

Ep #48: The Care and Leveraging of Superstars



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](http://www.DentistFreedomBlueprint.com) with Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris

Ep #48: The Care and Leveraging of Superstars

You are listening to the *Dentist Freedom Blueprint* podcast, with David Phelps and Evan Harris. Navigating you through the uncharted waters of a turbulent economy with straight-forward advice to, transform your practice into a self-sufficient cash machine, compound your net worth assets, and multiply, multiply, multiply your passive cash flow streams.

David: Hi everyone, Dr. David Phelps here with my good friend and wingman, Mr. Evan Harris. Evan, how are you doing today, sir?

Evan: David, outrageously well. Looking forward to jumping in on this topic.

David: Listen Evan, I got back just actually last weekend from a really cool opportunity and I want to share it with you and our listeners and get some of your feedback because I know you'll have a lot to input here. But I was privileged enough to be in a small room with an author and a business entrepreneur, name of Mark Ford. He also goes by the pseudonym Michael Masterson. He is the author of a number of books probably the one that is most relevant would be titled *Ready, Fire, Aim*, Michael Masterson.

Michael has a strong business background. He with a guy named Bill Bonner some years ago started up what today is known as Agora publishing. Big big big publishing giant, has a lot of divisions. When they started that together they started with a company that was valued way under a million dollars and brought it up to over a million dollars in a year. I think within four years was eight million. Then they blew it through the ceiling through the next several years and got to be a four hundred million dollar plus company.

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In talking to Michael, or Mark Ford, it was really fun to hear what he had to say about building a business and what were some of the keys for him and his partner Bill Bonner in doing so. It was so different from what I used to think it was to be a business owner. You know, a dentist in a practice where the business was typically all about us. We'd do the work, right? I mean we have hygienists, we have support staff, but really that business, that practice, is all about us going to work every day.

While being a dentist was always something that was very satisfying and I enjoyed those years, it never was a business that I could really let my fingers off the pulse. The reason why is I never built it that way, Evan. I never purposely thought about a different way that I might be able to own, operate, and run my dental practice if I was just given the right mindset and the right keys to do that.

When I asked Michael Masterson, I said, "Well what would be one of the most important things that you have learned over your years in building not just one business but multiple businesses? What's one of the most important keys?" He said this, he said, "The best investment you can make is the time and the money you invest in great people." He called the great people that he invested in in his company "superstars." So now the next question is well, what's a superstar? Who's a superstar? What do you mean by that?

Because I've had some good people in my businesses and practices but I didn't really know how do you define a superstar? He said, "You know, superstars are people that that you can really turn loose, that they are people that if you empower them, that's one of the keys, you

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have to empower good people to give them enough leash, enough running room to take off and go.”

I think the problem for me and probably a lot of our listeners in their businesses and practices is that we don't have that mindset. We think we still have to control so much of our business, our practice, and that's a self-limiting belief. That's something that typically holds so many people back in their business. Bringing the right people in, buying the superstars, not putting up with mediocrity but taking the time. It's critical you take the time and you put in a hiring process, Evan. A vetting process if you will.

We're going to talk about that in a minute, to get enough applicants that you take the right time to get the right people. Too often small business owners, we hire just to fill a void, to fill a spot, to fill a need, or someone leaves the practice. So we go on this frantic look to find the first person who shows up and says I have experience in that position. That is not really a good way to go about. It's certainly not the way Michael Masterson and Bill Bonner took a company that was under a million dollars and took it to four hundred million dollars.

In fact, Michael said, “You've got to learn to get out of their way.” Now that doesn't mean you don't still have involvement as the overseer of the business or practice but you've got to learn to get out of the way. Once you've found the right people, the superstars, you've empowered them. They understand what your vision is, your core values, and everybody's bought in.

Now that's a big mouthful there and we could spend hours on that subject but let it be known that having a core team, Evan, in my opinion is one of the most fundamental

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but often overlooked aspects of running or operating any practice or business. Give me your feedback on that.

Evan:

Yeah, I was actually just with a doc that had different names for the team members. This doctor believed more in having a cast, like a cast of characters so to speak. They utilize the Disneyland concept where once everyone comes from the laboratory area so to speak, that was they're on stage. You know, "We're in Disneyland model." They have areas that are backstage where they can change into their costumes. They can have their lunch break, they can do whatever they need to do, send some texts, check some emails.

But the moment they walk out of that area that they're going to be visiting with their guests. So rather than patients they call them guests. They were very thankful for those guests being in the practice so they were always on stage when they were outside of kind of the laboratory/ lunchroom kind of area. In their term of superstars, they were very clear what a superstar would do. Like this doctor said, "Evan, we have mission, vision, and values" and he thought very highly of those. He says, "Evan, but all of that is worthless if we don't act. We're very clear with what actions our superstars will take in the various different roles."

So they had a chart that was created not by the doctor, it was created by the team. The team together were assigning activities that they thought if they could make their own dream assistant, hygienist, front desk person, whatever kind of practice you have, insert those team members there. What would the actions be that they would do? Whether it be how they would interact with a patient, what would they say? When would they arrive for

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work? How would they prepare the office, the room, the front desk? How would they do the treatment planning? They had it neatly typed up. The more details they could put, they would put there.

Sometimes they would make it outrageous. Where they're giving a title of "superstar." Not just "good person" or a team member that shows up. This would be a superstar. So they were always continually reaching and helping each other be better. Then they would ask the question, if the person wasn't being a superstar, didn't think they could live up to it, what would they need? What support would they need to be able to get there?

David:

Michael said that characteristics of a superstar would be people that have a strong sense of urgency. He said that your key people should understand that there's deadlines to be made, to be met. That speed is money. They should also understand that business is business and it's serious. He said also that they should have a strong work ethic. That you want people who show up early, that they're ready to go. People who are on time for meetings and appointments. That not showing up on time or being late is a sign of just not caring.

Then thirdly he said they should have a strong respect for your customers, your clients, your patients, because those are the people that invest their time and money with you, your business, your practice. And that the primary mission of every one of your employees, your key people, should be to serve your people. So if they don't have those essential qualities then best to dig deeper.

As I said earlier, it's something that it takes ... it's like everything, Evan, there needs to be a process and a system for bringing the applicants to your business. That's

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something I think a lot of business owners don't want to do because, well, there's not a process in place, right? So you just go out there to a couple of different sites. You go to maybe a recruiter and they toss some people your way. You don't have a system for going through the interview process.

Again, the doctor is busy, he's tired. He or she tries to do the interview themselves. They miss a lot of things because they just kind of want to get through it. They're just hoping, fingers crossed, that this one will be the right one and they'll do everything they can to make it happen and overlook sometimes some serious potential inadequacies.

So what are some of the systems and processes that you have used? You've also seen done by good business owners and good best practices where you have been a witness to that Evan?

Evan: Sure, I had one practice that the doctors when I asked them, "How did you get such a great team?" The doctor said the team hired the team. What the doctor meant by that is the doctor spent a lot of time getting to know who she was as a clinician, as a person, and what she wanted to really be passionate about. Then as she was able to be clear about that, she was able to have it very clearly articulated both in the advertisements that she ran to find team members but also visually her office portrayed that.

Once she found her office manager, the office manager was in alignment very much with those things. Now she repelled other people too. Other people thought maybe she was a little over the top or she had certain passions that weren't in alignment but she was very transparent. There were no surprises.

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So when she found the team member that she has, that team member was attracted to her because it was exactly what the team member is looking for. It wasn't this plain vanilla, "Hey, I'm a doctor. I can be all things. I can be quiet. I can be loud. I can be subdued. I can be excited." She was very clear with who she was and the office manager was very clear with who she was. They could both be transparent rather than trying to be pretending. Then together they talked about what a superstar would be in the back office. What a superstar would be on the hygiene team. What a superstar would be like on treatment coordinating.

The statement the doctor made, she says, "Evan, this team member that they will choose they will spend more time waking hours than anybody else in their life." I thought about that, I'm like, how is that possible? Well Monday through Friday, from eight to four, not eight to five, eight to four, will typically be more time including weekends of waking hours than anybody else they'll spend time with. More than their kids, more than their spouse. I ran the numbers, she was right.

So she said, "Wouldn't you think the team would want to handpick someone that they would get along with? Someone that they would joyfully want to work alongside of. If they allow someone to get brought in that's not going to be a good fit, most likely their job is going to be a whole lot harder. So what they would do in the interview process is that the doctor and the team would look at résumés, would look at applications and I can get into that a little bit too. But once they would find the applicants to bring in for the interview it would oftentimes be a group interview. The doctor would kind of moderate it initially with questions and things.

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But then once the doctor was complete with her questions, she would let the team have their questions that they were already prepared with. The assistant wanted to know—this person that was being hired by the by the way—the roll was called MVP, Most Valuable Player. Now some people call them rovers. Some people call them floaters. Now this doctor was very clear. She says, “Evan, we don't use the word floater. A floater is something that's in a toilet bowl.” I thought, wow, that's a lot of information, but thank you for that.

She says, “We don't call them floaters. They're not just like rovers where they're not really good at anything they just kind of do a little bit of everything. No, this is our MVP. Our MVP is our most valuable player because when stuff goes down...” She used a different word, but we're on a podcast. When stuff goes down, she's got to be able to jump in on anyone's role. Like the front desk is overwhelmed, she's got to be able to handle calls. The back office is having an issue, they've got to be able to do that. Anything they've got to be able to jump in and do. So they call them the MVP.

She said, “Evan, oftentimes people will elevate their performance to the title of their role. If I call them the MVP, I have found they do become the most valuable player.” So all that said, is that the assistant would have questions ready to ask this MVP. Because the assistant knew that if this MVP was performing well, the assistant could have a whole lot better day. Rather than an assistant that the MVP is not helping the assistant would have to do double the work.

So the encouragement was from this doctor, “Enroll your team in helping you find the superstars because

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oftentimes the team can sniff out a phony much better than a doctor.”

David: Oh you're so right. I love what you stated about the titles because who is going to get excited about any kind of title for a position that's called assistant? That's just so bland and where's the motivation there? I mean, we can definitely be more creative than that.

You're right, people will rise to the top, good people will, when they're given a role, given a position, given a title that makes them feel important and everybody is important on the team. I mean everybody. Top to bottom is very important and we've got to build those roles out and allow the team to be a big part of that hiring.

I love the group hire too because that takes a lot of pressure off of the doctor who so often tries to do these himself or herself. By doing the group, other people are asking questions and it's easier, wouldn't you say Evan, to be more observant of some of the nuances, characteristics, the nonverbals that are part of everybody's personality.

They can be clues oftentimes to the inner workings of what a person really is when you get a chance to observe those. But you can't really do that while you're trying to ask questions and get feedback. It's at least in my experience too difficult to do it all at one time.

Evan: So true and that really what she said is when she's talking it's very hard for her to be noticing all the other ambient inputs that are going on. But when she's just being present and letting the other people interview, she's watching eye contact, she's watching breathing, she's watching body positioning. You know, is this person

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comfortable with the team or is there a feeling that there's almost a repelling type of feel?

There was one thing that she shared and I don't even know if this is legal. So to the listeners out there, please consult your H.R. departments. The things I say aren't necessarily the things that are necessarily what everyone does but these are things that I'm finding that work. When they tell me the things that work, please filter them through what is legal and what fits for your practice.

But here's what they do. They go right to people's Facebook page, before they even get an interview. They will stalk these people and if they're blocked they'll try to become their friend any way they can to be able to get access to the applicant's Facebook page. They want to see what these people are into. They want to know what teams they root for, what they do on the weekends. I mean, this stuff gets personal.

I know we have to be careful of how we select our team members. We can't not hire somebody just because they get really drunk on the weekends or they smoke all kinds of interesting things or they've got more tattoos than they have skin color. Those kind of things they look at. I know they can't make a hiring decision based upon that but I'm telling you forthright, they do make hiring decisions based upon the passions of the people. They even ask permission, they'll say, "Is it okay if we go and take a look at your Facebook page?" That in itself is a filter question.

David: Sure.

Evan: If someone says, "No, I'd really rather you don't." Well then that almost tells them that—they're a very transparent team by the way. Like what they do on the

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weekends, they all they all know about. So for them transparency is a really high value. So this may not apply to other practices but for them, it's big. If they say no we don't really want to open that door in many ways, they don't proceed.

But if they do open the door that's something that they really want to know about. They want to know is this person into kids, dogs, cats? What team do they root for? That may seem too personal but for them they're working side by side with this person. They really want to be excited by anyone that's coming aboard and having rapport. They found that social media has enabled them to get a better sense of whether there will rapport or not.

David: Very insightful. Evan, what about your experience in using assessments like the DiSC Profile or Kolbe Index? Have you or have you had many of your clients use those and found them to be helpful in making decisions?

Evan: I would answer yes with a but. I would say yes I found them useful when an office knows exactly what they're looking for. Meaning I have some that will give the assessments but they're not really clear what distinguishes someone that is a fit and isn't a fit. But the offices that say, "We are looking for someone that's very high in this area, in this area, and the other areas we really don't care so much about." If they're very clear with that kind of person and they're able to be more objective than subjective, then yes I've seen those fit.

In addition to that, if they're looking for a highly detail-oriented person, a person that is really specific. They ask a ton of questions in their advertisement, so it will say something along those lines to, "If you have interest in this job and wish to apply, follow the following steps." And

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in there will be—let's say it's an email response. “Title your e-mail the following title. Add to the body of your response the following answer to this question.”

So there's all these different things that they're being asked to do. The number one thing is they get emails back without even the change of the title, David. The very first thing they were asked, “Please title your email this.” Instead they get something totally different. So for that practice, it saved them time from even opening the email. It sees that it's something different so if they didn't take the time to read it because there are a lot of people we're finding that respond to ads and they'll respond to like twenty ads in like twenty minutes.

So all they're doing is just clicking cut and paste and they're not actually reading the body of work. Where they ask for the title to be changed is the second to last paragraph. So it's not the first, it's not the bottom, but they would have to have read the body of work to get to that request of changing the title. So that's kind of some of the ways that they have found to be able to find that highly detailed person. The highly detailed people even commented how glad they were to find that ad because they knew they were looking for them.

David: That's a great way to filter those applications. I've done the same thing, Evan. It makes it so easy because yes all you do is look at the subject line and if they have just done the copy and paste, that's an easy no and you just move on. So great ways to filter it out so you're not just have to cull through so many applications. Little tips like that can save so much time when you are getting a lot of applications in for a particular position.

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Well let's talk about one last element of this and then we're probably good for today. But that would be actual onboarding. So once you have your superstar, you've offered the position to them, they've accepted. I'll give you a few things that Michael Masterson said then maybe add anything you want to to this, Evan.

Michael said number one, you want to give them authority. That people that are superstars that they enjoy freedom, power, prestige, and a good challenge. You want to give them enough rope to hang themselves but not so much that they can hang you too. So a little bit of levity there.

He said always be giving them feedback. Mix the positive and the negative. Praise good people. Praise them publicly, sincerely. Always when it's appropriate. But don't be afraid to give them constructive criticism, but to do that privately when it's warranted. The best superstar employees don't have to be coddled or manipulated or managed. They need mentoring and they need a challenge. They will accept the criticism as long as it's fair.

Then third, give them advice. So great people, your superstars, they'll teach themselves most of the technical parts of your business. They'll figure out a lot of that left brain stuff if you give them the freedom and the resources to get those answers. But what they really can't do themselves is learn those inside secrets of your business. Those are the inside, invisible tricks of the trade that you've discovered the hard way. Don't make these people learn the secrets on their own. Teach them yourself. That's going to speed up their success which will speed

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up your rewards and to be to the benefit of your company, to your practice.

Fourth is give your best people good work to do and give them a lot of it. That the ultimate reward for superstars is the pleasure they get from doing a good job. Make their work interesting, complex, and difficult because they thrive on that. Then finally, it's about money, compensation. While we know money isn't everything, especially to people who love a challenge, that are superstars. But they need to be compensated certainly adequately.

His suggestion is to pay superstars at least ten percent more than market. Don't overpay them thinking that doing so will keep them loyal. You've got to still do other things to keep them on track with you but their compensation has to be a bit larger than they could get elsewhere. If you're stingy then you're probably going to lose them. So those are just some final thoughts from Michael I thought I'd add in. Evan, any other thoughts about onboarding and the best way to get them into play with the team?

Evan: I think that list is very comprehensive. I would add one thing that was a surprise to me from another office. They said, "Evan, you know what, we celebrate our team member's first day." I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Well we believe that that people will anchor to certain events, meaning they will go back to their thought of their first day. The number one question that these new team members will be asked by their loved ones, you know, friends, was how was your first day at work?"

They want to be able to have this person speak and say, "It was great. You'll never believe it. This is what happened." They believe that when someone vocalizes

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what their day was like now it embeds it into their subconscious even more. So what they do is on that first day, the other team gets there earlier. They have balloons and nothing greatly expensive but they have some balloons, some streamers, the whole bit. And by the way, they leave this up so that all their patients when they come in they go, "Whoa, what are we celebrating?"

"You know we're actually celebrating Kim's first day. She is our newest team member. We're so excited to have her. She comes with a great pedigree, great background, and we think she's going to be a great gift to not only us but also to our patients and we'd love to have you meet her." So it's already a fun day. The patients are like, "Oh, wow we came on a great day."

But Kim is completely blown away that the team would come out like this to be so thankful that she's there. And why they're thankful is because she's a superstar. All of a sudden they believe, "Wow I am a superstar. I have to behave like a superstar because I am one. That's my natural behavior to fit in that and I'm never going to forget this day." They usually have some little gifts that they give to them so that when they leave they have like a little flower arrangement. They had obviously the balloons and the streamers and then a little like a gift card, "So glad you're here."

I would imagine that the total total is probably like thirty bucks total but it's never forgotten and that's now customary. And the hope is that when they go home and people ask, "Hey, how is your first day at work?" "Wow, amazing, you'll never believe the team I've joined. I'm the luckiest girl on the planet." And that they said has made all the difference going forward.

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David: Great great tips, Evan. All right well why don't you close us out for this one and we'll see everybody on the next one?

Evan: You got it. Well this has been Evan Harris and David Phelps and we are two men on a mission to help practicing professionals thrive and not just merely survive. If you are listening to us on iTunes, please like us. Please leave a review so we can give you even more of what you want. See you soon.

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