

PATRICK: The yellow powdery pollen, I think, has stopped falling and getting over, getting all over everything, our cars and our back porches and our driveways, etcetera. So one more big, clean, thorough purge and wash and we should be done with that for the year. And then it's onto the heat. At least that's the way of things here in my home state of South Carolina. I hope things are well where you are. Thanks for joining us for episode 114 of the Leadership Window. And this is one of those solo episodes that I pause and take every now and then and exercise my privilege to share something that's kind of on my mind or has come up a lot in our coaching conversations and that I think might add value to our listeners. In this particular episode, we're going to start with a pledge that I'm going to ask you to take in your own heart and mind. And this is a pledge I have my participants take in almost every keynote I do, every workshop I conduct, every training or seminar or presentation. I have my audience take this pledge. And I hadn't thought about it until this week in this episode, but I might add this pledge to the beginning of every episode from here on out, and we'll just sort of make it a regular part of the show.

Here's the pledge. And this is I'm speaking for you now. So these are the words you would say to yourself in this pledge. It goes like this.

My ability to gain value from listening to this podcast episode is not dependent on the host.

Got it? Let me say it again. My ability to gain value from listening to this podcast episode is not dependent on the host.

This is what today's episode really is about. Now, I'm going to do my part, and I'm going to do the best I can to add value for you. But the rest is up to you. First of all, whether you pay attention, listen carefully, receive the value, and even if you feel like this isn't the best podcast episode you've ever heard, what is your responsibility for making sure that you get something out of it? How present do you have to be? Maybe you could take notes. Maybe you could just listen more intently. Maybe you could listen to it twice. I don't know. But there's a role for you to play. It's not just me feeding you.

So my ability to gain value from listening to this podcast episode is not dependent on the host. That doesn't take me off the hook for being a good host and bringing good content, but it gives you personal accountability and responsibility for everything that you do.

There is a viral video out there. It's been around a while now, a few years, I guess.

And the first time I saw it, and probably the first time most of you saw it, I just, we laughed so hard. It just, it's one of those cute kid things that, you know, kids say the darndest things. And it's a video of this little girl in the backseat in the car seat trying to buckle herself up.

And she's struggling a little bit, it looks like, getting the buckle connected, but she's working hard at it. And the dad is the driver in the front seat, and he's turning around saying, do you need some help? And the first thing the little girl says is, no, thank you. No, thank you. And then she says, worry about yourself.

And the dad kind of laughs, like, what did you just say to me? He says it. He says, what did you say? He said, worry about yourself.

And, you know, it's funny.

She didn't mean it disrespectfully. It doesn't sound like at first. But then as the conversation goes on, he keeps bugging her. And she finally says, you drive, you worry about yourself.

And, you know, it's, again, cute little video, but it, boy, the number of times I want to tell some of my coaches, worry about yourself.

Not in the rude way that the little girl might have meant it in the end, but just worry about yourself. We spend a lot of time worrying about other, what other people are or aren't doing.

We spend an inordinate amount of bandwidth and energy on it. It frustrates us. It gets in our heads so much that we want to talk about these people, and we want to blame them for everything, really, because we're doing our part.

But what if in those moments, we said, let me just, let me worry about myself right now. How am I showing up? What am I bringing to the table?

In the world of coaching, it is all about personal accountability.

My coach and trainer, doctor Jim Smith, have said it many times. One of the biggest things he taught us, you can't coach who's not in the room.

In other words, when I'm coaching a coachee, and the coachee wants to say, well, I just our team couldn't get it done because Susie is lazy.

Right.

Man, we just. My work is so unsatisfying because Jim is a horrible supervisor. He didn't even know what he's doing. I know more than Jim. Jim does this and Jim does that, and he's constantly contradicting himself and whatever, or, yeah, I'm really having trouble because Carrie is just duplicitous and toxic, you know, or we can't get anything done because our board just won't engage the way they should engage. And so everything is, you know, if only. If only somebody else would do their part.

And my question in coaching, I have to always come back to, okay, I hear you. Sounds like it's pretty frustrating. You're, you know, you got a bad supervisor, and Susie's lazy, and Carrie's toxic, and your board's not engaged. Whatever. Tell me about your role.

Tell me about how you show up.

Tell me about the value you're generating and creating. What is the influence you can bring to bear to maybe change some of these behaviors? You can't control Susie, Jim, Carrie, or your board, but perhaps you could influence them with artful leadership, with modeling behavior. So what is your role? I've told this story before, I'll tell it again. I had a big disconnect with a board a number of years ago when I was in organizational leadership, and we agreed to. Honestly, we agreed to part ways, and it was at that point a mutual agreement. I wasn't getting out what I needed. They were frustrated, I think, just in that I was moving, I probably got ahead of my board. I've said that many times, but in the moment, it was really, really difficult. And I remember going to a conference of some of my peers, and, boy, I was moaning and groaning about it. Boy, you wouldn't believe this board. I can't believe they did this and they did that, and they just. No one wants to do this. And this person was that, and this person was this, and one of my peers, and I would say, mentors, just a very trusted professional in the sector. When I was telling her this, she looked at me and she kind of wagged her finger just a little bit, not in my face, but just sort of gave the little slow down.

She said, be careful.

That was it. She said two words, just be careful with her kind of finger wagging. And I. What do you mean? And she explained, she said, be careful that you don't walk out of this experience not having learned anything, and be careful that you don't walk out of this experience, fully blaming another party and not looking really, really closely at what role you played in this.

Now, at the time when she said that to me, I didn't appreciate it, really. It kind of rubbed me the wrong way. I was like, that is not what I want to hear right now.

But of course, this is a really good friend, because this is the kind of friend that will tell you not what you want to hear. She could have said, oh, man, I can't believe that you're such a perfect leader. I can't imagine any board coming crossways with you. Boy, they must be terrible. You're the best I've ever seen. I can't believe she could have done that. And I would have walked away feeling a little bit better at in the moment.

But instead of telling me what I wanted to hear, what would have sounded good to my ears in that moment, she told me what I needed to hear. She was that friend who was willing to say, I love you so much. I'm going to tell you what you need to hear, because I don't want to see you hurt by this. I don't want to see you miss an opportunity to learn. I don't want to see you blindsided by your own blind spots.

And I will tell you that as the years went by, the more I thought about the whole situation, I started saying, all right, let me listen to her. Let me really go back and ask myself, what was my role in that? And so today I tell people, yeah, I got ahead of my board, pure and simple. Put it on myself. I got ahead of my board instead of saying my board was dragging behind me.

Well, that's not good leadership, then, on my part. So I got ahead of my board. Now, there could have been some other things, and I don't know what my board members would tell you was the issue, but for me, that was the learning, as I think I was moving too fast, pushing too hard. I'm a very impatient person when it comes to action and getting things done. People who know me know that I have a bent toward action, and sometimes that leads to, uh, breaking Marty Linsky's leadership definition rule. He says, leadership is disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb. I have plenty of times passed that absorption rate as a leader, but that experience really helped me learn, and I have since gotten a little better at the absorption rate piece. I also now work for myself, which helps because I can go as fast as I want. And then guess who's responsible if it doesn't work? Well, it's all on me. So I tell you that story to just when you're in that moment of blaming others, just, you know, wag your finger at yourself and say, be careful. Let's not miss what our role is in this.

I follow doctor Marshall Goldsmith a lot. He's a world class, elite executive coach and for many years, one of the pioneers, I think, of modern day executive coaching. He's got a lot of best selling books out there, like, what got you here won't get you there, and triggers and others. But he puts it like this. When we ask survey questions in our employee satisfaction and employee engagement surveys, we ask questions like, does my supervisor set meaningful goals for me?

Does my supervisor foster a positive relationship with me? Others.

Do my coworkers adapt to change readily?

Does senior management communicate effectively?

And he says, those are fine questions, but they're probably really not the best ones because the best ones ought to be. Let's go back through that list of questions and ask them differently.

Did I do my part in setting meaningful goals for myself that my supervisor concurred with?

Do I foster a positive relationship with my supervisor?

Do I model for my coworkers adapting to change readily?

Do I communicate effectively with my management team and my coworkers and peers and direct reports?

Notice the difference there. What am I doing?

Scoring everybody else on how they do? My job is not to administer a performance appraisal for my coworkers and my supervisor. My job is to show up my best self, perform at the highest level I can perform, make my goals align with my clients and my supervisors and my team, and pursue them relentlessly. Respect others.

My job is to foster relationship and model the culture I want to see in my organization. It's just really funny. I've seen so many people really complained about the toxicity of their culture, and when you really get down to it, a lot of those are the people that are part of that negative culture. They're sort of fostering it and creating it because they're fixated on it, and oftentimes they're the problem, but we're blindsided by ourselves.

So my leadership pledge I did at the beginning of this podcast that, again, I really think I might start doing this on every episode. My ability to gain value from this, this session, this staff meeting, this board meeting, this conference breakout room, this keynote, this, you know, collaboration meeting, this rotary meeting. My ability to get value out of any of that where I'm present, is on me.

So, in any case, I. I've sort of conjured up a little framework for putting ourselves in the mindset of personal accountability. In fact, this notion came organically during this is years ago. I was leading an organization, and I had a couple of staff people. Incredible, both of them, incredible, just incredible human beings and super talented in their roles, but they were conflicting with each other pretty constantly over a short period of time. And each of them were coming to me, complaining about the other a little bit. And I just decided, I don't know, I think it just kind of came on me naturally. I met with one of them and I said, listen, I understand you. I hear you. And she said, well, if they would just meet me halfway, you know, just meet me halfway. Just do your part and I'll do mine, and just meet me halfway. And that's when it struck me. I said, well, you know, one of you may need to go 60% instead of 50%. One of you might have to cross the halfway mark. In fact, that's probably what's going to need to happen. And to be honest with you, I told her, it's probably going to need to be you. I think you're just going to have to agree. If I go 60% of the way, we might get the traction we need. Like, I'll go over and above. I'll be that bigger person. I'll work on really trying to find the compromise or, you know, helping find a solution. I'll demonstrate the respect I'm looking for all of that. I'll go 60% of the way. And I said, is that, would that be asking too much of yourself to do that? Do you feel like that's reasonable? She said, no, I could do that. Yeah, that's reasonable. I could do that. And I asked her of a couple of ways she might do it, and she came up with some great ideas.

And then a little while later, I met with the second person and I said, I'm with them. And what I said was, you know, one of you is probably going to have to go more than halfway.

And to be honest with you, it's probably going to need to be you. You're probably going to have to go 60% or so of the way. Would that be a reasonable request of yourself, or you think that's

asking too much? And she said, of course it's reasonable. I mean, I could do that. I said, well, what were. What are some ways you might do that? And she listed a few, and they were fantastic.

So she walked out of the room.

I never had to have another meeting with them. I mean, the two of them became, you know, thick as thieves, they. They got through it on their own because they both made just a little extra effort. And so out of that, I decided to call it something, and I called it the 60 60 rule. You go 60, I'll go 60. We'll each give 10% more than what's required, and the overlap will create a buffer for us and we'll get traction.

It will create a tipping point where we both are willing to commit more than half in order to do it. It's a magical little formula. And since then, I've used it many, many times among people in conflict. And then I thought, well, maybe conflict isn't the only place for this 60 60 thing to work.

We do disc assessments on almost all of our coachees, and we do disc workshops. Disc is that leadership assessment that a lot of you have taken, and if you haven't, you've probably heard of it, but the bottom line is the d stands for something, the I stands for something else, the s stands for something, and the c stands for something. When you take the assessment, you end up sort of scoring higher in either d, I, s or c. And it doesn't matter what they are right now. You don't need to know what they mean. Just know that those are kind of four different leadership styles, we'll say. And yeah, I learned a long time ago, I'm a high d, by the way, and I learned a long time ago that as a leader, the idea is not to say, look, I'm a high d and I'm the leader. So everybody needs to learn how to operate in d mode.

You need to be a driver, you need to be decisive. You need to be daring. You need to be direct. You need to be bold. You need to be willing to take risk. You need to answer in short answers. You need to look at the big picture and get on with action.

You need to do all the things that a d does.

And as the leader, that's the wrong approach. Obviously, I learned that the better approach is to know where my team is.

This team over here, they're s's. I've got an I over here, and I've got a c in my accounting department. And I, you know, need to realize that none of these letters or profiles are better than another.

They're just who we are. So I'm good at what I do partly because I have high d tendencies, but I have worked with and coached and known many people who were good at what they do because they had high s dimensions or high I or c.

Everybody leverages their strengths and hopefully tries to intentionally address any deficiencies that they have. But I learned that instead of saying, I'm the high d and I'm the leader, so meet me in my d box.

I learned to say, if I want to get the best out of my people, I need to be willing to step into their box. If I am working with a high c, I need to provide space for time, clarity, detail, caution, and I need to allow space for that person to leverage those c dimensions in a way that they can bring out their best. And if it requires an extra day or two or week or whatever it might be for something to get accomplished that I would have wish had been accomplished sooner, that's worth it to me now because maybe it takes a little extra time, but we won't have to go back and

change things like we do. When I go about executing something, I just dive in and then realize, oop, I got to redo this. Did that wrong.

So that's what I learned, is taking accountability for myself. Yes.

But going 60% of the way, going over my line, into their line, and that's really it. And so then I'm starting to coach teams around communication. Well, you know, we have communication problems.

We lack clarity. Some people will communicate this, but they won't say this or they won't answer this or they don't answer questions or they don't provide enough detail or whatever it might be. And we blame some situation on someone else's communication style or deficiency when instead what we could do is say, what if I go the extra mile? So let's say clarity of communications is the issue.

Okay, well, then, if I'm the sender of information, well, how can I go a little more than 50%?

What are some simple steps that I can take in this email that I'm crafting to my board or my team? What are some simple steps I can take just to add a little bit of clarity, not be condescending or insulting to anyone's intelligence. Just to be super clear, here are the parameters. Here's the clarity. Email is tough because you can't read tone. So how clear can I make this? And am I pausing to think about everybody that's receiving this email and how they receive information and what their style is and how they might interpret something? And if I want to leave less to interpretation, I need to clear up my language now, flip the script. What if I'm the one receiving information from others, including my supervisors?

How about that person who gets communications from their supervisors that aren't clear? Well, they didn't answer all the email. I asked them three questions and they've. They responded, but they only answered two of my questions.

Doggone it. They don't pay attention. They didn't read the whole email. They communicate horribly. Well, as the receiver, what might we do to go 60% of the way?

Maybe assume the best intentions and go to that person and say, got this. Just one more quick question. For clarity sake. What do you mean by x?

So if both the sender and the receiver are in a mindset of 60/60, you're going to have some pretty good communication. It is a whole lot less likely that something's going to get botched because somebody wasn't clear on something.

That's just taking personal accountability and saying, as the sender, I'm the one accountable for clarity, and as the receiver, I'm the one accountable for clarity.

You don't let yourself off the hook that way and you help influence others to create a better approach. And by the way, 60/60 is just a concept that says go more than 50% of the way. Sometimes you got to go 70.

You know, sometimes a 70/30 is what's required, depends on the situation. Sometimes it's an 80/20. Sometimes depending on whose role is what and who's responsible on the. On the chart, in the job description. Sometimes it's 90/10. And sometimes even 100% might be appropriate.

The point is, you have accountability in virtually every situation and an environment you're in.

But we let ourselves off the hook. This isn't my meeting.

That's not my job description.

Right. Or I couldn't do it because somebody else is a jerk that's letting ourselves off the hook. It is your staff meeting, it is your job description. Just say, I have a role in this, I'm going to have to play it. And I'm not going to let my energy and my bandwidth be affected by John or Jim or Jack or Sue or Carrie.

I'm going to take personal responsibility. It's really that simple. The bottom line is here, worry about yourself.

Worry more about yourself. Let's put it that way. And if you want a less rude version of it, bring your best self to every situation.

It alleviates a lot of frustration.

Bring your best self. You can't control what other people are bringing to the table, but you can have a better chance of influencing it if you're bringing your best self. That's it. We'll see you in episode 115. Team lead on.