

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

The way you're working is not working. The old school approach of sacrificing your personal life for professional gain has succeeded only in breeding, a workplace culture of overwork, disengagement, and burnout. Welcome to The Work Less Produce More podcast. I'm your host Dr. Lisa Belanger CEO of ConsciousWorks consulting, an expert in proactive mental health and performance in the workplace.

My goal is to teach leaders to consciously build their workplace culture. Whether you're leading five people or 500, the dynamics you set in your workplace matter. We will cover essential skills to live a lead sustainable work, leveraging the latest research on how to work, and maybe even more importantly, learning how to unwork. This podcast will help you work sustainably, lean in and enjoy it with the support of an inspired and fulfilled team.

While there's no one answer each episode, I will explore with a guest experts, considerations, ideas, and tools you need to create work, life integration that fuels your drive instead of draining your ambition.

Today, we're talking to Lindsay Dowd. She has founder of Heartbeat for Hire. An executive with over 25 years experience at high level sales. She and I are going to discuss sales and how the culture of work more, earn more, can be really depleting. So how does somebody in a profession that's incentivized the same way that sales is work less and produce more? Let's dive in.

Lindsay, what do you do? What is your entrepreneurship endeavor?

Lyndsay Dowd:

I founded a company called Heartbeat for Hire, and it was founded out of a great necessity for sellers specifically and leaders who are really desiring that positive, rewarding sales culture. And I'm not talking about the prizes and the trips, because that's part of sales. I'm talking about the compassionate leadership, the recognition, the opportunity for people to do their best and to perform. And unfortunately in sales, they're often relegated to another part of the company and they're expected because they're on a different comp plan. They don't have the same needs as maybe the other employees in the company.

And what I've learned from building my own sales organizations... I've been a seller for 25 years and in various leadership positions. And I know what it feels like when it's good and people perform and the results speak for themselves. And when it's bad, it's really bad. People don't engage. They don't share, they care less about their own success. They care less about their boss and their peers and they mail it in and it becomes just a job. So my whole mission in life is to help companies realize what this is, how to fix it if it's broken, and to really help people with stories, to find the examples of the good stuff, because there's a lot of good stuff out there.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

So I have a very personal self-serving question. My husband is in sales and he's brilliant at it. It's his personality. It was what he was born to do. I love watching him. I used to joke around. They're like, "What does your husband do?" And I'm like, "I don't know. He takes a lot of people for beers." He's absolutely brilliant. I find sales such a difficult task, but one thing that I've noticed... And again, just from a selfish perspective, he has such a hard time turning off because of the compensation package and how it's related and clients needs. So often we very rarely don't take a trip that isn't related to either one of our works. But when we do the phone's on and clients are being served. Are you seeing this across the board? Is there any recommendations to that? Have you seen this done well?

Lyndsay Dowd:

I had a really wonderful boss tell me once... She says, "You know this company is going to take and take and take until you tell them no." And she taught me the importance of boundaries. And so there was some little mini practices that we put in place. Like, "Lindsay, you're really responsive. Maybe take a breath before you respond to that email because you're creating this idea that you are going to respond to everything right away." And that was a good teaching point. I'm like, "But I am responsive, but I want to be responsive. And I want to be viewed that way." But I also realized that if I got to marinate and think about what I was going to say, maybe I'd have an even better response. So taking that breath and kind of creating those boundaries became a real practice for me.

And I've also found that when a company has really good culture... And I'll give you a story just happened yesterday. A woman I'm friendly with on LinkedIn, she just started working for a new company and it was three days in she had to go in for emergency surgery. And she basically told the boss, she said, "If you want to fire me, I understand because this wasn't expected and I'm going to be out for a little bit." And he goes, "Absolutely not. You are part of this team. We are here. We've got your back. You do what you need to do. Take the time that you need. Your work will be here. Don't worry. And I just want you to have that peace of mind."

Okay. That's good leadership. And she is going to say, "God, this guy has supported me when I needed it. I'm going to take a risk for him. I'm going to give him my best." And this is the beauty, when you believe in someone. I had a boss once I had just been promoted into this new leadership role. And she's like, "You've got everything you need to make this happen. I've got your back now fly." Well, don't you think I felt empowered. I felt excited.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

But did you take breaks? So did you take vacation? This is my point is I completely agree. But in the sales rule specifically, it's very hard.

Lyndsay Dowd:

You get burnt out if you don't.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Can I get my husband so he can-

Lyndsay Dowd:

Bring him on, lets talk to him. But honestly it's discipline. I worked for a company that had unlimited vacation, which at first blush, you're like, "Oh, I'm going to vacation my heart out." And then you're like, "No, I'm not because I don't want anyone to think I'm a slacker." So you don't use all the vacation in the world. You take the time as you need it. But with that has to come a leadership team that supports it and doesn't question it and says, "You need to take that time." And he needs to ask for it and he needs to make sure his work is covered and he needs to have that peace of mind to shut off. Because if he doesn't, it's going to eat away at him. He's not going to have any clarity for the rest of his life.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Fair. But because I run my own chip, what I tend to do on vacations often is I'll dip in just for 50 minutes an hour a day.

Lyndsay Dowd:

Yeah. You take a beat.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Yeah. Take a beat. But that's giving that expectation that I'm... To your point, we teach people how we respond. We actually teach how to communicate with us. So if we're right on it and immediately responding, we're teaching them that's the way things are and that's what to expect. Where my vacation, while I can't fully let go. It's very limited to that beat usually in the morning where it's like, "Respond what fires need to be put out."

Lyndsay Dowd:

I'm with you. I'm a solo girl, myself, entrepreneur. I'm doing my own thing. So if I take a vacation, there's nobody working.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Exactly.

Lyndsay Dowd:

I've really got to make sure that I'm not dead to the world. Now-

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

You can be like, "Contact John in accounting and he will sort it out." [inaudible 00:07:20].

Lyndsay Dowd:

I'm John in accounting and I'm married HR. I'm all of them. I saw a post recently, I came across this out of office and I thought it was brilliant. And the out of office was like, "I'm on vacation. I'm not going to respond. I hope you're enjoying whatever you're doing, good luck," or something like that. Everyone was laughing about it, but I'm like, "No, it's great. It's establishing a boundary." And it gave them people to cover. As a leader, you have to be willing to support your people. And you have to say, "Please take the time." I was all over my team about that. I'm like, "You haven't taken vacation in a while. When is your next one?" And they're like, "Oh, I'm glad you asked. I want to take my kids to Disney," or whatever. "Oh, it's wonderful. Go."

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

It's opening up that door though. It's giving permission and space when you feel that they can't let go.

Lyndsay Dowd:

That's part of one of the practices I do Lisa, is asking the question, "How can I be the best manager for you?" And when you ask that question, you open up this opportunity to build trust. And not only are you going to get wildly different answers across the board from all your people, because they're different ages, they're different tenures, different experience levels. And they need different things. Some people like to role play. Some people just want to check themselves or they just want an escalation point. Some people want you to work with their clients at a senior level because they need that kind of feedback but they all need different stuff. And when you ask that question, first of all, they're going to be surprised

because not that many people do it. So they're like, "Wait, you want to know?" So they take a minute and they're like, "Oh, this is cool."

And then you've got this ongoing opportunity to learn about each other, to like each other, to relate to each other. And yeah, you could be completely different people, but maybe you both like dogs and you talk about dogs. It's not that hard to find some common ground with someone and it makes people enjoy their job more. When you know you've got somebody and something in common, you look forward to the time being spent with them. So taking that time to check in with your people and make sure that they're taking the time they need for their families is so smart. It's a leadership principle that everybody has to embrace and your husband probably needs to take more vacation.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

He definitely does. I'm going to make him listen to this. This is being voluntold to listen to this because that's what he wants.

Lyndsay Dowd:

Wonderful.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

[inaudible 00:09:40] my voice [inaudible 00:09:41] his life that's-

Lyndsay Dowd:

Should I give him a direct message? What's his name?

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Yeah. Please do. And I think one thing from the Work Less Produce More concept and idea when we're talking to leaders is a lot of this is, and it shouldn't be, but outside their role. There's work they have to do and then there's people leaving that they have to do. And that tends to be the thing that falls off the plate in these really stressful, over consuming times and it's so important for so many reasons. Because of course, if your team is functioning at their capacity, if they're leaning in, then you're just simply getting more done and that is your mandate. That is your role. And so it's a very valuable use of time.

But what I'm noticing with leaders, and I know this is something you train in, is they don't have the right questions. They've never been taught to do this. Their leaders never modeled these behaviors to them. They're relearning how to lead, which is so challenging in a hybrid work environment, in a fully remote or back to office with some resistance. So any thoughts on this on how we can develop these skills and know the questions to ask our people?

Lyndsay Dowd:

Yeah. I have so many thoughts. I have seven [inaudible 00:10:46] I can cover now. One of the things you just said was when you've got leaders that don't know how to do this. I talk a lot about how leadership has evolved over time. Our language choice has evolved over time. You look at somebody like Richard Branson and you say, "He didn't lead the same way 10 years ago that he does now. He didn't use the same tech that he did then and now." Everything has changed so why wouldn't your leadership style evolved too? In my mind, a good leader encourages a couple things one... Well this is my general things. People crave collaboration, community and purpose. And when you can provide that... And the part you

hit on early was when you have teams that you have to work with, which every organization does, they may not be in your direct reporting line.

How are you encouraging your teams to engage with those people? Are you embracing them? Are you making them part of the fold? Are you making sure that your team understands how critical they are to your success? And one way to do that is through recognition. And recognition, people are like, "Oh, well I don't have budget for that." Well, recognition doesn't have to be expensive. I mean, this can be, "Guys, Sally stepped up and let me tell you all the things that she did. Sally, will you tell us what you did on the next call?" "Oh my God. What?." So Sally is excited. She gets to share her experience. Maybe Sally doesn't want to talk on a call. That's okay. You can talk for her, but you can let everybody know what it is she did. And then you create this friendly competition. "I want to be recognized. I want to do something good. How is she going to notice me?"

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Can I interrupt for two seconds because I just had an idea that I feel like is relevant to this point? I wish we did this both in work and non-work and what I mean by that it's to be like, "Sally just went on a vacation if Sally fully disengaged, or Sally has this amazing break strategy that she says increases her productivity for the afternoon." I wish that was part of the conversation too, because I think we really systematically need to learn to work and be productive with the hours we have and then fully unwork. And what does that look like?

Lyndsay Dowd:

So I think we're in the middle of this shift, a really massive paradigm shift. That's kind of why I started my company when I did, because I really see this absolute, incredible desire for kindness, for compassion, for humanity. We were all kind of in our shells during the pandemic and we've all kind of come out. We're all craving this connection with people and-

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

The good part of humanity really.

Lyndsay Dowd:

Right. And Lord knows there's enough bad to go around so we got to kind of be purposeful with the good. And when you can call out those positive practices and say, "I think it's great she took a vacation." And they're like, "My boss loves that she took vacation. All right. I'm going to take a vacation."

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Noted. Yeah.

Lyndsay Dowd:

It's modeling. It's modeling behavior. I really feel like I'm watching... Especially on LinkedIn because it's kind of easy to see, just what everyone's talking about when you see this whole kind of, "Yeah. My boss is encouraging us to take a break." And I have a friend, a senior executive at a company and he's like, "We gave our entire team every Friday off in July." And I'm like, "That's wonderful." Now, if they all start tweeting about it or posting about it, it's even better, but this is great. And they had to feel really taken care of by that. So those are easy things to do and leaders just have to figure out like wouldn't you want someone to say it to you? [inaudible 00:14:28].

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Yeah, exactly. You know how that feels if somebody... Or you could imagine. This is an odd question, but I'm just wondering... And again, so selfish. From a sales perspective because I'm an entrepreneur with a small team. Sales is certainly on my mandate. It's something that I don't know a lot of about. So if we think from a Work Less Produce More from a sales approach, is there any quick tips or thoughts on how we do this well and not being overly time consuming to get what we need and want from that experience?

Lyndsay Dowd:

I'm laughing that you think you're not in sales because every entrepreneur is in sales whether they think-

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Oh, I know I am. I'm just not... It's also like-

Lyndsay Dowd:

You wouldn't call yourself a salesperson, is what you're saying.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Well, I see what my husband does and I just fascinated by it because I'm like, "I will educate somebody..." This is my sales approach. "I'll educate somebody on how amazing this stuff is and then let them go." I'm just like, "You think about it. You decide. You let me know."

Lyndsay Dowd:

You want people to sign up, to hire you to do things. So you're selling your services all the time. So while it might not look like what he's doing, you are doing the same thing. I really kind of feel like when sellers are at their best, it doesn't feel like work. And I had a woman say to me this week, "Lindsay, I teach when you're selling in service of something it's different than selling a product." I love this concept. So talking to someone and saying like, "I really want to understand what's bothering you. What is the worst thing you've got on your plate right now? Forget what I sell, but just tell me." Because I want-

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

"What keeps you up at night? What-"

Lyndsay Dowd:

And that's such a typical sales question, but when you can present yourself with the sincerity of, "I really want to understand because there's probably something we can do together, but let me really understand you." It's the same question as, "How can I be the best manager for you? How can I be the best seller for you? What do you need?" And-

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

"How can we serve you?"

Lyndsay Dowd:

That's it. And when those questions are asked, it's disarming and people are like, "Huh? You mean, you're not just coming in here with your agenda and you're going to dump this on me. And I have to make a decision. You're interested in my success. Okay. That's good." And the best sellers demonstrate that with clarity and when the deal is done, they're like, "Damn. I loved working with her or I loved working with him." I think a lot of people get worried about sales and they think, "Oh, I'm not a seller. And I don't want to be seen that way. And it's so aggressive and cutthroat and hard." And it doesn't have to be when you break it down into service.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

And I think you really... Good point is people remember how you make them feel. So regardless of the relationship you're building and how it got there or what have you, it's how did you make this person feel? Which again is so much of what you coach and talk about is that kindness, that empathy, that bringing the humanity back. And that's what the science is saying is effective. It's so interesting because you talked about the shift and I am seeing half the people I talk to are full into it, learning about it, understanding it, trying to support their leaders to encourage to do the same. And there's half that are still old school model. Be back in office as an example or like, "We hold people's hands too much." And I'm like, "Why wouldn't you guide them? You're the leader!" So it's really interesting the climate right now as we explore this and then again from the Work Less Produce More angle, results oriented. You don't have to put in hours, you have to put in strategy and work.

Lyndsay Dowd:

I would so much rather have five quality hours of somebody's time where they're getting their stuff done. If they want to go get a pedicure afterwards, what do I care? If the work is being done, brilliant. I'm so happy. I'm so over the whole, "You be here by 8:00. Be done by 6:00 or be done by 5:00." Those days are done. And we saw that with the pandemic and now companies are really being forced to look at their practices and what is our work from home model? And how elastic are we on it? And do we have to really think about a strategy here? And I think people saw they were so much more productive. And it's not for everybody. I know people that are like, "No, can't be at home."

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Go back to office. No, for sure. And I used to say, which is funny, I had an office at the university. University about an hour and a half from me. And I used to say, "I can work from home for one or two days and then I get weird." And I think I'm on 530 and I'm still here and I'm still working and able to be productive. I think one thing that I had to unlearn, if you will, is the guilt. So use the example of the pedicure. I grew up in academia where if you didn't bleed by the end of the day, it wasn't a good day. There was such a notion and you know these cultures-

Lyndsay Dowd:

Yeah. Sales could be just like that.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

... that said, "If you don't hurt, if you don't feel exhausted, if you don't feel like you've given-"

Lyndsay Dowd:

"Burn out is a good thing. You should be stressed. You should be working to yourself to the bone." No.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Yes. Going into the lab, for example. Somebody would be like, "How are you doing?" I'm like, "Great." And they would be like, "Ugh." Like, "How dare you be great and not-"

Lyndsay Dowd:

"You must not be working hard." Yeah. Terrible.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Yeah, exactly. If you're not suffering therefore you're not working. So it's been a process of learning to be like, "Actually, no, that isn't success." And we define success on whatever it is to us and looking and playing with those notions.

Lyndsay Dowd:

Well, and look at the shift that has thankfully been taken around mental health and the space that we're giving to this now. And the recognition of, "No, she's not just whining. She's having an issue." Support that. And if someone needs a break... I mean, when I was running a big organization, I had someone that... A few people that needed to take a leave of absence and we treated that with such care. Whatever they were going through, you need to give them the space to do what they need to do so when they come back, they're renewed and refreshed and they feel ready to go and committed to you because you supported them.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Exactly. Because they're either using that break to get back to you or they're using it to look for another job and you literally get to decide that with how you're treating the whole process.

Lyndsay Dowd:

That's right. I have a slogan and I say, "It's heartbeats, not headcount." And to me, when you put that humanity back into your workforce, you treat them differently. Everybody's not expendable. It's-

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Well, we're not robots. You are hiring full blown human beings.

Lyndsay Dowd:

That's right.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

With wants and needs of their own, which is beautiful. And it adds that-

Lyndsay Dowd:

Who could make magic.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Exactly. Adds that thought diversity. It adds... Even with Keynote and they're like, "Oh they're paying you this for an hour of work." And I'm like, "No, they're paying me that for years of experience."

Lyndsay Dowd:

And the research you do before you get there.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Yes.

Lyndsay Dowd:

And the time that it takes you to get there and the likely follow ups and the people that are going to reach out to you soon [inaudible 00:21:17].

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Or even just the travel time. I just went through a massive delay in travel. So this is why I include it. But I think just being able to be fluid with these thought processes and reimagine what our work could look like in the work that you do for leaders on how to really take care of your people. Because I do think that most leaders, when asked, "Do you want to take care of your people?" They want to, but they may not have the skills to do that.

Lyndsay Dowd:

Well, they may not know how. And the perfect example I see is, especially in sales. When you have this rocking good rep who has a raging good year and they crush their numbers. The company immediately wants to magnify that. So they're like, "Well, we got to put them in management." It's not always the best choice because this person might really only be interested in their own success. And unless you have someone who delights in the success of others, they're probably not going to be great at it. And they model what they've seen. So if they see this aggressive, "I can make people do things because I have power now," the worst kind of leader you could have. And I've seen this time and time again, where the wrong people get into management and they just keep getting promoted because they manage up really well and the people above them don't know how toxic it is below them. The employees don't dare vocalize it because they know that they're thought of with respect.

So you create this environment where few people can rise up. Few people can find their way through because it's just dead ends everywhere you go. It's a tough thing to root out. But when you ask that original question of, "How can I be the best manager for you?" Especially if you're a leader who might have been one of those toxic leaders, it's going to change you because it's different than everything you've done.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

It's [inaudible 00:23:02]. Yes. I think it's one of the most brilliant questions that I've heard in regards to... Especially as we all relearn how to manage whatever environment that is now, it's something that can open so many doors. Is there anything else you'd like to mention before we sign off?

Lyndsay Dowd:

It's been a joy we could go on for hours. We have so much in common. No. If you want to find me I'm at heartbeatforhire.com. I'm also on LinkedIn at Lindsay Dowd on Insta and Facebook at [lyndsaydowdh4h](https://www.facebook.com/lyndsaydowdh4h). But this has been a total joy and I love chatting with you, Lisa. Thanks for having me.

Dr. Lisa Belanger:

Thank you for listening to the Work Less Produce More podcast. You can find me on LinkedIn and Instagram to follow my mission of living a four day work week or well other versions of it at Lisa Belanger. Also, look for conscious works for more tips on proactive, mental health and performance on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook. For more information on today's guests and further resources visit our podcast page on our website at consciousworks.com.