

Announcer (5s):

Welcome to 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 is 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, CEO of Mastery Partners, Tom Bronson.

Tom Bronson (36s):

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 your business. This episode is part of our series on the value of assessment tools for any organization. Now, you've probably heard a lot about various assessments and the chances are pretty good that you've had some exposure to one or two assessments during your career. This series explores the best ways to use these assessments to improve your business. Today, we're going to explore predictive index and I'd like to welcome our guest Melanie Shafer, who is the president and founder of talent suite, a business consulting firm that helps companies achieve measurable results through applying behavioral analytics, talent benchmarking, and leadership development.

Tom Bronson (1m 29s):

She's an expert in diagnosing talent related pain points that keep organizations from achieving their highest potential and designing solutions to impact results. Melanie's desire to learn and serve. As a trusted advisor to our clients has led Melanie down a diverse career path, including accounting, talent management, executive recruiting and management consulting. She's worked with companies in varied leadership structures and ownership, structures, and sizes ranging from fortune 500 to emerging businesses that allows her to translate best practices from large companies into viable options for the middle market.

Tom Bronson (2m 13s):

Prior to talent suite, she was a partner and owner in a recruiting and consulting firm that placed twice on the Dallas 100 fastest growing companies list. I'm envious. My company only placed there once, maybe in the future again, throughout her career, Melanie has won numerous awards based on results delivered and client satisfaction. She's an engaging speaker known for high impact presentations that deliver immediately actionable takeaways. Melanie is a talent optimization certified consultant, predictive index certified partner. Thank goodness, cuz that's what we're talking about today and a Gallup certified strengths coach.

Tom Bronson (2m 55s):

You heard a little bit about strengths when we, when we had our talk with Brandy shade. So welcome to maximize business value, Melanie.

Melanie Shaffer (3m 6s):

Oh, thank you, Tom. I need you to introduce me anytime I walk in a room.

Tom Bronson (3m 11s):

Well,

Melanie Shaffer (3m 12s):

You're really good at that.

Tom Bronson (3m 13s):

Yeah. Your mom wrote a really nice introduction. That's what I'm, that's what I always say. When I, when I get introduced onto a stage, I'm like, wow, thanks mom. For writing that nice section for me. That's awesome. So, so what is your story and what makes you so passionate about predictive index?

Melanie Shaffer (3m 33s):

So my passion has always been around helping people maximize what they've naturally can do well and minimize blind spots that keep them from reaching where they wanna go. And my passion for predictive index came from of course, observations I had during my recruiting career where I was on the agency side. And I love change like you Tom. So I worked both in recruiting and business development. I always worked on both sides. And so I was always hearing stories in these businesses of all structures and sizes of dissatisfaction of employees.

Melanie Shaffer (4m 14s):

And also on the other side, you know, what the employer thought was, the reason that this wasn't working or issues and structures. And so I did that for 12 years and when I left the kind of bigger recruiting world and went into that boutique recruiting firm where I ended up buying in, I'd been kind of judgemental when I was the recruiter on the outside, not dealing with the issues. And what I realized when I was running my own company was that we had our own issues with keeping people and we really couldn't figure out, is it us? Or is it them right?

Melanie Shaffer (4m 55s):

Like which it's one or the other. It's a bit of both. And how do you bifurcate that? So I had been certified in strengths finder and I was using it in that boutique recruiting firm's practice to integrate executive placements. Okay. So two things kind of converged the same time for me, where my passion for predictive index comes from I'm working with these executive teams, integrating their teams with the newly placed C level person that we put there with strengths finder over and over. I got the question from the CEO. This was wonderful. I understand more about these people, but I think I might have a few in the wrong seats.

Melanie Shaffer (5m 35s):

What do you think based on what you did here? And I was like, this is the science of excellence. It's not about fit to work. It's not about selection. So that converged in my business practice the same time in that firm that we were driving towards hyper growth. And I started having their pain of gosh. Like we are either

training people up that are not staying long or we're hiring people to just flame out quickly. And so I went to look for an instrument I could use that would pair with the strengths finder. And that's how I came in a predictive index. There's over 800 psychometrics out there, Tom and I looked at many, many, many, many of them for selection.

Melanie Shaffer (6m 22s):

And the reason that we partnered with predictive index is the last company I was in. Like you said, where we placed two years in a row and the fastest growing companies, I went and learned predictive index and implemented it in our business. Not only for selection, but I created my own work that we now use at talent suite and how to leverage it for development and continued expansion of the business. So I really hands on used it to drive the business as a strategic point.

Tom Bronson (6m 58s):

Wow, wow. That, that that's impress, you know, a couple of things that you mentioned here by the way, 800 psychoanalytic, is that what it psycho

Melanie Shaffer (7m 9s):

Psychometrics. Psychometric. Psychometric.

Tom Bronson (7m 12s):

Yeah. 800 different. All right. So folks, this is gonna be a really long series. We're gonna be running for the next, let's see, we've got about 50 episodes. This is gonna run about 16 years. So, so if we did them all good Lord, that is a lot. But

Melanie Shaffer (7m 31s):

Is that nuts?

Tom Bronson (7m 32s):

It's crazy. I, I had no idea. Of course everybody's heard of the big ones, right. You know, the folks that are out there and, and several of them, and of course, predictive index is one of those more popular folks or assessment tools that folks use. So, which is why I ask you to come on. You mentioned something early though in kind your description. And that is helping business owners identify those blind spots. Every business owner has blind spots and it's, it's not, you know, we don't want them. We don't like them. Right. We don't think we have them, but it's kinda like driving down the road. Right. And it's why, before we change lanes, we actually look over our shoulder because there genuinely is a blind spot that you can't see anything.

Tom Bronson (8m 18s):

Right. And I've even put those little bubble mirrors on the side of my car so that I can see a little bit wider angle. But every business owner has those blind spots and trying to, trying to getting somebody else to

come in and, and get a fresh pair of eyes on it is almost like, you know, it's like a V8 moment. Right? Wow. I should have had a V8. Right. And so you see those things that, that are, have been there the whole time, but, but you don't realize that they're, but as soon as they're identified, you realize it and you go, oh God, of course. Right. So I love that about what you do now.

Tom Bronson (8m 60s):

When we talked to Jenny gray a couple weeks ago, we learned that there are different types of assessments. Now I'm gonna guess an assessment called predictive index. I'll bet I can guess where it's going with this, but the different types of assessments, you know, their personality work style and cognitive assessments, personality typically are those predictive assessments that are typically used for pre-employment work style or productivity assessments are the kinds that are used to improve team and individual performance. And since you brought up of course, strengths finder, we've already had Brandy shade on that we know is one of those kind of team improvement as is disk, which was on a couple of weeks ago.

Tom Bronson (9m 40s):

We talked about that. So what type of assessment is predictive index?

Melanie Shaffer (9m 46s):

I love it. I love how you put it into or Jenny. And I know Jenny she's fabulous, but PhD, the three categories, so predictive index, but a lot of people might not know about it is in 2014, the company was purchased by two Harvard MBAs investors in the organization that brought in private capital and invested millions in the platform. When I started talent suite, I was in conversations with them about what was coming. And so the reason that talent suite predictive index is one part of what we do. We do holistic talent strategy, but the reason we align with predictive index and evaluating many similar options is predictive index has all three because they've built that into the platform over the last two years.

Melanie Shaffer (10m 35s):

So there is a cognitive assessment along with the behavioral assessment. So the cognitive is built on the same constructs as the wonder, lick that a lot of people would be familiar with, with NPI, right. But the in-house science team shortened. It it's 12 minutes. So it's easy to get candidates to take it because it's quick and it's highly effective. I could talk for a long time about both cognitive and behavioral, because actually cognitive is the highest predictor of performance in jobs over behavioral. Okay. But the behavioral is what PI's known for. And then when you asked about kinda work style, PI released something about, I don't know, 14 months ago called design.

Melanie Shaffer (11m 21s):

And once people have taken that five minute behavioral assessment, you can put them into the four cultures of work in a model that helps you understand where the team will work well together and where they have

natural areas. Collectively DNA wise, the science team has come up with nine team types of where those blind spots would be. And so we do a lot of work on the front end with executive teams on really getting clarity, not necessarily individually cuz executives. A lot of times know that, especially the sophistication level of companies that we choose to work with, but it's more kind of collectively, whereas this getting in our way.

Melanie Shaffer (12m 1s):

And then with PI, they even have a model within that four cultures of work where we work with the executive team to overlay their strategic in tandem, with where that sits against the four cultures of work of their existing team. Because work changes, Tom people fundamentally don't right. Like we adapt, we choose to flex, but we don't change because behavioral science, I'm sure everyone on here has said, once you hit kind of your early twenties, what drives you is fixed? It's your heart and your briefcase that adapt.

Melanie Shaffer (12m 44s):

And a lot of the heart is choice. And the heart needs clarity along with the head of how do we as a group sometimes like you and I are extreme patterns, where do we need to either rely on others based on where they close our gaps because you and I have some big ones. Right. You know, extreme patterns usually do as well as Tom, where might right now might Melanie and Tom have to be a little less of Melanie and Tom to get through these strategic priorities.

Tom Bronson (13m 16s):

Right. Right. Yeah. In fact, we'll, we'll talk about my predictive index. Second half extreme. Yeah. I don't, we don't know enough yet folks to know whether or not I should be offended at having that extreme, but, but we'll learn that in the second

Melanie Shaffer (13m 32s):

Right there with you, Tom. That's why

Tom Bronson (13m 34s):

I know. So, so predictive index as a company has different assess different tools that you use that can do cognitive work styles and, and kind of the pre-employment behavioral behavioral,

Melanie Shaffer (13m 50s):

The psychometric piece. Yes. Got

Tom Bronson (13m 53s):

It. Got it. Okay. Interesting. Now

Melanie Shaffer (13m 56s):

It is validated by the E E O C with over 350 validity studies.

Tom Bronson (14m 1s):

Wow. It's the cognitive one that scares me. I'm afraid when I take cognitive tests that people are gonna realize that I, that I'm a little bit like the scarecrow. I really don't have a brain, so, oh

Melanie Shaffer (14m 11s):

No. I was scared to death. When I had to take it to become a PI partner. I was like, this is gonna be what limits me from my dream.

Tom Bronson (14m 18s):

Exactly. Exactly. Well, so let's, let's press on. So, so what have you found are the biggest assumptions that business leaders make about their employees? That data can dispel?

Melanie Shaffer (14m 31s):

That's such a good question. So oftentimes the leaders of organizations are risk taking patterns and part of being a risk taking pattern is many of them draw their confidence from what they've experienced, what they fundamentally already know. And curiosity has to become a learned behavior. It's a lot of what we work on in our leadership development practice is helping leaders with ways to be naturally curious because it's not that they don't want to know why Tom it's, that they are a lot of times in the seat they're in, because they've been willing to take the risk to get to where they are.

Melanie Shaffer (15m 16s):

And now they're very confident in their own energy, their own thoughts, their own briefcase. And so oftentimes I find them potentially discounting people that don't think the way that they do, maybe they're not as willing immediately to move to change. They ask a lot of questions and the executive perceives that as, oh, they they're challenging my authority or, oh, they don't wanna change. And so they make a lot of assumptions about people based on their own confidence, but it's also one of their greatest assets.

Tom Bronson (15m 57s):

Interesting. The, so speaking of, kind of the whole managerial, you know, the, the kind of the way people, the manager or lead people is there. I hear all the time kind of there's natural born leaders, right? Natural are, is there, is there sort of an ideal behavioral profile for an executive leader?

Melanie Shaffer (16m 25s):

So it depends on the stage of the company. What is the company driving towards? What are the strategic priorities? Who are they surrounded by? What resources do they have access to? I get asked that all the time, not just in relation to, you know, the top line, the CEO, the most common question I get asked is the ideal profile for an integrator, you know, within EOS. And it's really the same answer. It depends on what the company's trying to do and how open the CEO male or female is to adapting. Because typically when you

need an integrator, it's because you've gotten to an inflection point that won't what got you there, won't get you to the next phase.

Melanie Shaffer (17m 9s):

And that curiosity comes back in. And that humility, Tom, that are, I would say oftentimes more important if the cognitives there than maybe some of the behavioral,

Tom Bronson (17m 25s):

You know, it's, it's interesting you, that you mentioned that, I guess it, it really does depend on kind what stage it is. I've seen so many businesses that, that a, an entrepreneurial business owner can take the business from startup to 50 million and then it just stalls, right. But it keeps performing at 50 million, you know, and it's doing its thing, but it just doesn't go to the next level. And many times, I think that that's a result of, of, you know, the leader, the leader took it to where they could. And then that's, that is the limit, the smart leaders step out of the way and bring in other leaders who can take it to the next level.

Tom Bronson (18m 8s):

And I've seen that happen over and over. I recently met the CEO of misin and Maine, the guys that make,

Melanie Shaffer (18m 14s):

Oh, that's my husband's favorite clothing company.

Tom Bronson (18m 17s):

Oh my gosh. I love it too. Because you know, sometimes when I, when I change sizes, like most people change, my MIS and Maine can grow with me. Right. And

Melanie Shaffer (18m 27s):

That's why my husband loved it. It's very forgiving, but stylish.

Tom Bronson (18m 31s):

Yes it is. And I met the CEO, but he, he took that business to a certain level, but then he stepped out of the way and hired in the kind of talent that could take it to the next level. A lot of times, business owners are not willing to step out of the way. And, and by the same token, if you take that leader, that male or female that can take the business from 50 to, to 500 million and you try to put them in a startup, they're gonna be a fish outta water. Right. And so investing that, then that, that you then answered that in the way that I would, I didn't really see coming, but I love that because it is, it really depends on the stage of the business and the, and the type of profile that you need.

Tom Bronson (19m 17s):

Now, I know that people are more than kind of a test result, right? Oh

Melanie Shaffer (19m 22s):

Lord. Yes.

Tom Bronson (19m 24s):

So how can companies use behavioral analytics and their existing or with their existing employees and candidates for higher, in a way that sees more than kind of the gray, right? Or more of the gray? I, not the black and white, I don't wanna see the black, how do we see that gray soft, squishy side?

Melanie Shaffer (19m 47s):

Right. I love that question because, you know, when I look at psychometrics, I think there's an art and then there's the science, and you've gotta separate the two in order for people to not feel intimidated. And you also have to acknowledge, some people have had experiences of discrimination with assessments when they were unemployed, or when they went through a search when they were still in another seat, or they had a boss wanting to get rid of them that used that data as a way to label them so they could move them out. So those are the things we're up against, you know, as far as that goes. So the communication always has to come and everything happens first at the top line level, embracement there, sharing of their information there.

Melanie Shaffer (20m 36s):

And then messaging of collecting the data. We always like them to collect the data of their own workforce first. And so in sending that out, the communication is in an effort to continue learning how to work best together. We'd like to have you take this brief survey in human behavior. You know, your leader will be sitting down with you to talk about their profile along with yours. And it's a very positive message of we're looking to get better. You know, we don't think we've reached that pinnacle yet. So that message is huge. And then in using it in the selection process, it's important to educate not just the top line executive team that are buying it from you, but shorter training that we do for hiring leaders, because something that's different about talent suite and how we train, which is really the, the art is just as important as the science is.

Melanie Shaffer (21m 35s):

We've learned in the last three years. People don't have the mental capacity anymore to sit through two days. And so it's a very small, maybe one or two people you would put through that. And everyone else you're taking through something that we call our learn, use, repeat approach, where they're learning it in shorter bursts. We give them very simple things to go do before they leave. They pick one person, they go do specific, easy instructions, and then they debrief together with the collective knowledge of what worked and what didn't. So we want those things happening before everything's fully disseminated.

Melanie Shaffer (22m 17s):

We want positive messaging to collect the data. We want leaders trained in how to use this right in shorter

sessions. And then we give them ways to have inspire conversations. So this becomes more than dots. It really fundamentally is something driving productivity and giving choices to the employees in the business.

Tom Bronson (22m 43s):

The, so there are, there are assessments that, that could genuinely take a couple of days, right. To do the, oh gosh, yes. I have a hard time getting through this podcast, you know, in one hour I cannot possibly fathom doing, you know, a two day type of an assessment. I, I probably wouldn't survive that. Right.

Melanie Shaffer (23m 8s):

Absolutely. Yeah.

Tom Bronson (23m 10s):

So how funny now, you, you, you mentioned, you know, kind of testing the people and sharing it. I wanna jump ahead to, to something that I was thinking about, you know, or, and that is asking employees and candidates to take assessments when they have never had them before in the past, kind of create some anxiety. Now I've asked this to our other folks as well, but I think that you have perfectly already kind of brought to my attention the way you would handle that, but how can a business owner kind of minimize that anxiety when introducing assessments into their company so that people don't think, oh, God, they're gonna be eliminating me.

Tom Bronson (23m 50s):

Right?

Melanie Shaffer (23m 51s):

Yeah. Well, it's two things. One of 'em was the language that I utilized in how you message as to why you're doing it, and then everyone's doing it. You don't handpick certain people. Okay. The second thing is those people that maybe are not performing and are not ones that need to be there anyway. Might some of them leave well, maybe, but we can't manage to the few. We have to manage to the many in organizations.

Tom Bronson (24m 20s):

Right. Right. So, so it's really sort of explained that everybody's doing that, you know, when I've used assessment tools and, and I, by the way, used the PI in my last company Grandberry. And so, so I, I insisted on taking the test first and, and then cuz we were using PI really to hone in on what was the ideal type of sales rep that we were looking for. I think all of our very best sales people. And, and so we were trying to look to be able to predict that behavior off into the future. So, so, but I, I insisted on taking it first so that people would not be, you know, overwhelmed with it.

Tom Bronson (25m 3s):

Here's my results. You know, let me show you what happened to me. Right. And so, so now what kind of

strategies do you see companies pursuing that can't find or hire the right people that they ideally want to hire?

Melanie Shaffer (25m 17s):

Yeah, so they've had to get really creative. So it's been fun. It's kind of like drawing on all my recruiting experience from the 20 years I was in that profession, getting to work with our clients to think differently, really kind of re-imagining how they're putting people into roles. So like an example recently has been a company that needed to bring in a VP of technology to integrate. They have disparate systems, they grew through acquisition. They have people locations that are not properly using the technology and they in their mind wanted to go find someone that had done this exact same job somewhere else. Well, they couldn't afford them. Right, right.

Melanie Shaffer (25m 58s):

So we help them use the data to think about what are the non-negotiables that the right person that has the interest in this would have. And let's look for the wiring. We call the methodology, head, heart and briefcase. So let's look for the head and the briefcase have to have certain things in there, but we're gonna have to get outside of what you're used to doing in having all the boxes. By the way, when we set that, you know, kind of job baseline of what that behavioral profile would look like, it turns out, we knew right off the bat, they were gonna have to bring in a resource to do some of the heavy lifting on the implementation.

Melanie Shaffer (26m 43s):

So they knew with confidence who they hired, which they had clarity of the baseline versus the role. He was not ideal, but they knew he could get through the most important parts of the role in the beginning. And then when things, he was educated on that and where his gaps were and they knew where to bring in support for him. And they were able to use the PI data to look in the organization at who they had that would compliment him. And they brought that person in on a stretch project. They still kept their other seat, but this was a younger person in the organization that wanted to do the project management piece of the implementation, which is where this VP was weak.

Melanie Shaffer (27m 27s):

So it just worked because there was clarity up front of where this person they hired did not exactly match to some of how they needed the role to operate and some of the experience. And then they were able to provide an opportunity to someone to come in and support him when he got to the phase where they all knew in advance, where that was not gonna be the best use of his talents.

Tom Bronson (27m 55s):

And, and part of managing that is really understanding the first, the person that you're dealing with and understanding those things that need to be filled in on the back end and not making the assumption that this person can do everything. When in fact you've already proven that they can't do, or they're not wired to do

certain things in the future. I think part of that, even for my own self, when I, when I understand my own strengths and the, and the way that I operate, it helps me to understand how I can compensate for those things. You know, when I, when I need help doing things, it's, it's really, to me, it's all about one of the tenants of, of genuine relentless execution.

Tom Bronson (28m 44s):

And then if you UN, if you know yourself, right, it's the, the knowledge, self knowledge, understanding where my own strengths and weaknesses are and being able to compensate those for other things. And so, so I, I, I love that one, one quick question. Before we jump off to a break here, let's, let's skip ahead and think about some like retention practices. So what are some retention practices that companies can apply? Whether or not they use behavioral data?

Melanie Shaffer (29m 15s):

Okay. So one that has been really effective has been identifying your centers of influence, and you can do this with, or without behavioral data. So most organizations, I find research shows five to seven people are the most that you can effectively lead. If it's any more than that, you're managing to a process. So they're people, cogs and wheels you're there, everybody's executing. Okay. So if, if that's the case, cuz I speak a lot with companies that are like, we can't do anything about that. That's just our cost structure and how we're gonna operate. All right. Well, if you are not gonna allow your leaders to lead, then we need to find your centers of influence in the organization to do some of the things that a leader normally would have time to do with their people.

Melanie Shaffer (30m 1s):

And again, this is, you know, interesting work for people that are true centers of influence. So if you have behavioral data, that's predictive, you can obviously find that by looking at the patterns that are influencing patterns, naturally, some of them don't even give themselves credit for it. But if you don't have behavioral data, the easy way to do it is to send one question to your entire workforce, which is if you had a problem currently, who would you go to in the organization for help that will tell you who your centers of influence are.

Tom Bronson (30m 34s):

Oh, interesting. Yeah. I love that. I love that approach. And so now five to seven people, I don't know my last company I had, I think it was 11 direct reports. It was a bit much, but, but we did have, I guess that there were certainly things that some of these people did that they reported other directions, but we had a, it's a, it was a pretty sizeable company. And I will tell you that, you know, five to seven is kind of the ideal I've seen with my managers to manage other people or to, to lead other people. But the, the more you get in there, the tougher it is.

Tom Bronson (31m 14s):

Right. And so,

Melanie Shaffer (31m 15s):

Oh gosh. Yes. And Hey, these are suggestions that are modern day. Like what used to work even three years ago, doesn't work today and everything tells you forecasting wise, even when we go into a recession, cause we all know we're going towards one at some point that the talent issues gonna still be there that is not gonna change. And I think a lot of CEOs think, oh, I'll just hold out, keep doing the same old tired stuff. And it'll eventually work itself out when the recession happens and all these people are desperate for jobs. I'm like,

Tom Bronson (31m 48s):

Yeah, that is such, that's

Melanie Shaffer (31m 49s):

Not what forecast say.

Tom Bronson (31m 51s):

That is such pre COVID thinking

Melanie Shaffer (31m 54s):

It's still out there, Tom. I still see it all the time.

Tom Bronson (31m 57s):

I know. So I just made that up. Right. You know? Oh, you're just thinking pre COVID. Right. So

Melanie Shaffer (32m 3s):

Yeah, I would say the other retention practice that's again, the ones I like to provide when I speak are no cost. So the leadership team actually on an agenda item on their strategic meetings about town hall discussion. So in your team, your own teams, your functional teams, when you've asked your team, what do they wanna know more about? Where do they need more support? What are they nervous about? You bring that up to that in its agenda item. So it's always owned by the top line team and the CEO in town hall communications addresses it so that those people know the stories I tell myself are not necessarily true.

Melanie Shaffer (32m 46s):

I'm gonna share what I'm thinking my leader so that when that town hall comes out, I have expressed something that I wanna know in real time.

Tom Bronson (32m 58s):

Yes.

Melanie Shaffer (32m 58s):

Those are easy. Those are easy. It's like one thing, right? That's like really not that hard that everybody's just running around right now. Like a chicken with their head cut off and they don't think it's important. But then I hear the backlash of it. I've heard my whole group, oh my God. My best person just threw down their notice. And I had no idea. They were looking. I'm like, Hm.

Tom Bronson (33m 18s):

Yeah. Yeah. I was after I sold a company to a publicly traded company, we were known for our town hall meetings. And as an officer of the company, we had 55 officers. Now we had 13,000 employees. Right. And so 55 officers, we were required whenever we went to one of our branch locations to hold a town hall meeting to state of the company. And so for all hands on deck, you know, inside that branch or location that we were at and to encourage people to ask questions, we handed out \$2 bills for every question. So

Melanie Shaffer (33m 55s):

I like it.

Tom Bronson (33m 56s):

\$2 bills. And so our company was the largest consumer of \$2 bills in the United States. We were based in Jacksonville, Florida and the federal reserve. All the \$2 bills in circulation were sent to Jacksonville because we were going to use them. That's

Melanie Shaffer (34m 13s):

A great story. How

Tom Bronson (34m 15s):

Do you, how do you like that? Hey, don't tell my own company. I probably still have some of those \$2 bills somewhere.

Melanie Shaffer (34m 21s):

I bet

Tom Bronson (34m 21s):

You do. Cause every time I left town, they're, they're shoving me. Here's some, here's the state of the union and here's the package of \$2 bill.

Melanie Shaffer (34m 30s):

Hey, that's culture. You created a culture. People wanted those \$2 bills.

Tom Bronson (34m 34s):

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. So awesome. We're talking with Melanie ser and having more fun than we deserve. Let's take a quick break. We'll be back in 30

Announcer (34m 43s):

Seconds. Every business will eventually transition some internally to 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 where 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 you'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.

Announcer (35m 25s):

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Tom Bronson (35m 37s):

We're back with Melanie Shafer, president and founder of talent suite. And we're talking about the predictive index and how to use it now as our audience already knows, I've taken all the assessments that we're talking about in this series. So let's use me as a Guinea pig yet again. And so first Melanie, what are some insights that you can share about my assessment? And you know that I'm an open book. So, so give you the good, the bad and the ugly.

Melanie Shaffer (36m 9s):

Okay. So Tom, I'm gonna tell you, as far as how I work with people in psychometrics, we look at the whole person. So when someone says that to me, I always wanna know, well, what did you walk away with from reading through your report? What resonated for you?

Tom Bronson (36m 26s):

Well, it's the same thing that I've kind of talked about over the last couple of weeks. You know, I am, I am sort of, I love the way you guys put it remarkably independent. My wife would, my wife would call that genetically unemployable. So Paula

Melanie Shaffer (36m 49s):

I'm with you.

Tom Bronson (36m 50s):

Yeah. Remarkably independent, intensely proactive and aggressiveness driving to reach goals. Now I know I am a, I'm a hard charger. I am a driver, I've got a, a sense of urgency. And it's one of those things that, you

know, I teach, I actually give a, a keynote address, which I last delivered a couple weeks ago at a conference in Florida on relentless execution. I, I think that what I see here is, is a lot of that. I mean, I am, I am informal. I don't, you know, I, I, I, what I'm seeing is it's ready, fire aim.

Melanie Shaffer (37m 35s):

Right. I love it.

Tom Bronson (37m 38s):

Yeah. So, so those are now, it's really interesting. The, the comment that it made here, it says not interested in the details, but delegates them freely. Right. And that's, that is absolutely true. It is. I would actually word that even stronger. Not only am I not interested in the details, I hate the details. And now a lot of people who know me well say, but, oh my God, you, you really get into the details. I mean, you, you spend time and you, and, and I, I've always suspected that that's because I hate the details so much.

Tom Bronson (38m 20s):

If I've gotta get into the details, I want to be as accurate and as fast as I possibly can to get out of the details again, so that I can get back up to kind of my 50,000 foot view, that's where I lead best. And so, and, but it it's really interesting to me that, I mean, this certainly captured the fact that I don't like the details or, or that I, you know, I'd rather delegate the details, but so many people think that I'm really good at the details. I think that, I think that what I see here is that the test would agree with me that, that I'm not great at the details, but I, but when I have to be, I can adjust to that because I, I, it's important to know the details sometimes.

Melanie Shaffer (39m 6s):

Well, I'm married to your profile and he was a tax partner until he hit 40 and people thought he was detailed too. But let me back up for a minute, because if you kind of notice what happened there is, I approached you from curiosity. So instead of me showing my psychometric prowess, I let you tell me what resonated for you and look at what I learned in a huge insight about something about yourself. I'm now gonna be able to share some why and some, so what about is that the report says you're not detail oriented, but yet you are told you are detail oriented.

Melanie Shaffer (39m 47s):

So I love it. You've now given me something to work with, that's a lot more interesting than what an intelligent person can read from how easy PI makes it to really understand that report and take something from it. So my job with curiosity is now to pull things out that are really challenging for you. You just shared with me, that's probably challenging for you in working with people that they perceive you and maybe lean into you when they shouldn't for details. When really when we think about your profile, you nailed it, but that Maverick profile it's called a Maverick because your widest need is risk orientation. It's results, it's gas pedal.

Melanie Shaffer (40m 29s):

So for you, the reason details matter if I asked you, when do they matter, Tom, when do details matter to you? I know the answer, but I'm asking you,

Tom Bronson (40m 42s):

I, I think that, and I can't wait to hear your response on this, but I think it's when I don't trust whoever brought me the, or what I'm hearing, and I feel like I need to get into the details to understand

Melanie Shaffer (41m 6s):

Bingo. And it's in your psychometric because your highest need where you draw your confidence is the result and you ultimately know it best. And if you don't know it, and someone hasn't convinced you with enough information quickly, that they know it. That's where you're down in the details. So I work with a lot of leaders like you and their teams, and a lot of, of what we work on when we do leadership work with their teams is it's not that Tom doesn't trust you. It's not that Tom is, is questioning your ability to do the work. When Tom is asking you questions, it's because his motivation is getting to the best result in a way that he visually can see it.

Melanie Shaffer (41m 56s):

And you're not taking him down the path with how you've prepared to present to him. So we work with teams below leaders on how to present to a hard driving executive in a way that mitigates all those questions so that everybody's more productive. And so that you are operating with confidence in your team. And they are people that remember I said, the assumes your data would suggest you're highly assumptive. It's, what's made you very successful. And some leaders like you learn to be curious, and others really struggle even with intervention because they just can't with that extreme need for authority.

Melanie Shaffer (42m 38s):

They're just like, Ooh, I'm always gonna ask the question. And if somebody can give me a big picture, answer fast, we're not going into details.

Tom Bronson (42m 48s):

Interesting. Yeah. You know, it's, that is probably the best explanation of kinda one of the things I, I've coined a term. It's gonna be famous, probably posthumously. I'll be a little bit like van go. Right? And so, but I call it intentional procrastination. I, it's a term that I use that, that people who are close to me, who've worked with me for a long time. Once I've explained that sort of phenomenon in what I'm doing, people will ask me, are you intentionally procrastinating on a decision here? The reason I intentionally procrastinating, I actually used this with a client the other day in an explanation to her on something that she's dragging her feet on.

Tom Bronson (43m 37s):

I intentionally procrastinate when, when the answer is not clear to me based on the data that I have been

given. And because if, if I can't see that future of where I'm running with as much clarity as I can see my hand in front of my face, then, then I stop. All right, cuz I, the problem is we're rowing, but we don't know where we're rowing too. So I need more information in order to, to, you know, do that. And people will ask me though, why haven't you made a decision on this? Because the answer's not clear to me yet.

Tom Bronson (44m 18s):

I, I still don't have the data to, to understand where we are going. So I can't give orders to go there, right? If it's to take the hill, well, which hill we're surrounded by eight Hills, I need enough data to understand which hill is the most important hill to take. Right? And so, so I think that the way you explain that kinda perfectly dovetails with that term that I, that I've been using for years. I'm I intentionally procrastinate if I don't have the details. And if I'm, if I'm too lazy to go get into the details, I just wait until the details are presented to me in a way that I can understand. Does that make sense?

Melanie Shaffer (44m 57s):

It does. I, my wiring is very similar to yours and I even equate it to right now, you know, we're doing a email over our house and the designer will send me things over, you know, texts and pictures. And, and I always push back with a question, Tom, cause I'm like you, I wanna challenge her. Our patterns only in our natural state, respect people that challenge us. So if you're not challenging me, then I'm gonna ask you a lot of questions because, and now I'm gonna make you uncomfortable and you better have quick answers for me because if you don't, we're gonna go to a place that's probably not the best, right?

Melanie Shaffer (45m 39s):

I've learned to stop those interactions and say, Hey, I'm not seeing where we're trying to go together. I need more help from you. Could we take a break? Can we come back together? And when we come back together, here's what I really need to see in a way that you're not pulling me down into massive spreadsheets. I just wanna see how it all ties together. Do you have questions for me on how that would need to look? I wanna help you as much as I can so that we can be productive together. I realize this is something I need right now that neither of us are prepared to make a decision upon.

Tom Bronson (46m 23s):

Right. Right. And that

Melanie Shaffer (46m 25s):

Helps a lot.

Tom Bronson (46m 26s):

I, I love that. And, and hearing about that, that you are, in fact, you are kind enough to send me your predictive index as well. And we are, we are very similar in our profile. That's one of the things that has always been sort of a tentative of my leadership. I do not surround myself with yes. People in fact, oh,

Melanie Shaffer (46m 46s):

I

Tom Bronson (46m 46s):

Can't nothing. There is nothing that is more annoying to me than people who just agree with everyone of my cuz. Then I just start spouting, just babble. Right. To see how far they'll continue to agree. Right.

Melanie Shaffer (47m 0s):

Mom, it's like, we're the same person.

Tom Bronson (47m 2s):

Just, it just frustrates the ever living. Ugh, Adam. But, but so I'm constantly looking for now you say that you challenge people if, or you know, that you don't trust people, that don't challenge you. Even people who challenge me. One of the things about me is that I am naturally curious and inquisitive. Cause I, you know, when people,

Melanie Shaffer (47m 26s):

But you're only curious when it's around a result.

Tom Bronson (47m 30s):

Oh right.

Melanie Shaffer (47m 31s):

You're not curious around a lot of the things, half the population is right.

Tom Bronson (47m 35s):

That's it, that's it, you know, it's funny that when, when we're first engaging with clients, I, I tell them right at the beginning, you know, I just ask so many questions. You're gonna get so tired of me asking questions, but it's because I'm trying to understand what the intended desire outcome is. And in order to get there, I also have to sort of understand kind of how we got to where we are. Right. And so that I can make meaningful recommendations about where that client needs to go in their business. And so I just, I just constantly am asking questions and I, and I, I love, you know, television shows that reveal things to me that I D have never seen or heard, you know, before, but, but even the people who challenge me, I ask them lots of questions too, because I want, I want, that's the way I challenge their challenge of me.

Tom Bronson (48m 31s):

Yeah. Cause I wanna see how convicted they are in their own, you know, challenges and beliefs and, and whatnot. So wow. Now, so, so I'm an employer, right? And I've, and I've got Tom Bronson on my staff. And

so, so I'm one of the team now. We all recognize that, that I am intensely. Oh, intense, remarkably independent.

Melanie Shaffer (49m 3s):

Hey, we all say we're beautiful the way we are. Okay. I, but oftentimes we have to flex to work best with others. Yes.

Tom Bronson (49m 10s):

So, so, so what can, what can an employer learn about me and how to work with me from really kinda understanding my PI?

Melanie Shaffer (49m 23s):

Yeah. I love that. Okay. So here's a key thing. Employers have to keep in mind is to have future leaders were often hiring the Toms when they're young and unchecked, that are those people that if they were looking at your profile, it's important to look, what's his highest need. We talk a lot about feeding the need. Okay. So if we're gonna bring Tom into this role and we know he has this, you know, desire to learn this business, but the role itself doesn't align with a lot of how he naturally wants to operate, but in career pathing and with talent strategy, help, how we help companies. Are we looking at him as someone that's promotable?

Melanie Shaffer (50m 4s):

Are we looking at him as someone you're gonna have in this role for a long time? What do you need right now? When you look at the team as a whole in the department. Okay. Well, if Tom is who we're bringing in, it better be the person that's promotable because he won't stay very long. If he doesn't see the path. Okay. That's number one, number two. What we know about Tom from your results, even if Tom's wrong, you, you need to let him have a say as a young person on the team. And as long as you show him where, what he's suggesting is valid, but not the best way. He's good. But when he is young, he is gonna be very independent and, and very comfortable inputting.

Melanie Shaffer (50m 47s):

Even when you, as season leader are rolling your eyes in the back of your head, you've gotta give him a voice or don't hire him. Okay. Lastly, Tom is going to go chase what Tom sees, getting him the furthest fastest. When you onboard him, give him guardrails, let him know. What's really gonna get him ahead with you because he is going to figure it out on his own. If you don't set that up on the front end with him.

Tom Bronson (51m 19s):

Interesting. Interesting. I will tell you that one of the greatest mentors I ever had was one of my first bosses who, who, you know, once I kind of rose into a leadership role and I'm bringing all these, what, what I now in retrospect would call hair brained ideas. Right? You know, my, my, we would bring these, you know, things to the boss, his constant response to us was, huh? That's interesting. Why don't you guys give that? Why don't

you give that a try? Now?

Tom Bronson (51m 59s):

It, it wasn't until many years later that I really understood what kind of constraint or what, you know, what restraint that boss had because he in a, in a, in a very casual setting, one day, he said, you know what really pisses me off about you? And I said, what's that? He said, all these ideas that you bring, I've tried all this stuff before and it didn't work. And I knew it wasn't going to work. And yet you went out there and for whatever reason, you were able to make these things work that I never could. And

Melanie Shaffer (52m 37s):

Wow. What a humble leader.

Tom Bronson (52m 40s):

Yeah. I mean, I get choked up even thinking about him now. And, and I thought, wow, that is the example of the kind of leader that I really want to be. I'm not wired like that.

Melanie Shaffer (52m 54s):

No,

Tom Bronson (52m 55s):

I unfortunately he's passed on. I would love to have known what his PI would be, but I mean, you wanna talk about emotionally intelligent, right? Somebody who really, you know, understood how to keep that stuff in check. And, and he said, he said, not everything worked, but you, you were able to do so much more than I, than I could have. And the fact that I kept giving you rope and you kept doing it, you know, is just, he said, it's just a beautiful thing. And of course, you know, I helped him sell his business and, and he, you know, became a multi multimillionaire as a result, which was, you know, a, a kind of a cool outcome. And that's where I sort of got the bug for, for what I've been doing ever since.

Tom Bronson (53m 37s):

But

Melanie Shaffer (53m 38s):

He gave you what I like to call dabble time. So if you hire a risk pattern, they need to have some dabble time. Because if you give it to them, they'll improve something in the department. They'll come up with something you haven't thought of. And it's going to retain them longer because they're fulfilled the job they're doing may not perfectly align to their wiring because you can't hire a hundred percent of your workforce perfectly aligned to dots. It's just not possible. So if we're bringing, especially if you're bringing in future leaders, because the future leaders on some roles, the patterns for the leader of a department sometimes look different than the frontline people.

Melanie Shaffer (54m 19s):

Right. So if you're bringing them in to sit through that for a while, while he's there, you better give him some dabble time.

Tom Bronson (54m 28s):

Yep.

Melanie Shaffer (54m 29s):

Yep. I love that. What an amazing yeah. Leader that you

Tom Bronson (54m 33s):

Worked with. Yeah. Just someone that, that I was very passionate about. So I can tell this day. Yeah. It's, it's still, I have to kind of fight back the emotion a little bit. When I think about that and I've had the, I, I guess I'm starting to realize that it's not just them. I've always sought out great mentors. Right. And I, and I've, that was the first of a long line of amazing mentors during my career that that kind of have led me to where I am today. And so, so I could talk about all of them that way, you know, as I, as I think about the predictive index, are there, are there specific types of businesses that this works better for, or is this kind of agnostic to industry and, and business types?

Melanie Shaffer (55m 23s):

Yeah. So I would put companies in maybe two buckets that would be the right fit for utilizing predictive index. You know, the first would be, you know, a company going through a significant disruption or change, you know, even if it's not growth that really wants clarity around people decisions. The second would be obviously high growth companies or companies that have plateaued that wanna get to the next stage. So those are typically kind of the best two companies at entry point. You know, if you have a smaller company, you know, under, oh gosh, like I, I'm gonna say maybe 30 employees and the company's pretty flat, then it may not be the best fit for what you're trying to do.

Melanie Shaffer (56m 8s):

There are things other than culture index and predictive index that are kind of by the drink. I like to call them out there. And those are probably better suited to smaller kind of plateaued companies, because, you know, if they get on a subscription, like a PI or a culture index, they're gonna be on it for a year. And then they're kind of done, you know, and it's, it's a journey and the right clients that fit for predictive index and who we partner with are the ones that, you know, like I said, significant change or growing, there's gotta be because listen, change is not easy. And fundamentally, this is a shift in thinking that happens first in the C-suite on down.

Melanie Shaffer (56m 52s):

When you put an instrument like this in place, you can use this strength finder MBTI without a fundamental shift in thinking about people in your business. It's, it's more of a, like you said, a development profile. Okay. But something like this that you're buying into a new way, a systemized scalable way of thinking about your workforce with data that allows you to make future decisions. That's a change in philosophy and it's a cultural shift.

Tom Bronson (57m 28s):

Yes. That's well said, well, before we go, let's give a shameless plug for your business. You know, let's what sets talent suite apart from other businesses in your space.

Melanie Shaffer (57m 42s):

Yeah. So what we've been told by our clients is that we provide the so whats and we enable them to be able to carry those forward. Once we've put them in place in a very actionable way, we're also an integrated firm. So we're not just gonna come in and implement PI. We're gonna help with other issues in their business as they're growing it or as it's changing. And so we come in and do leadership development and we have our own leadership development offering that we pair with something they've already invested in, which is the PI. So it deepens it even further into their culture, around things like taking action, providing feedback, culture of accountability.

Melanie Shaffer (58m 26s):

There's all kinds of areas that leaders in mid-market companies struggle with, that we've targeted our training to hyper-focus on and then bring back something they've already invested in. So with us, it's a journey over a period of time and something we've just recently put in place as the next step after the leadership development, or sometimes in tandem with, depending on their appetite is emotional intelligence. So my business partner is certified in EQ and she's a natural because her strengths finder she's an individualization related. So it just is a natural thing for her to put in place. And it's really powerful with the psychometric. We use an EQ with the PI,

Tom Bronson (59m 7s):

Is there, is there a test for EQ? Oh, I did

Melanie Shaffer (59m 12s):

That. Yeah. But the, the EQ is fluid.

Tom Bronson (59m 16s):

Right.

Melanie Shaffer (59m 17s):

Okay. It's not static. However, at the time that you assess it, that is current state, how that person is

operating doesn't mean they can't change that and adapt it, but it's all about awareness. And so oftentimes what we find as leaders, it's not the behavioral that's causing maybe some issues in the organization. It's the EQ that's triggered by some of their behavioral needs. So it allows us to have a deeper picture of how to help. Not only individuals, but entire teams.

Tom Bronson (59m 51s):

Yeah. Got it. Got it. I love that. All right. So one last business question. This podcast is all about maximizing business value. You're a business owner yourself. What is the one most important thing you recommend business owners do to build long-term value in their business?

Melanie Shaffer (1h 0m 12s):

I think it's understanding more about the, the people you have and where we're spending our time is your current workforce, instead of always looking to the outside, hiring someone to solve your issues. So I think if you were asking me, Tom, I'm making it relevant to today. It's about maximizing what you have, because it's really hard to go hire what you need right now.

Tom Bronson (1h 0m 37s):

It is very difficult to do that right now. It's always difficult to hire what you need, but it's even more difficult in these days. Well, we've kind of made it all the way to the end, but I'm not letting you off the hook. Even though you've given me some great insights about myself, our listeners listen to get all the way to this question. So what personality trait has gotten you into the most trouble through the year and since our PI is so close, I'll be interested to find out what yours is.

Melanie Shaffer (1h 1m 8s):

You know, I think the one that's gotten me in the most trouble is the action orientation because I can't, I have a hard time focusing on anything for very long. And I know that, I know that I don't let things work as long as I should. So I surround myself with people that push back on me. When I say, I wanna change, course, I wanna do this now. And they're like, Hey, remember when we committed like three months ago, let's look at our rocks. Let's look at our priorities. So I know that it's my constant desire for shiny objects.

Tom Bronson (1h 1m 46s):

Wow. Wow. See, that's in my case a lot, like you, you know, attention span, my team says that I have a, the attention span of a Nat on red bull.

Melanie Shaffer (1h 1m 59s):

I love that. I've never heard on a bull.

Tom Bronson (1h 2m 1s):

Yeah. So

Melanie Shaffer (1h 2m 2s):

A red bull.

Tom Bronson (1h 2m 3s):

Yeah. Red read that. Right. So red

Melanie Shaffer (1h 2m 6s):

Drink. Yeah. I'm gonna use that.

Tom Bronson (1h 2m 8s):

Yeah. Well that's yeah. You have to give my team credit for it. My rule is when I use something that somebody else says, I give them credit for it once and then it's then I own it. Right. So,

Melanie Shaffer (1h 2m 19s):

So the person that master trained me in PI used for your profile online attention span of a app, but you've just added the red bull to it. So I already using that

Tom Bronson (1h 2m 29s):

On red bull. Well, how can our that's right. How can our viewers and listeners get in touch with you?

Melanie Shaffer (1h 2m 35s):

So I'm on LinkedIn. Our website is talent suite LLC got with llc.com and my contact information is out there in both places.

Tom Bronson (1h 2m 46s):

Awesome. Melanie, thank you for being our guest today and sharing with us, these insights about PI and about talent suite.

Melanie Shaffer (1h 2m 55s):

Thank you for having me, Tom. It was fun.

Tom Bronson (1h 2m 58s):

You can find Melanie Shafer on talent, suite, llc.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 my friend, Melanie Shafer. This is the maximized business value podcast, where we give practical advice to business owners on how to build long-term sustainable value in your business. Be sure to tune in each week and follow us wherever you found with this podcast and give us a comment or a suggestion for a future podcast. If there's something you want to learn about to maximize the value of your business, don't be quiet about that.

Tom Bronson (1h 3m 39s):

Go out and share that in a comment because I promise you there are other people who want to have the same answers, and we'd be happy to talk about it right here, where you find great information. So until next time, I'm Tom Bronson reminding you to use assessments wisely while you maximize business value.

1 (1h 4m 1s):

Thank

Announcer (1h 4m 2s):

You for tuning into the maximized business value podcast with Tom Bronson. 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 on their terms, learn more on how to build long term sustainable business value and get free value building tools by visiting our website, [www dot mastery partners](http://www.dotmasterypartners.com), that's master with a Y mastery partners.

Tom Bronson (1h 4m 47s):

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