashley: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Suzie: So I'm hoping that you got nuggets of wisdom and insight to help you on your journey. I'd like to recap some of the things that she shared, Ashley shared, around intrinsically starved employees, some actions and top three, and these are simple, but they're not easy as we discussed, but number one, be real, don't put on a facade, be intentional about making a personal connection. And number three, share your failures, stop pretending when you make

mistakes. I love this quote by Henry Ford, it says, "Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently." And then I certainly can relate to that. I'm somebody who moves pretty fast, I'm not afraid to make mistakes actually; sometimes I wish I was a little more afraid. I'm learning to kind of pull it back a little bit. But when I get an idea and I'm ready to go, I'll go. And sometimes when I go, I make mistakes. And so I love the idea of having a failure or making a mistake or making an error, is not fatal, it's actually, as Henry Ford said, an opportunity to begin again and this time you know more. It's kind of like the thing I always talk about, about situations or you know, anything you don't want after you've had what you don't want you never know more clearly what you do want until you've had what you don't want. So you know, to begin and just go for it and then not to not be afraid of it. And if you want to connect with your employees, which is the whole idea of what intrinsically starved employees is about, is they need and want connection, we all need and what connection to each other. And to think of that as a key part of your job, to make that connection, share those failures, be intentional about the connection part and be real and watch how things, as Ashley said, watch to see what happens, give it a shot.

Suzie: Show notes for today's episode is at pricelessprofessional.com/starved, pricelessprofessional.com/starved and the starved is lower case. Our directory of episodes, wakeupeagerworkforce.com. Next up we're going to talk about the negative side of assessments, I see assessments as a key tool in my business, but there is a not so positive side or negative side to that and that is when people weaponize DISC, DISC is a tool that I use, I think it's valuable, but there's some mistakes that get made over and over again, I see them all the time in organizations and I see it with colleagues and so we're going to talk about that. What are those mistakes so that you make sure you're not weaponizing DISC and I'm taking the negative out of something that could be positive or making something negative out of something that could be positive. You know, we're going gonna talk about how to do it better, so I'm excited about that, that's our next episode.

Suzie: The new thing that I started this year is Wake Up Eager Wednesday. So every Wednesday I post at wakeupeager.com, tips, mind, body, spirit tips, and it's all personal things. This is what I'm thinking about this week, mind that's the systemic or tools and that's all what systemic is, something that's measured in the Hartman assessment. Extrinsic is the body. You know, what are the things I'm doing to wake up eager. And intrinsic, what are some things I'm feeling, being, that are helping me tap into the feeling part of a wake up eager life. So that's personal connections and more. So if you are interested in Wake Up Eager Wednesdays, you can go to wakeupeager.com and you'll see that every Wednesday. I also post on LinkedIn, so if we're not connected on LinkedIn, contact me there and let's connect. And also there's a Facebook Wake Up Eager, facebook.com/wakeupeager. And if you're connected there or you like that page, you'll see Wake Up Eager Wednesday every Wednesday. So go forth, have a wake up eager wonder week. And, we'll see you at the next episode. Take care.

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