

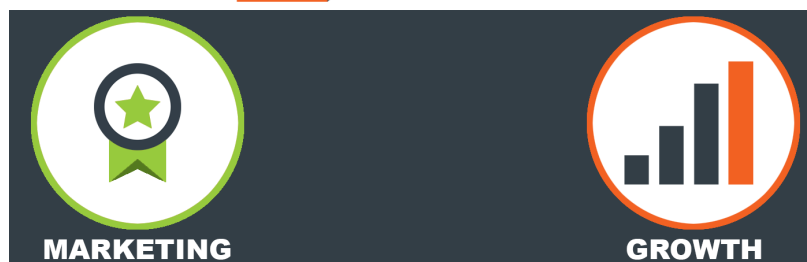


LEADING MATTERS

with



**JOEL
CAPPERELLA**



LEADING MATTERS

Episode #9

Guest: [Ryan Estis](#), Business Performance Expert & Keynote Speaker

Voiceover: Leading Matters with Joel Capperella.

Joel Capperella: Okay, let's jump right into today's episode, Leading Matters. Today I'm speaking with Ryan Estis. You can find him at RyanEstis.com. He worked for a very large advertising firm for a number of years and as he puts it, opted out in about 2009 because of a trend that he was seeing at the time where organizations were not adopting as swiftly as necessary to meet the changing landscape of business. Since that time he's been consulting, he does training, some research, and speaking, actually quite a bit of speaking. In fact, that's how I was fortunate enough to invite him onto the show. I was at a conference in Boston that I spoke at in one of the smaller sessions and he had the main stage for one of the keynotes. It was really a compelling keynote address.

What I loved about it, and I'll talk about it in the episode, you'll kind of get some of the details, but what I really enjoyed that he did is he framed out his talk so that at the end there was a clear and specific call to action. As a matter of fact he calls it a Take Action Now plan or a TAN plan. I would encourage you to look up Ryan Estis online. Look at some of his videos and also listen to the episode. It's about 20 minutes long. I know you're going to get some value and it's actually motivated me to try to take these episodes and let's pull one thing out of them that we can apply. I think today's episode you're going to hear quite a bit about how we inject culture into the DNA of who we are, especially and in particular the talent acquisition processes to make sure those that are joining our team are the right culture and value fit.

That's the takeaway action for all of you listening today. What's the [00:02:00] one thing that I can do with specificity that's going to change the way we interview, the way we screen? What are the questions that we're going to ask that are going to allow us to align the talent coming into our organization against our mission, our values, and our culture? Write it down. I would also encourage you to implement it and make it measurable. Don't let it, however, be overwhelming for you. It doesn't need to be a complex plan, matter of fact Ryan's going to talk a lot about simplicity as well so I would encourage you to keep it simple but take action. If you need some motivation, stay tuned as we get going here for my conversation with Ryan Estis.

Okay, joining me today, as my guest on Leading Matters, is Ryan Estis. Ryan is, and I'm not just saying this because it's to blow smoke here because he's my guest, but I truly believe that one of the best keynote

speakers that I've seen in a long time. I was fortunate enough to see Ryan speak at the Bullhorn Engage conference in Boston earlier last month and really just blown away by the approach he takes, and not only that, the value that he delivers to the audience in an actionable way so much so it motivated me to try to still a couple minutes of his time afterwards and invite him to the program. First things first, Ryan, I really appreciate your time. Thanks for joining me today.

Ryan Estis: Thank you Joel and thanks for the kind words. It was great to connect at Engage conference and it's good to be on the program.

Joel Capperella: Well listen, I'm going ahead and jump right into it. Your consulting practice, you do a lot of speaking, training, and research, that's the value that you bring to your clients. You talk about it as a way to embrace change and improve performance, right? What I want to do, and again, you don't have to go into great detail but for those that might not have had the pleasure of hearing you speak, just what motivated you to start a drive improving business performance from that perspective?

Ryan Estis: Well, I think part of it, part of my motivation, was personal. I, just for a little bit of quick [00:04:00] background, I left a large organization. I was the Chief Strategy Officer for a division of a Fortune 500 advertising and communications company and our performance struggled in large part, I think, due to resistance to change and in January of 2009 I opted out and became an entrepreneur. I started my own company, the company you mentioned that I run now. I think just personally I had experienced some of those challenges and my background is in leadership and sales and so I wanted to bring some of my own personal approach. Then obviously looking for opportunities to unlock the potential and performance inside the clients we serve and support. It's been a great journey for me over the course of the last 6 years. I've worked with some wonderful companies and have partnered with the research company that supports us with great data and intelligence. I'm leveraging both that experience and continually looking for new research and case studies to support the learning and the impact that we offer our clients today.

Joel Capperella: Let me kind of expand that a little bit because, and I'm going to link it up when I go ahead and post this, but a great example that you give of really understanding what you're truly selling is in your story about the young woman that served you coffee at the, I think, was it the Minneapolis airport?

Ryan Estis: Right, that's right.

Joel Capperella: I'm going to go ahead and link that up but more importantly the takeaway from that is, listen you're not in business to whatever the bits and bites might be, or whatever the transaction might be, but there's a greater purpose there. There's a greater mission. Many times what I'm finding is business leaders sometimes get so mired in the day-to-day that they lose track of what the purpose and the mission is. Can you talk about the importance and the necessity of having clear purpose and mission?

Ryan Estis: Well, I think the [00:06:00] importance of having clear purpose and mission is maximizing the contribution of your people. Today I think many employees are starving to contribute to something larger than themselves. We see that mission, purpose, values, is critical to unlocking the capability and contribution of the talent inside your organization. I mentioned my previous experience and I will tell you personally, I worked inside an organization and I think if you ask, if you did a survey of people there, we would have said that our core purpose is to maximize shareholder value. While I'm not diminishing the importance of that, I don't know that that necessarily is a drive that unlocks the deepest capability that exists inside people. Having these ideas and then consistently executing around them and delivering a solid experience internally inside the organization, it's critical to be an effective leader and to also deliver performance.

I think as business becomes more complex, as the marketplace becomes more competitive, as the rate of change accelerates these are key fundamentals to growth and success as we look out toward vision 2020. I see things like mission values, alignment, purpose, culture; these are the keys to being competitive in the world we live in today. I get exposed to this on a weekly basis. I walk into organizations and work with pains that aren't aligned at all and they're struggling. I also have the opportunity and the fortune to walk into organizations that are dominating their category and always looking to scale up and take it to another level. Having that exposure and having an opportunity to research and study that, I see the difference that it makes. That's why I'm passionate about it.

Joel Capperella: Another question I have around that is what my experience has been when I'm helping my clients or along stops [00:08:00] in my career is that it's always a great thing to aspire to. In other words we want to have mission, we want to have purpose, but then it's not an easy thing to develop though. It's not an easy thing to gather people around and actually roll your sleeves up and identify it. It's hard work and it can be tedious work to definite it, right, to actually put it on, not necessarily on

paper but inject it into the DNA of our organization. Have you seen that, companies struggle to inject that mission truly and sincerely go through the tedium of developing it and then making it easy and accessible for the organization to understand it?

Ryan Estis: I see it every day. I see it every day. Look, you have to have buy-in to really deliver against this. You have to have buy-in at the very top of the organization. Then you have to have the leaders that are committed to executing around it each and every day to make it part of the fabric and the DNA. I'll be real straightforward. Kind of the way to do it is it's simple in concept but I think it's difficult to execute around it consistently and it's real. It's based on who gets hired, who gets rewarded, who gets promoted and who gets let go. If you're not connecting these things in the way you manage people and performance there is going to be a disconnect and that creates all kinds of challenges and problems. I think that's both the opportunity that exists and maybe the challenge that's embedded in doing it well.

Joel Capperella: Is it measurable? In other words, is it something where once I have it defined, and those are very key tactical things that you mention there but I'm wondering, is the idea of how well are we embedding mission, and purpose, and culture into the DNA of who we are, is that something that could be measured?

Ryan Estis: Sure, sure it can, yeah. I'll give you a great resource on this call to measure it. I have a partnership, I mentioned, with a research organization [00:10:00] based in Minneapolis where I office and live. The company's called Modern Survey and they, in addition to studying employee engagement and tracking trends for over a decade, they're actually they're a measurement company and they will go and they provide a very robust platform and set of tools to measure this exactly inside an organization. Wherever you are on the spectrum, whether you're at the inception of developing this, or you're trying to make it have a larger impact in your organization, or you want a pulse check, I think measurement is a critical component of doing this right and that's once resource. There are others but that's one that I'm in.

Joel Capperella: I like that. Listen, I said that in my opinion you were a powerful keynote speaker and let me just kind of share with the audience why that is. What I loved about your talk is that you framed it up around the 4 key areas you wanted people to remember and then you actually gave, I think you ended up with an action plan. In other words, take 1, 2, or 3 things away and then apply it on Monday. You talked about branding, the customer experience, leading from influence, being a cultural champion and then

exactly that, a take action now plan. I guess what I liked about it was it was different than other inspirational keynotes, where I feel great after it but 5 minutes after it's over I remember it was great but I have nothing to do from it. Is the way you approach your keynote speaking is that kind of an example of how you could do these things within your organization if we keep it simple to focus in on the actions we need to take?

Ryan Estis:

I do think simplicity is critical and I think too often we over complicate these things in business today. I think simplicity is paramount to actually moving some of these things over the line and creating impact and so you're right that is why I approach both our speaking and our training that way. My objective is to take these concepts and make them actionable. If I do a good job for the hour exactly what you mentioned happens. [00:12:00] Somebody's going to go back on Monday and implement a change or do something different and I think one of the challenges both in attending a 3 day conference or even inside our organizations is that we're overwhelmed today with information. It's great to have access to more information and all of the channels that we can connect and communicate but people are getting overwhelmed. Even attending a 3 day conference you get 179 great ideas, you sit through all the sessions, the break-outs, the workshops, the keynoters, then you get back into your office and you have to clear out 400 emails and 16 voice mails and so you set the 179 ideas on the shelf, you get right back into your same old routine and nothing happens.

We're working that way. We're working just to keep up, to keep our head above water so this idea of innovation and attacking problems and re-engineering process, that stuff gets put in the background and meaningful change doesn't happen. I try and keep it simple and I try and give people a plan or a process to walk out of there and immediately take action and execute on a couple of core ideas that are going to deliver results with a specific timeline. It was Take Action Now, developing a TAN plan. It's 3 ideas you can begin to take action on starting tomorrow morning at 8am that are going to have impact and key results in the next 30 days. Breaking it down and simplifying it, I think, is essential to actually taking the next step and taking action now.

Joel Capperella:

I saw you the other day. Actually, I watched it actually so it wasn't you speaking just the other day but I saw your discussion about the generational differences. There is so much written about Millennials and whatnot but I think just the other day I saw that Millennials actually outnumber Baby Boomers in the workforce, right? With this necessity for simplicity, obviously there's speed and there's a lot of noise with the way that business is done today. I would imagine that given the transition of

the generational shift here that keeping [00:14:00] things simple and actionable is even more important, especially when we consider how Millennials kind of have the demand to understand their purpose even more than ever before.

Ryan Estis:

I think it's true. I think Millennials, I don't want to categorize or stereotype a whole generation, but we all seem to have a bit of ADHD today right? We're distracted. I think the average smartphone user checks their device 150 times a day. The average office worker checks email 30 times an hour. We're working in a constant state of interruption and distraction so simplicity, bite-sized chunks of information, I think that's increasingly how people connect and communicate so I do think there's a need to approach it that way. Look, you're right about Millennials having a strong desire to connect and contribute to something larger than themselves, to have meaning and fulfillment in their work, to covet a sense of purpose. I think all of those things are great but I think it's creating more of an impetus for organizations to ask and answer those questions. Who are we in the world? How do we make a difference to our customers? What kind of impact do we aspire to have? If it's just about making money, I don't know that long term that that's necessarily the redeeming and worthwhile goal. I run a for-profit business. I'm not suggesting that corporations shouldn't make money and provide return to their shareholders. I get it but if that's the only thing that we aspire to I think we're missing an opportunity.

Joel Capperella:

Isn't it true them, and again I don't want to put words in your mouth but I'll pose the question to you this way. Before we got on I kind of told you my focus and one of the things I try to help companies do is really see the importance of injecting these priorities [00:16:00] into the very process by which you're bringing talent into your organization. Again, that's kind of my perspective on it but I would imagine based on what you're saying that listen, to set out and nail the purpose, and the passion, and the mission appropriately then it's going to be important for you to make sure you've got the right people on your team. Do you think companies are giving that lip service today? Or is that kind of a shift to get more of that embedded into the talent acquisition process?

Ryan Estis:

I think great companies take it seriously and I think a lot of companies give it lip service. That's the difference but I think talent acquisition, the selection piece, I think it's one of the hardest things in business to get right and I see organizations make a lot of mistakes around it, and I think it's an area that costs organizations significant amount of time, opportunity, and also money. Those can be really expensive mistakes to reverse and I think reversing them can be incredibly difficult.

I remember even back years ago when I was a rookie manager, when I first became a sales manager and I had to fill 2 open positions in my territory, 2 knee-jerk responses, made poor hires, and it cost us a year of impact results, and then I was back to square one 12 months later. Man did I learn a valuable lesson as a rookie manager about the impact of selection but it's difficult. If you don't approach that the right way it can really have negative consequences on an organization. Yeah, hiring for skills, critical; hiring for values, culture fit, and alignment also critical. If you're not taking both of those things into consideration you can have some challenges.

Joel Capperella: In the interest of simplicity, right, let's assume that most organizations understand how to identify and hire for the right skillset, right? If that's the assumption, what's the 1 or 2 things I could do to inject the hiring for culture and values [00:18:00] into my talent acquisition process?

Ryan Estis: Yeah, ask better interview questions that map determining if you're interviewing somebody that's going to align to your core values. If the core value is teamwork I could quickly frame 3 or 4 questions around teamwork based on somebody's previous experience and their approach to the work that's going to give me some really good insight if this is a solo player, if this person is going to fit into the context of the way we approach things in our organization. That's the best way to do it. If you take things like culture and values seriously you're mapping them into the selection, the assessment, the interview, the on-boarding, and the performance management to the entire talent life cycle. I think that's a page out of the playbook of some real world class organizations, organizations like Mayo Clinic, and Netflix, and Starbucks, and Adobe.

The great thing is small business leaders, those of us running small or mid-sized organizations can take these examples and leverage the same principles and tactics that are allowing those organizations to dominate their category. You mentioned we connected at the Bullhorn Engage conference. Bullhorn is an example of a small to mid-sized organization that is having incredible success in a very competitive category that approaches their growth exactly this way. I just did a feature post on my blog. People can go check it out. The article ran this week about exactly how they approach it and the emphasis they place on their organizational culture during an incredible growth stream for them. That might be something, or a resource that's worth linking to or checking out.

Joel Capperella: Well, I actually read it and Tweeted that one out. It was very valuable. I agree with that. Look, let me, just a couple more questions here because okay that was [00:20:00] the front end of our acquisition process, right,

but now our employees are part of the fold, they're part of the team and so much is written about employee engagement. I think it's almost a click baiting topic these days and 90% of the articles really won't have anything new to tell me. What can I do? Again, in the interest of simplicity, now, let me kind of stack the deck this way, I think one of the areas, personally, where companies can better engage their employees is to enable them to represent the company over social media, or where they're speaking, or demonstrating their work in some way, shape, or form. I guest 2 questions. One, would you agree that would help keep my employees more engaged and if not, what is the 1 or 2 simple things we could do to just jack up our employee engagement by a couple percentage points?

Ryan Estis:

I agree, I think empowerment and autonomy are huge things. I talk about this idea. We have a trust crisis in corporate America today. I think it's around 50% of our employees have trust and confidence in their senior leadership and that number actually goes down to about 40% with organizations of 10,000 or more employees. In the absence of trust you can't have a healthy relationship and you probably not maximizing somebody's contribution, their potential. I think this idea of empowering our people to be a voice, and advocates, and selection, putting people in the right jobs and then giving them the freedom to contribute is huge. I agree with what you're saying.

A couple of just quick little things, when it comes to engagement, quick wins, little things we can do, one of the leading drivers of engagement today is development, right? I think if you, as an individual leader, manager, somebody running an organization, you want to foster a culture of continuous learning. People recognize the world is changing so [00:22:00] fast and they want to work for an individual manager and an organization that's going to continue to reinvest in growing their skills and competency over time. That's something if you can bring that to the table both within the framework of a team and then in the larger context of an organization, it's so critical.

Another huge driver: confidence in the future of the organization, confidence in management and the future of the organization. How do we create trust and confidence, communication? It's frustrating to me when I step back and look at this we have more opportunities, more channels, more resources to connect and communicate, to connect people to our vision, to re-enforce culture and our employees are starving for more communication from senior leadership. Communication can solve a lot of this. Giving people access, more transparent, open, frequent, real-time on the spot communication connects people, aligns

people and I think it's so often a missed opportunity. There are some challenges that we're working more remotely, people are traveling, work flex but as leaders we have to take the time to give people feedback, to connect people to the vision, to reinforce the strategic plan, to deliver in 2020. All of those things are so critical. I think those are a couple of boxes to potentially check as leaders and managers and that will help us create better relationships and move the needle on engagement.

Joel Capperella: That was fantastic. That was a great couple of takeaways right there, Ryan. Listen, I'm going to actually, you know what, I'm going to actually end on a high note because I don't know how much more concrete we can get than that. Listen, we've been talking to Ryan Estis. You can visit him at RyanEstis.com. Ryan's organization helps you embrace change, and improve performance, and they do that through speaking, through training and research, and you can tell, [00:24:00] if you've listened to this episode, just how passionate Ryan is about the topic and also how practical he is about applying some of the concepts that he knows work for organizations. Ryan, once again I want to thank you for taking time out of your day and joining me on Leading Matters.

Ryan Estis: Thanks, Joel, I appreciate it.