



MAXIMIZE BUSINESS VALUE PODCAST - EPISODE 93 Transcript

1 (5s):

The maximize business value podcast. This podcast is brought to you by Mastery Partners, where our mission is to equip business owners, to maximize business value so they can transition their business on their terms. Our mission was born from the lessons we've learned from over 100 business transactions, which fuels our desire to share our experiences and wisdom. So you can succeed. Now, here's your host, the CEO of mastery partners, Tom Bronson.

2 (35s):

Hi, this is Tom Bronson and welcome to maximize business value. A podcast for business owners who are passionate about building long-term sustainable value in their businesses. So in this episode, I'd like to welcome our guest Conni Francini. She is the president and CEO of clarity consulting. Clarity's mission is to instill hope and enable success for high-achievers. Something that every business owner probably is more about than in a minute, it's rare that I meet someone the first time and asked them to be on the podcast immediately, but that's what exactly what happened here. This week. I literally met Conni two days before she joined me today to record this podcast as the result of an introduction from my sidekick, Kim Benson, who I talk about a lot.

2 (1m 24s):

It turns out they Conni and I run in some of the same circles. And I thought her message is so relevant and timely for today's business owners. So I boldly asked her to jump on this podcast and here we are so welcome to maximize business value. Conni, tell us a little bit about clarity consulting.

3 (1m 45s):

Thank you so much for having me. It's really been fun to get to know you this weekend and, and have this conversation today. Clarity consulting is, as you said, really founded in the mission to instill hope and enable success. I, myself am a high achiever, overachiever, recovering perfectionist. So share a lot with, with the folks that I work with, working with executives and business owners, across a variety of industries who feel like they've gotten to a place where they feel really overwhelmed and frustrated. Some of them even find themselves in the place of no longer enjoying their business at all and helping them through the framework that I've created to create the success.

3 (2m 29s):

They really want create the kind of business and lifestyle that they want with more balance and confidence and calm.

2 (2m 36s):

I want competence and calm are three wonderful things that I think everybody sort of strives for. Right. I hear balance constantly, as I'm talking with business owners who are trying to balance the, the rigors of a, of a business and sometimes, you know, a young family, things like that, but so what is your background and why did you start clarity?

3 (2m 58s):

So I have throughout my whole life and career, I've always been a teacher guide. Mentor coach really always loved that aspect of whatever it was I was doing in my last corporate role. I was the senior executive at a publishing company. Fast-growing company, you know, really helped to lead the change from still a very family owned family oriented business, into a much more mature organization, and really grew a lot along the way, but ultimately ended up experiencing executive burnout and, and, and felt, I know we'll talk more about that later, but really felt like a real failure at that point in my professional career.

3 (3m 45s):

And I kind of lost track of my why. So when I left corporate and wanted to start my own business, I really wanted to create a solution for other high achievers who really felt like

they should be capable and really wanted to be successful. We're really driven by success and passionate about the work that they did and help them to create that picture of success without ending up burnout like I did.

2 (4m 10s):

Yes. So I'm sure that you're going to, you're going to share that story with us a little bit later on, but I think at any point in a, in a, in an executives career, in a, in a manager almost in anybody's career, you might experience a little bit of burnout, which, which kinda causes stress in your life. That kind of stress that you had a great friend of mine, Jeff York, who I just saw the other night. He is one of the founders of pay comm it's now publicly traded payroll business with a market cap of nearly \$20 billion. As of this recording, he recently said to me that he banned the word stressed for his sales team. I, yes, literally thousands of salespeople, you know, all over the world.

2 (4m 53s):

And, and he said, it's okay to say that you're frustrated or that you're angry or that you're upset, or that you're even burned out, but not stressed. So the theory is that if you can more clearly define the emotion, then you can find a way to deal with it. So why don't we start with a definition? What is burnout?

3 (5m 15s):

Great question. So burnout has essentially three components and the first is exhaustion. So when people are experiencing some level or some stage of burnout, there is this sense of exhaustion. I've lost my energy. I get up in the morning and I just don't feel like I have the energy to get started. It's hard for me to keep pace with projects and things that at work or in my role. And so that sense of exhaustion, obviously, it's going to have a huge impact on the work that you do. The second is this, this cynicism, or think of it more as like negativity, a detachment from your work.

3 (6m 1s):

So there's often we'll hear people will share, you know, nothing is going to change. There's nothing I can do to change. You know, these challenges I'm having in my business, nothing is going to get better. Nothing I do is going to make a difference or, or

also losing sight of the why behind your business, right. Nothing that we're doing. It doesn't really matter anyway, right. What we're doing, isn't really making an impact. And so that detachment is, is the piece that is indicative of sort of losing the heart for what you're doing. And then the third component of burnout is this lack of efficacy. So think in terms of poor performance, missing deadlines, you know, being slow to make decisions, resisting decisions, holding onto work, when you really, you know, are capable of delegating that to other people on your team, lots of innovation, right?

3 (6m 57s):

Lots of creativity, all of those performance elements come into play. The further you get into burnout and, and ultimately burnout actually has five stages. So it's one of the, one of the things that I misunderstood in my own burnout burnout experience. I thought burnout had to be only for folks like emergency room doctors who, you know, ended up at a treatment facility for burnout. That that was the only picture of what burnout is. And burnout actually has five stages going from, you know, this is new and these are new challenges and I'm finding ways to manage them.

3 (7m 37s):

Certainly there's some stress and some anxiety and some, you know, maybe some efficacy issues there all the way to the fifth stage, which is chronic burnout, which also has things like chronic anxiety, chronic depression, those are things that are, you know, that really debilitating stage. But I do think it's important in, you know, having this discussion and for your business owners and the audience listening to really, to know that there are those multiple stages and burnout. Isn't just that stage of, you know, this is, it I've completely can't function at all. And I, you know, need to be out on medical leave to recognize the stages earlier on so that they can take steps to prevent, you know, hitting that those end stages

2 (8m 21s):

So many times, you know, that you lose your why, right. Why you're doing things. And, and I would frequently say in many of my businesses, but the thing that comes to mind is my most recent business that I sold four years ago. We were a technology company for restaurants, right. And I, and I would routinely stand in front of my team. And I would

say, look, we're not saving the whales. We're not curing cancer, but we are providing a necessary service that is helping others achieve their goals. And that is worthwhile work. And so it's about that kind of worthwhile work that you're doing. And it's sometimes hard. The other thing that you mentioned is kind of the lack of efficacy, which I actually teach a technique.

2 (9m 6s):

It's something that I, that I think I may have invented, but I haven't, I haven't found anybody else that's written, I call it intentional procrastination. Procrastination can be, can get in your way of making decisions. Right. But I use a technique that I call intentional procrastination to bring out better solutions from other people. Right. I don't, I don't, I won't give an answer and they'll say, why aren't you helping, you know, why aren't you telling us, giving us the green light on this? And it's because we haven't reached the right conclusion yet. Right. So I intentionally procrastinate decisions. Some people probably have accused me of loss of efficacy before in that process because it was, it wasn't even something that I even understood.

2 (9m 52s):

I just did it naturally. So, so that is interesting. The stages of, of burnout. And I like you, I didn't, I didn't really think about people. I do think of certainly emergency room physicians or nurses or high stress jobs, airline pilots, right. But also executives in businesses, you know, there is, I think that there's probably a lot higher burnout rate than most people would realize what, who are the people that are at most risk of burnout?

3 (10m 23s):

Well, everybody seems to be at risk of burnout. These days is the, as their rates are rising, there is some, some data, depending on the different studies that you look up. But there was a really good study from Gallup recently that showed that the percentages of, of working professionals who are experiencing burnout is somewhere between 30 and 50%. And it's higher for women than it is for men, for women. It is almost near 50%. So those women who have been feel like they've experienced some stage of burnout within the last year on a regular basis, it's pretty stunning to think about. So when I, when I go in and I, you know, work with teams and go and speak to an organization or a

group, you know, that's one great statistic to look around the room and say, okay, you know, how many women do we have here with us today?

3 (11m 16s):

Probably half of those are experiencing or have experiencing, have experienced some aspect of burnout right. Within recent months. And that, you know, that's a, that's a huge impact on an organization. The other, the other trend, which is, which is I find fascinating is that the folks who are most at risk of burnout are your high achievers, your most capable people, your most driven, your most passionate, and the, the kinds of folks you feel like, which is what I felt, who should be able to figure out a way through it, who should be able to manage that.

3 (11m 56s):

But it's that sense of passion that drive that commitment, right? That I always want to deliver. I'm known as someone who gets things done that is actually predisposing those folks to burnout because of their sort of personality traits and their values and the way that they work. And from a business owner's perspective, if you sit in that seat, you know, that's you most at risk. And at the same time, if you look around your team, you've got some really great high performers on your team who are probably more at risk. And, and that would be something to watch for. And as you said, you know, you're talking about, you know, emergency room physicians and these high stress industries.

3 (12m 36s):

And that is true. There is a lot of burnout in the medical industry, in the frontline worker industry, but there is also a high burnout in industries like design, because it's so creative and there is really no, there's no hard and fast line that says this is complete or not complete, or this is done or not done. There's a lot of back and forth with a client, right? There's no one way to say a design project is complete. I worked in publishing. I feel like it's very much the same way. Publishing is always, there's always a moving target, right? There's no way to say this book or this curriculum program.

3 (13m 16s):

There's no blueprint to say this exactly what you're going to do. Right? That's constant salt, solving a problems and ideas and innovation that makes it very challenging. And it's also very people oriented industries. That's what I find as well. A lot of my clients, they work in those people oriented industries like accounting, right, where they're working with other people to deliver their product or service. So it is much farther beyond those emergency room physicians and firefighters and folks, we might typically think of who, who would struggle with burnout.

2 (13m 48s):

Yeah. You said a mouthful. I mean, I used to own a software company and I used to joke with our team, when will the software be done Software it's never done. Right. Yeah. Same thing with my latest book, I actually drafted my latest book, which is now an editing two years ago. And I kept convincing with it and just going back to it and adding more and doing stuff. And finally, I realized in my mind, I said, geez, I could, I could add it, add an edit in a massive chapters of this book for as long as I shall live.

2 (14m 28s):

Some point I need to get into the hands of the people that it's going to benefit. Right. And so, so I can always add beyond that. So you said a mouthful, a lot of things are just never, there's no finish line.

3 (14m 38s):

Right. And, and to speak to that point, when those, when that manuscript comes in to your, to the editorial team, who's going to develop it. One of the jokes that, that, that was true of our company is the designers would laugh and tease the folks. If there wasn't a to print deadline, the editors would just keep editing for the very same reasons of what you just said. There's just always some way to make it better. There's some new idea I woke up today and I, I think, oh, there's this new threads through line that I hadn't thought of before that I really want to draw out. And I, I see that same situation, same challenge with business owners across industries. There's always a new idea.

3 (15m 18s):

There's always a new strategy. There's always a new market. There's always a new service to be developed. And you know, that, that breadth of possibility is exciting and also overwhelming. Sometimes

2 (15m 32s):

It is. Yeah. You know, it's funny. I try, you know, you try to strive for perfection, but I, I found imperfections in almost every book I've ever read and I read 50 books a year. And, but even in my own book, I said, okay, let's try it. It, and eliminate, there's one error in the book. One that pointed it out. And, and to my knowledge, I'm the only person that's ever actually identified it. No one has ever brought it to my attention. I know it's there. And it really frustrates me because it's printed. Right. But, but no one else has ever found it. So there you go, audience, go pick up a copy of maximize business value. Tell me where the error was because I'm probably the only person that stands out like a giant sore thumb.

2 (16m 19s):

And today, right now you mentioned that, you know, kind of these people, these high performing people and the way they work, as I think about high-performing executives and really business owners, one of the questions I like to ask business owners is what was the last time you took a vacation? You know, because they, they don't, they don't, you know, oh, well I took a long weekend, you know, with my family. Okay. So you turned off your email and you went to the beach. I worked in the mornings. And then, you know, if you, if you can't get away, then you are probably rapidly on a path toward burnout. More importantly, though, it doesn't do any favors to the business. The business then is dependent on you.

2 (16m 60s):

And, and, and that's a problem. So folks that can't get away, I think are probably a high risk you're, you're the expert on this. And so I used to deal with that with my executive team. I would force them out to take a minimum of two weeks at a time, at least once a year, take two weeks of vacation three, if you, if you feel up to it, because I like to take three week vacations, I actually took the whole, basically the whole month of December off this year. And because I can go and refresh and renew, and it's not like I'm not doing

anything, it's just, but I can be more thoughtful and intentional about my why. Right. And why I'm doing those things.

2 (17m 41s):

So, so if you don't take vacations, do that and be on the lookout for those people that can't take vacations, by the way, when I sent them on those two week vacations, as soon as five o'clock in on that Friday, and they're leaving, I called it and I said, shut down their email or remove their remote access. And so when you turn it back on in two weeks kind of thing, because that forces people out. So now that's kind of a long story, but I know that you'd mentioned before that you're a victim or you're a burnout survivor. You were a victim of burnout. Would you be willing to share that experience with us?

3 (18m 23s):

So, you know, it's interesting. Yeah. It's just, it's so interesting to look back and think about you that year, that year or so. Leading up to my ultimate, like crash with burnout, you know, I've on the outside, I was flying high, you know, I was a senior executive or growing company presenting to the board of directors, keynoting to our sales team, flying all over the country and meeting with customers, doing presentations and focus groups, building a phenomenal team, creating great partnerships. I mean, just everything I think on the outside seemed to be flying on all cylinders, moving into a new house.

3 (19m 5s):

I'm traveling internationally with my family. Things seem to be great. One Monday morning, I woke up and just completely just choked with anxiety and panic attack and ended up at the urgent care clinic. Literally couldn't go to the office. And I was terrified. And I think, although I say one day, this just happened. What I came to learn is that burnout was really creeping up on me for years. I can look back and see the evolution of sleeping problems.

3 (19m 45s):

I can see, you know, stomach issues. I can see me a former marathoner, you know, really kind of losing my mojo if you will, on running and a series of injuries and, and just kind of, wasn't really engaging in that anymore. I could look back at, you know, later and see

all of that, but I didn't see it in those years leading up to it. And so I ended up being out on medical leave and then on unlimited partial schedule for a couple of months. And, you know, ultimately when I came back to, you know, back into the role, I felt like things are going to be great. This is going to be good.

3 (20m 26s):

I feel like I'm really recovered, but you know, in the end, it wasn't very long, just a couple of weeks before symptoms were creeping back again. And I knew I just really had to make a change. I knew I really wanted a change. And so that was part of my decision to leave corporate and start my company and, and, you know, create a solution for others who we're in. You know, there had to be other people in my same position. Right. And, and I felt so alone. I felt like I was the only one. And I really, you know, really wanted to help be the guide and be the partner and help shepherd people away from, you know, that place that I had ended up. But, you know, before they hit that spot.

3 (21m 6s):

So

2 (21m 8s):

Plus in the rate sense, you, you started your business before you even kind of had recovered from, from burnout is what is what I'm hearing. And it was almost a therapy for you then to help you overcome a burnout. Am I right in that?

3 (21m 24s):

Yeah, I, you know, I think one of the things we talked about earlier was sort of losing your why. And I, it, you know, really wanted to get reconnected with what my, why is. And, you know, as a senior executive, there's a, you know, you're driven by, you know, metrics and strategy and new product ideas. And, you know, there's so many things I think I got, so hyper-focused on, I lost, I, I knew I was losing touch of the, the mentoring and a lot of the guidance and, and whatnot in my role because of how the, you know, we were growing and all of the different strategic things we were doing. But starting my company allowed me to come back to that and say, what have I always really loved? I've always

really loved helping other people see their potential for what they can create in whatever that space or role is.

3 (22m 14s):

And then actually helping them create it. I'm a project manager by heart. I love a clipboard, you know, I love project planning and I think that's why I love the product development. And so there was just a great, a great way to reconnect with what I love to do. And a lot of my very natural, easy strengths that give me energy and, and create that, you know, in my business.

2 (22m 36s):

So really, I mean, the way you told it here, one Monday you woke up and there it was, I mean, you didn't really, I mean, it, wasn't two weeks leading up to like an hour feeling lethargic or it just basically, boom, there you are. Right, right.

3 (22m 51s):

I didn't want anybody who met my husband, you know, I called my husband and he's like, what, what do you mean? What do you mean you can't go to work? I said, I don't know, but I, I can't go to work. I cannot go to work today. I have absolutely fallen off the ledge and I hadn't told him I hadn't, you know, I hadn't owned up to anything. Damn. I hadn't really owned up to anything to myself either. So it was, it was hard. It was, you know, a hard place to be in. It was hard to go from high-flying senior executive. And then to be told by my physician, you have three, you have three to do items. One is you have to take a shower while you're home.

3 (23m 32s):

Two is you have to get out of the house and just take a walk, no marathoning. He's like, don't, I don't want you to go crazy with some big aspirational. We're going to keep everything very low and slow burn, take a shower, get out and take a walk and take a nap. I was so sleep deprived. I can't, I can't even imagine how I functioned. I get probably twice as much sleep now as I did before twice as much. I don't know how I functioned. I really don't know how I functioned.

2 (24m 2s):

So you look back and you see all those things building up. Right. But suddenly it was there. So funny, I always say distance provides clarity, right? When you, when you think back to things, man, I, I, I should have seen this coming sounds, sounds like your story as well. I've actually had a situation like that where I just literally couldn't get out of bed. And, and my wife was my physician. She, she looked at me, I'm notoriously an early riser. I get up at four 30 or five o'clock every day. I'm at my desk at five. My peak work hours are like 5:00 AM to 10:00 AM. And I can get more done in that time that most people wouldn't get done in a week.

2 (24m 43s):

And, and I'm very focused, but that particular morning, you know, Karen was taking our, our children to the zoo. It was a Friday, it was like a preschool thing. And she'd got up, took a shower. She came out and I'm still in bed. She says, what are you doing? I said, I can't get up. I can't get out of bed and said, get your ass out of bed, get up. We're going to the zoo. And it was the kind of medicine I needed. So

3 (25m 13s):

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

2 (25m 16s):

It sounds like your doctors say way, take a shower, take a walk, take a nap. I liked that in fact, right after this podcast. So of course this podcast is specifically for business owners. So let's talk a little bit about how burnout impacts businesses. You know, some may view burnout as kind of a health and wellness or mental issue. How can high burnout rates impact a business?

3 (25m 43s):

This is, this is definitely an kind of an eye-opening discussion that I think is important for, for your listeners burnout. Isn't contained only to let's implement a employee meditation program, and that's going to be the solution because burnout truly can have a business wide organization wide impact. So obviously, you know, it can impact if you have employees who are experiencing burnout, it can impact your medical leave rates,

right? And you've got people out on medical leave for extended period of time. You know, I was out for a couple of months as a senior executive, surely that had an impact right on, on my department and my, and my organization.

3 (26m 25s):

You know, then you have high turnover potentially. And those lots of those people through that turnover is one thing. But we also know that when you have high turnover rates that also can contribute to a, a negative culture within those who are still there working in the organization, right. When they're seeing people going out on medical, leave there, knowing that people are leaving because of burnout that can increase anxiety and stress and impact performance for others on the organization. They're having to take on the load, right? Or they're, you know, mentally worried about if they're going to be the next one, who, who will be impacted, you know, on the operational side, you've got things like miss deadlines, right?

3 (27m 6s):

Innovation, again, it comes back to if you, if you're not feeling invested in the business or in your role, if you are not performing up to your capabilities, that's going to be impacted across the organization. You're gonna have rising costs, you know, maybe have poor customer service. You have people who are stressed and exhausted on your, your customer service phone lines. That's not going to provide the kind of world-class client experience that you want to deliver. Right? So I think it, you can see this impact happening not only within HR and things like turnover and medical leave, but operationally in sales, I work with a lot of sales leaders and business development folks, right?

3 (27m 49s):

Because of that, that same kind of challenges you don't want your sales team to be experiencing burnout and sales is really key. So it really can affect the entire organization, especially if it is, you know, beyond one or two people. And it's really becoming a bigger trend across your, your staff.

2 (28m 10s):

You mentioned, you know, how it could, it could damage your reputation as a, as an employer. Of course, somebody who's facing these kinds of things. Then they become perhaps a grumpy and, and hard to deal with. And, and, and that's a real challenge. I remember, years ago, gosh, probably 25 years ago, I was running a, a, a, a big company that had branches all over the country. And we notoriously would go in and hold a town hall meetings with all the employees at the branches. Right? And so I was in Albuquerque, New Mexico and having a town hall meeting. And we always rewarded employees for asking questions.

2 (28m 53s):

We said, there's no such thing as a dumb question. And we carried stacks of \$2 bills, and we handed out \$2 bills. By the way, we were the largest consumer of \$2 bills. The dollar bills in the United States were sent to the Jacksonville fed because that's where we got them. And, and so we would just hand out \$2 bills like water. One question that just caught me off guard from an employee was, what's the hardest thing about your job? And I said, wow, that is a really great question. I need to think about that. Can I get back to you? Will you be here in the morning? Cause I'll be back in the morning. Let me think about that overnight. So the next morning I came in and grabbed a cup of coffee and I went and found this employee. And I said, I think I know what it is.

2 (29m 33s):

And he said, what's that? And I said, I have to be on, on my game without fail. And I can't have a bad day because imagine if you will, I'm here for a day and a half. If I'm having a bad day, I can destroy this business. And, and I could knock it off, off balance for months by having a bad day. So I can't even have a bad day. That's the hardest thing about my job is when I'm having a bad day, I can have a bad day. And so, so it really can impact businesses more than business owners. No. So one last question, before we take a quick break, are there signs of burnout that business hunters can look for perhaps in themselves or in their key employees or even in their frontline employees?

3 (30m 18s):

Yeah, I think it comes back those three key areas. Right. See those signs of burnout. So the exhaustion is if you're having trouble sleeping, that is critical. That is absolutely

critical. And if you hear that from any of your staff, that should be a warning sign right away, sleep is just absolutely critical to doing your best work and being the best of human being for your own personal life. Whether that's you as a business owner or anyone who's on your staff, that would be, that would be one. I think really key warning sign to look for is, is trouble with sleep. This, the second would be this, this growing sense of sort of negativity, you know, that, that I've sort of given up.

3 (31m 1s):

You know, I, I don't really know. I didn't really know how to solve this problem, and I'm not even really gonna try, especially if it, if it is a shift from your previously your mindset or your approach to something like problem solving, or you see that in one of your staff members, if there's been a shift, you know, from I'm usually positive and productive and engaged and, you know, really, you know, fully invested in what we're doing or in my role. And that changes in any way, that would be another really key sign to look out for. And then the third would be performance issues, you know, starting to miss deadlines, starting to be a roadblock.

3 (31m 41s):

You know, if a manager's coming into you and saying, I really need you, you know, to make a decision on, you know, X, Y, Z thing that you told me, you were going to make a decision on, because now we're getting held up with this, you know, client project, or, you know, this new implementation we're doing. If you are really becoming the bottleneck in your business, that's gotta be assigned as well. I think those would be some of the most, most common signs that, that I hear from my clients that I work with. And I would say the, but I would say the number one word I hear is overwhelmed.

3 (32m 21s):

It's sort of a general I'm over. I'm just overwhelmed. I have too much to do. I'm in the weeds. You know, I'm frustrated. I feel like I can't get anything done. I went through a busy week and I don't even know what I did throughout the week. Those are the kinds of things that people think I just need to be more productive. You know, I just need to do time management better, but they really could be indicative of those earlier stages of burnout.

2 (32m 48s):

I was finna says, you mentioned that, that that's not always a sign of burnout. Sometimes there are people who are just cynical and I always try to employ one of them more for comic relief than anything. So I think what your point is is that it's sort of a change in that behavior, right? If it gets her or someone who's not seen, Nicole suddenly becomes that way. I mean the thing. So those are all great points and we do need to get enough sleep. We do need to like keep that positive attitude and we do need to try and drive for, you know, to being effective in our business. So great things to look for. We need to take a break though. We were talking with Conni Francini, let's take a quick break.

2 (33m 29s):

We'll be back.

1 (33m 32s):

Every business will eventually transition some intimate employees and managers and some externally to third party buyers, mastery partners, equips business owners to maximize business value so they can transition their businesses on their terms. Using our four step process. We start with a snapshot of where your business is today. Then we help you understand the way you want to be and design a custom strategy to get you there. Next, we help you execute that strategy with the assistance of our amazing resource network. And ultimately there'll be able to transition your business on your terms. What are you waiting for more time, more revenue, if you want to maximize your business value, it takes time.

1 (34m 13s):

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2 (34m 25s):

We're back with Conni Francini, president CEO of clarity consulting. And we're talking about part out. So why is preventing burnout a priority or why should it be a priority for business owners?

3 (34m 41s):

Well, I think we share a common vision in working with business owners that the business owner really is the key lever in the business, right? They don't need to have every solution. They don't need to be the expert in everything, but where they go. So goes the business, right? And so if you are a business owner and you are at some stage of burnout, ultimately that's going to have a cascading effect on the people in your business. And ultimately the, the, you know, the work and the outcome and the impact that your business does or does not make. I know that you work with your clients to help them create a, a sustainable business that they can exit on their own terms.

3 (35m 28s):

Right? And, and if you are in a state of burnout, not, it's not going to be sustainable. It is not sustainable. If you are exhausted all long, it is not sustainable. If you're not able to make really big, high value decisions, it's not sustainable. If you're not able to create a really clear plan to exit your business on your own terms, because you, maybe you don't even know what you're, what it is you're trying to create or what your terms are and why. Right. So to me, this burnout issue is speaking to business owners is just absolutely critical because of the reach and the potential for impact that you have.

2 (36m 8s):

I think that you gave all the, kind of the ways to be on the lookout for that. And if business owner doesn't realize how important burnout is, or the side effects of burnout are in their business, they really should be on the lookout for those things. Now, I know you work with business owners and executives who kind of go to go from being overwhelmed to on and on the road to burnout, to being confident and calm. What does that path look like? And can you maybe share a story or two about that?

3 (36m 41s):

Sure. So the, the, the kind of ADL and framework that I've developed really starts with getting the business owner excited about their business again, right. I want them to be excited about their, why, why did they start their business? What are they working toward often? It is a sense of, you know, freedom in their lives, travel, leaving a legacy for their family. So we really start by reigniting that passion for their business. Again, that's really critical from there. We move into making it actionable, making it real. So they don't feel like this vision is far off in the distance, and there's no way to get from here to there.

3 (37m 23s):

So I'm all about practical tools. So we start by creating a strategic plan for them that helps them go from where they are today to creating that picture of success for themselves and for their businesses. And that strategic plan encompasses, you know, helping them to create more calm and predictability within their organization. I helped them to implement a, an operating system within their business if they have one of their own, I'm happy to, to work with that as well. But knowing through my own experience, how important that is, that an operating system creates a sense of clarity and a sense of calm and allows everyone in the organization to row together toward a common vision.

3 (38m 8s):

And I know that's really important. And then for them, as a, as an owner, I work with them on four elements in that strategic plan. And they spell out team. The first is time helping them to use their time in a way that really suits them. You said you like to work early in the morning from five to 10:00 AM. I do have some business owners who are early birds. Like you, I have others who absolutely have a completely different lifestyle. They don't want to start until nine 30 in the morning that works for them and works for their businesses, but really helping them to create and leverage their time as the business owner in a way that works for them. The second is energy. I truly believe and have seen that the more you get energy from your business, the more you are doing things that bring you energy, that just give you all of that.

3 (38m 56s):

Mojo is one of them said to me, that gets you out of bed in the morning that you can't wait to go do these things. The closer we can get business owners doing those things, the better they feel, the more productive they are, the more impact they're making and the better their businesses really thriving. So that's the second one, the ASMR for activities, and making sure that we're really being super intentional about what the high value activities are that they are doing for their organization, so that they can let go, right, delegate and let go of the seventy-five things on their list and really hone in on the things that are most important for them. And then the fourth is mindset for high achievers.

3 (39m 38s):

We, we don't want to let go of things sometimes because we don't want someone else to take it and not do it as well as we think we might or not do it exactly the right way, but that is ultimately serving as a, as a roadblock. And that's a mindset or a belief that we can help business owners to change, to let go of that fear and to really elevate what they're doing in their business, do more of what they love and, and be able to delegate with confidence to the rest of their team. So really work through all of those elements in creating that strategic plan. And then once we have that plan in place, as we're working over time, working together in our momentum sessions, it's all about working with the business owner to answer their biggest questions, solve their biggest challenges and take advantage of their biggest opportunities, get them out of the weeds and all of the, you know, off of the hamster wheel.

3 (40m 34s):

So they're really thriving in their business and their businesses thriving, and the people in their business are thriving as well. So that's really kind of what that model looks like with them. Have one of my favorite business owners that I'm working with when she came to me, she, she said, I'm just completely overwhelmed. I don't know where to go. I don't know where to start. I started this business for a great reason and, and I, I paid it now. It drives me crazy. I don't want to go in to the office. I don't want to do anything. Maybe I'll just sell it, but I just I'm at my wit's end. And she had this wonderful story of why she started her business and amazing reviews from her customers.

3 (41m 20s):

Just to me, so much potential, just so much potential, but she was stuck just completely stuck. So, you know, getting her reconnected with the why story of why she started her business, helping draw out what values were as an organization, by listening to what her customers had to say was so reenergizing for her. And she went, oh, I actually do something really great. I actually have a really important place in this industry by customers do actually really value what I do. And I can see the special thing that I'm able to provide for them that is so important and really makes a difference.

3 (41m 60s):

And that was the, like the icebreaker for her, right? So then we brought in the strategic planning pieces, we started some goal setting for her. We started helping to bring in some of the operating pieces, helping her craft her vision for how she was going to show up as a CEO, because she came in to start this business without a business background. So she kind of felt a little bit like a fraud because she didn't think she was a real business owner, but she's built a multi-million dollar multi-state business. So she is a business owner. She is the CEO. And so helping her build that confidence and define what that role looks like for her. And just recently, we did the launch of the year planning kickoff with her leadership team.

3 (42m 44s):

So now we're bringing our leadership team in getting them involved, and that takes such a burden off of her that now she sees that it's not, it's not all on her shoulders, right? And it's not every problem isn't going to get solved by her. And by leveraging her team and bringing them into that vision, getting them re-energized around the why in her business and putting them into this, you know, this operating tools. She just has seen such a difference in the time that we've worked together. And seeing the change in her is just really is, has just been so rewarding because she truly has a great business and a great value. And so much to give out there are really just plays a really important role in the work that she does

2 (43m 29s):

Was based on your descriptor here. You probably are like me. I, I get so energized when business owner gets it right. And suddenly I see the light bulbs go off and the passion starts returning and, and all of that. And I, it sounds like you are just like me. I love your, what you call your continuing program, the momentum sessions, it kind of follows Gino Wickman's traction, right? One of those operating systems that we, that we know about, and we've talked about here on this podcast, but one of the things that I wanted to to say here is, well, two things. Number one, passion is contagious, but opposite of it also is contagious, right?

2 (44m 13s):

If you're no longer passionate, that lack of passion is also contagious, right? For a business owner. And so, so business owners that don't have that passion for what they're doing anymore really should think about having a conversation with you and, and, and talking that through. I, you know what I was just going to go out and say, this it's going to be hurtful, and I'm sorry for that, Conni, but I am so glad that you burned out because otherwise you wouldn't have developed this program that you have to help other people who, who are experiencing those things. So I'm not sad that you burned out at all.

3 (44m 54s):

I am happy to be on the other side and happy to be helping avoid, avoid that place. You're seeing, you're seeing a business owner take a vacation and not answer email is a win. You know, I mean, I worked with one client last year who doubled her business and still took three weeks of vacation to spend with her young children and her family. And that was so important to her. And she, she said, I just never thought it was possible. I can't believe what I was able to create for my business and my family. And that is just, it's just, just amazing to me. Every business owner should be able to have that opportunity.

3 (45m 37s):

It doesn't ha I don't believe in the grind. I don't believe in the hustle. I don't believe in, you know, being a workaholic. And that's the badge of honor. I know, I know what can happen because I've been there.

2 (45m 50s):

Yes. The same way for us, you know, we know what can happen in business transactions because we've been there a hundred times. Right. And so, so it's, it's that passion for helping others. You know, one other thing before we move on to my next question is you talked about your friend and your client, the business owner who, who, you know, thought of herself as sort of a fraud. You know, I, we call that imposter syndrome right. When you've got that self doubt, and I can't believe anybody trusts it, everybody has that. And recognizing that installed level, everybody, you know, experiences that it's, it's so helpful to realize, but within to step back and go look, I did create this, I did this, I did these great things.

2 (46m 36s):

I've done this. The, probably the biggest place where I feel like in a foster is with my children. Right. Because there's no manual I'm doing that. Right. But we still, we do it. Right. We just, we do it. And that's, it's really surprising to me, the, the number of folks that I talked to who really kind of experienced that imposter syndrome. And, and if you do then, then look for ways to find help for that, because you are good, you you've built something, you're doing something and, and do that. It's not a message for you kinda, that's a message for our listeners. So would you agree with that?

3 (47m 14s):

I don't think there's one business owner executive that I've worked with, who doesn't have, you know, doubts about how did I get here and do I belong? You know, I, I think I see it in sharper focus with, with the business owners, because most of them haven't, they don't typically come through business school. They are an expert in their, you know, in their area of business. They are an education expert there, you know, they're a trained accountant. They have their area of expertise. They're a lawyer, right. But, but running a business for some reason, feels like a whole different whole different space.

3 (47m 56s):

And, and so that validation, I think, is really important to recognize, get grounded in what is real and true and, and doing the exercise like I did with this one business owner in, in

really coming through all of her client feedback and reviews online, it was really, really clear, right? What kind of impact her business has and what her business values were. And when she heard it, it was really validating and really empowering for her. And it really, again, kind of re-energized her and was the whole, you know, like whole jumping off point to creating these changes for herself and her team in our business.

2 (48m 35s):

You mentioned that, and going back and looking at those reviews, I've done something. It's a trick that I don't even know why I started it. Somebody must have said to do this early, early, early in my career, but for the last 35 years, or how many ever years I've been working, I guess for close to 40, now I keep a file. It's in my desk drawer. It's all the way at the back. Cause I don't have to pull it out very frequently, but it is handwritten notes, cards, emails, things. When people have said something to me that just lit me up, right. You know, the just make me feel really good about myself and about the work that I've done.

2 (49m 15s):

It's even those from my children, from my wife and whatever, I'm getting down on myself and I, and I'm getting frustrated. And then I started having imposter syndrome. And I cause, cause I do that as well, I'll have to do is pull out that folder. I never get deeper than probably the third item. And I'm back to myself. I realized that I am doing some pretty good stuff. Right.

3 (49m 41s):

It's so easy to get bogged down in the, in the problems that we're facing. Right. It's what's right in front of us. It's that email, it's the customer who's upset about something. It's the project that's gone awry. It's so easy to be thinking about those things. And as high achievers that often where we go, right, we want to solve a problem and, and we can forget about the good things that we've done and, and the gratitude that others have for the work that we do.

2 (50m 5s):

You have to remember to put that up my list. I've got a green box, which are kind of instructions to my family, Sonia, when something eventually happens to me. Cause it really mentally, I need to put on there. Just don't don't have anybody speak, just have somebody take this folder and go read it at my funeral and

3 (50m 23s):

Good idea. Yeah. That's a good idea.

2 (50m 26s):

Yeah. That would be kind of flat look for business owners who are looking for kind of a burnout prevention for their staff development. What are kind of the top strategies that you teach leaders?

3 (50m 37s):

Yeah. So there, there's a variety of things that focus. I think for today, I want to focus on, on two things, I'll focus on two today. One is starting with a human first approach and again, in business where it is easy to go right to here's the email, here's the problem. You know, here's the upset customer think in terms of metrics and growth. And I love metrics and I love systems and all of that. It's really important that as leaders that we start with the people first approach and know the people that you're working with as a human being first.

3 (51m 17s):

So one great question that I, that I ask of leaders is what is one personal thing you know, about each of your team members? Do you know that they're a cat person? Do you know that they have a hobby selling? Do you know which one, you know, makes pottery, do you know which one is into photography? Do you know? You know, which one is an adventurer and it's going to go skydiving next weekend, do you, what do you know as a human being about the people on your staff? And if you don't, there's a great next step, go and learn something that what makes the people on your staff tick because you want to connect as a human being and build trust and a sense of belonging and a sense of I'm a person at unvaluable.

3 (52m 8s):

And I'm here for a reason. I'm not just a cog in the wheel trying to, you know, deliver X number of dollars in sales revenue. So that would be one in engendering trust and a sense of community that really helps to combat burnout. The second thing would be to take a, what I call a coaching approach, an empowering approach in working with your team members. Oftentimes as managers, we feel like we must know all the answers, right? People are coming to me, I'm supposed to be the expert. I should know what to do. It's my job to give you the, the solution to solve.

3 (52m 48s):

And in fact, when you are in some stage of burnout, one of the things is you feel very powerless. So you do want to create an environment where your team members feel more empowered. Like they have, they have a say, or, you know, they have the ability to make a decision and determine what it is that they need most of where to go. Next. One of the worst things that someone said to me when I finally was able to share that I was experiencing burnout is, well, you should have done this From someone who wasn't experiencing burnout and hadn't experienced burnout.

3 (53m 32s):

And that was I'm sure the intent was to say, this is solvable. And you know, I wish you would have come in to me and I would have helped you. And that's not how it felt because it took all the power away from me. The actually the strategy that works better is to ask questions. So this is just a great, here's one thing you can focus on as a business owner, listening to this podcast today, don't tell and solve, especially when it comes to burnout, ask questions. So if someone comes to you and says, I'm experiencing burnout, or I'm feeling really stressed, and I'm really the it, the answer isn't to say, well, you need to do X, Y, and Z.

3 (54m 18s):

Their response is to say, what are you ask open-ended questions? Where are you struggling? Most it's so simple. And so open-ended, and again puts the power in the other person's position. And you know, some, if someone says, well, I'm going to need to, you know, take a one-year sabbatical. Maybe that's not feasible in your, you know, in your

organization. But most of the time the response is something like I need, I need help prioritizing my work, right. Or I need to be able to, I need help in making sure that I don't have six hours of meetings in an eight hour Workday because I can't get anything else done.

3 (55m 5s):

I want your help doing that. Sometimes it's as simple as I'd like to have a printer in my office. It was something that I learned through my work as well. I mean, it could be something really innocuous, but asking really conveys to the other person. I'm listening to you. And I want to help you create the solution that you need.

2 (55m 29s):

I'm out of that movie office space. I need my stapler.

3 (55m 33s):

It could be something really innocuous that creates a, you know, a big solution. And you don't know, you don't know. And so that's where the power isn't asking a question.

2 (55m 44s):

Awesome. Now I will tell you that that's the great argument that I've always had with my chief operating officers. I would always say it's people first. And they would say, no, it's process first. And it's there. Well, you can have all the best process, but unless we have great people doing them and we're not getting anything

3 (55m 60s):

A hundred percent, same goes for systems and it systems and software, you can have the best software in the world, but if you don't have, you know, people behind it and the why behind what you're doing, it's not going to matter.

2 (56m 11s):

I was at a program this morning. The great was talking about really processes are second. It's all about it. Processes get the way of innovation, right? And so things like that. I love that people first ask lots of great questions. Well then perhaps it's going to be

that on your answer to this. But I always ask this at the end of our podcast, every one of our guests, the last question is this podcast is all about maximizing business value. So what's the one most important thing that you would recommend business owners do to build value in their business.

3 (56m 53s):

Very simple statement. Put your mask on first. You know, when you're in an airplane, okay.

2 (57m 3s):

At the time of Kuvan and I'm going, okay, what's going on here? I suddenly, it dawned on me what you're saying. That's brilliant

3 (57m 11s):

When you're in an airplane and they tell you when the oxygen masks drop down, put your own on first, before you help someone next to you, the kid, you know, the old woman, whoever it is, right? Put your mask on first. Imagine you were the pilot of the plane as you are the, the owner of the business. When the oxygen masks come down, put yours on first. If you don't take care of yourself, if you don't get the kinds of support and resources and expertise, whether that's with a coach or a consultant or guide and an advisor, if you aren't getting sleep, nothing else is going to come together.

3 (57m 53s):

You, you can't grow your business. You can't hire great people. You can't have great innovation. You can't create a business. You love, you can't create a legacy for your family. None of that will happen if you don't take care of yourself first. So put your mask on first.

2 (58m 8s):

That is great advice, but I'm not going to let you off the hook for those of our listeners who listened to all of our podcasts. I always ask the bonus question. We're really looking forward to hearing the answer. What personality trait has gotten you into the most trouble through the years?

3 (58m 26s):

Oh, I go back to my sixth grade report card. Mr. Lamb wrote, you can't write this anymore on a report card, but he wrote stubborn as the day is long on my report card. And I think that's pretty true. I think it's a strength. And I also think it's gotten me in trouble when I decide I'm doing something. I am doing it like a, like a bulldog. I am just on it. That is it. End of story. So I think that's, you know, again served me well, but in some cases I think driven people, crazy, the process,

2 (59m 9s):

The report card and framed in somewhere. Yeah. He used to write notes on there, you know, and that's great. Stubborn as the day is long. I've been accused of that once or twice in my life as well. So how can our viewers and listeners get in touch with

3 (59m 30s):

Pop onto my website, which is clarity consulting Inc com or feel free to reach out to me via email it's Conni C O N N I no E at clarityconsultinginc.com

2 (59m 45s):

This has been such a great conversation. We went a little longer today because this is such valuable information. Thank you, Conni, for being a great guest with us today.

3 (59m 55s):

Thank you for having me.

2 (59m 57s):

You can find Conni Francini at clarity consulting Inc com or on LinkedIn. And of course you can always reach out to me and I will be happy to make a warm introduction to someone who I am convinced is going to become a lifelong friend with me. This is the maximized business value podcast, where we give practical advice to business owners who are passionate about building long-term sustainable value in their business. Be sure to tune in each week and follow us wherever you found this podcast and send us in a comment or a suggestion. We love your comments and suggestions for future

podcast. And we promise if there's any burning issue that you've always wanted to learn about, send it to us, and we will be happy to explore that in a future podcast.

2 (1h 0m 45s):

So until next time, I'm Tom Bronson, reminding you to look for the signs of burnout in your business and find a way to get back on the right path while you maximize business value.

1 (1h 1m 3s):

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2 (1h 1m 49s):

That was perfect. I wouldn't make any changes.