

Successful Business Leaders Make Decisions Based On Employee...

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SPEAKERS

Ginny Bianco-Mathis, Mitch Simon, Andy Alsop

M Mitch Simon 00:10
Welcome to another episode of Team anywhere where CEOs, leaders and experts are building teams, companies, organizations and amazing cultures share how to lead from anywhere in the world. I'm your co host on the East Coast chicken Bianca Mathis, and I'm your co host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us team anywhere when making strategic decisions, who's supreme shareholders or employees on today's podcast, Andy Alsop CEO of the receptionist's shares his enthusiasm for building a truly hybrid company where the focus and attention is on prioritizing employees over shareholders. You'll learn about the receptionist values, their just cause and the impact they're making on their customer by putting employees needs first at a company that truly knows how to Team anywhere. Hello, and welcome to another episode of Team anywhere. I'm your co host on the West Coast Mitch Simon. And on the East Coast. We have our amazing co host Dr. Virginia, Bianco Mathis. Today's guest is Andy Allsop president and CEO of the receptionists. And so I've got a question for you, at your company, as a leader, who are you in service to when making strategic decisions, your investors, your customers, or your employees? Today on the podcast, we have Andy Alsop president and CEO of the receptionist, the company behind the original iPad based visitor management system, and the inventor of the employee supremacy framework, a bold and completely different way of making decisions in a business. Welcome. It's great to have you on the show. Andy,

A Andy Alsop 02:09
thank you for having me. I really appreciate it.

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 02:11
Welcome, Andy.

M Mitch Simon 02:13

Great India's coming from New Mexico, I think our first our first guest from beautiful Santa Fe, New Mexico. So nd I understand you are a serial entrepreneur. And I would love to know just right now, what are you fascinated about the most?

A Andy Alsop 02:29

All right, well, what also might be fascinating is that you're talking to a CEO in Santa Fe, New Mexico, but I actually am the CEO of a company in Denver. Wow, places.

M Mitch Simon 02:40

Any type of a thing, huh?

A Andy Alsop 02:42

Yeah, definitely, definitely. On that

G Ginny Bianco-Mathis 02:45

podcast.

A Andy Alsop 02:50

So the thing I've been kind of most well, let me just say this, I've been an entrepreneur for 32 years. And during my time, I have run a bunch of different companies. I've been a part of a bunch of different companies. And I've never really worked for like a mega corporation. I did very early in my career, but I've always worked for smaller companies. And so to be honest with you, what I'm fascinated right now is this, this concept of employee supremacy, something that we're going to be talking about today. And the reason that kind of throw that out is what what I love to say is challenge me, this is something we've just come up with, I've come up with very recently. And I'm starting to go out there and talk to people about it. Our team loves it, our investors love it. A lot of the people that I've talked to really love this, this concept. And I'm super fascinated about some I'm so excited to be on the podcast today to talk to you about it.

M Mitch Simon 03:51

It's great. And we're gonna definitely get into employee supremacy. It's one of those like, Oh, I gotta keep listening. Right. So So our first question we've been asking all of our guests is really what did you learn about the last 18 months about employees and about teams, given this recent pandemic?

A Andy Alsop 04:11

It's been tough. I'll tell you that. I remember I had to. I just wrote a recently a letter to our investors. And I looked back at what I had said, after we'd finished the first quarter of this year, so basically, talking not finished the first quarter. I apologize at the beginning of the first quarter where I had to talk about the third

inished the first quarter, I apologize at the beginning of the first quarter where I had to talk about the third and fourth quarter of last year. And for our employees, many of them we have a lot of younger employees, and they were isolated living in Denver, probably, you know, haven't they haven't launched into relationship and families and things like that. And so as a result, it was really tough for them. It started with a pandemic, you know, course the pandemic, everybody's like, I don't know what's going to happen. What's gonna, you know, be different. We did all go all virtual, we were previously a hybrid company. In fact, we did one week in the office, and one week outside of the office because of my going back and forth between cents and a fan, Denver. And so it was really hard. And what I wanted to be sure, that our employees had was a feeling of kind of safety, and a feeling like I've got a job, I can count on this thing, it's going to be okay, so we ran the company, we've always run the company somewhat conservatively. When we were in growth mode, we were definitely investing in the future. But what we decided to do was to really kind of ratchet it back, we had a huge hiring plan, we knew that that probably wasn't going to be able to be fulfilled. So we brought that back. And we basically said, let's, let's really invest in the team, and let's make sure how they feel, you know, supportive. So what we ended up doing, we ended up putting together what we call the COVID Family Travel program. And that meant that our employees who needed to get back to their families to be with their families could do so and the company would foot the bill. They weren't flying, nobody was flying at that time, you know, so we were helping them rent cars and get them hotel rooms and whatever it needed. So they could get back to their families, they go back and work from their homes and be with family and things like that. So we did that. The other thing we did was because we were doing really well on cash and everything else, we improved health benefits. So we eliminated all for all single employees, we eliminated all premiums, and we increase the contribution towards families and that type of thing. And that did so much, you know, and we weren't just doing it because we wanted to, you know, make the company more valuable or anything else, we really just wanted to support our employees. And it was so important to myself and our leadership team that we did that. So we learned from that was we brought the we brought us all closer together, you know, our employees felt like they were part of something that they now wanted to just make sure that it was successful as it could be, and actually is kind of lead into the conversation we had. That's what I learned. It was it was an important time to support people and kind of take a step back from maybe let's go and grow because we need to grow.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 07:27

short comment, and I love the answer the Evolve for you all was, well let's get you home, wherever that is, right? You need a car, you rent a car. I mean, you really got to the very basic things that people will worry about. I love that.

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Andy Alsop 07:45

And and you know, and I thought it may be a little unfair for those employees who lived in Denver, and actually, you know, grew up in Denver, because they didn't have anywhere to go, they went, Well, they did, I could go and see their families. But for the ones who wanted to go and see their families that meant so much to them, they would come back and just say thank you to the leadership team. And, you know, thank you to myself, because they had that opportunity to be with family. When it was a really weird time. You know, that's still kind of a weird time.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 08:15

We're still moving through it.

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Mitch Simon 08:18

So, you know, I've been working with a lot of companies to kind of say, Okay, so now that we're in a weird time, we've declared now we're in a weird time, it kind of look at our look at the company's values and see other company's values apply to this time that we're or in? Can you tell us a little bit about the receptionist values and how you utilize the values to shape your thinking over the last year and a half?

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Andy Alsop 08:42

Absolutely. And our values, which are, you know, it's fabric is the acronym. And this was one of those organic things. I feel like what you'll find with a lot of companies is they come up with some cutesy little phrase, and then they kind of make the letters work for it. Yes, yes. Ours actually, we had done an effort when I first I bought this company back in 2015. And when I bought the company, so we need to really figure out what are our values, and we went through the process of trying to come up with our values. And it wasn't honestly great what we came up with, but then we went and we started this is something that I think is really important, I feel that has been part of our evolution, is we used a book called Traction getting a grip on your business by Gino Wickman. Yeah. And so it sounds like you know, it sounds like you both know that and I suspect your listeners too, as well. One of the first things in terms of creating your virtual traction organizer in traction, is to go through and figure out what your core values were. So we went and we went back to what we had done back in 2015 and 2016. And we kind of, you know, dusted it off. And we looked at them and as a result of a collaborative effort at leadership level, we went and realize that when we just made one little tweak, we could actually make the word fabric come out of it. So it was actually kind of a organic evolution where kind of fell into place. So fabric stands for fun, authentic, bold, respectful, innovative, and collaborative. And what is so important, in my opinion, in terms of core values is to actually live them. A lot of companies will put them up on the walls, but then you talk to the employees, and the employees will say, Well, yeah, those are kind of nice things that are up on the wall. If you ask any one of our employees, and you can even come into one of our chat system and go to the receptionist, calm and just say, Hey, do you guys actually live these values? candidates? Actually, candidates who are interviewing for a position will come into chat, and they'll say that, and you'll see exactly that the employees are saying, Yeah, this is the first company I've ever lived at the lift at work that actually lives their core values. We collaborate constantly we bold means that you're you're going to go out and try stuff and a few fail failures is applauded, you know, failure three different times. And the same thing probably as an applauded. Fail failure when you're going up. And it's an I want to try something, yeah, it didn't work we learned. And that's what we learned. So we really live the these values. And they've really meant a lot to us, when we had to go through the pandemic. That is what we relied on, we fell back on our values. And we recite them all the time, somebody will say, Hey, I had a really respectful conversation with a customer or so and so on, I collaborated it is really part of our fabric of our company, part of your language. Exactly. It's part of the lexicon.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 11:49

And for them to say it then to give an example, that you can start off every meeting that way. An example for each one of our letters.

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Mitch Simon 12:02

Right, every meeting every meeting these needs to be fun, right? Yeah,

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Andy Alsop 12:07

everybody, when we try to do that, I mean, it, we laugh all the time. And that's so important. I mean, I just saw, I think the last episode that you'd publish was fantastic. In terms of talking about fun, and I believe it, I believe that if employees are having fun, they enjoy working for the company. So

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Mitch Simon 12:27

yeah, the Great, okay, so now we're gonna get into employee supremacy. So I know this is you're really excited about tell us more? What is employee supremacy? And why do we need it now more than ever?

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Andy Alsop 12:40

So really, I think probably a half to, you know, it's going to go back to our toward just cause as well, which is something that we've now just kind of driven into, if you don't mind, if I just start out? And then just talk about the just cause? Because let's Yeah, let's go for that. Okay, good. So essentially, we have a just cause, and you can, you know, we can see each other here, but for the listeners that hopefully you can hear the passion I have behind this, but the Just Cause is to build a world where a company's profits fuel the mission to be in service to its employees, and the community. And so for us, you know, it's it sounds a little bit maybe, I don't know, trite or something. But if you dig into it and understand why we do something like this, and why we've chosen this just cause it gets into the question of, you know, employee supremacy. But it started with our core values, we developed our core values. And that was something that really was the glue for our company. And then we began to say, Okay, we want to look inward and understand why, why is it that we feel so strongly about making sure that the employee is feel supported, and everything else? And we started to look at and we actually sort of came across not really came across because many members of our leadership team had been kind of studying Simon cynics how to get here why, and the infinite game. I personally hadn't done as much. But when I heard there was a particular podcast that he did, it was with Ink Magazine, where he was talking about employee, not employees pharmacy, excuse me, shareholder supremacy, and it's a concept from Milton Friedman, in the 70s. And 80s. Very popularized, about when you're actually making decisions, those decisions need to be made in the benefit of the your shareholders, right? You needed to because they're the ones who invested in the company. They're the ones who own the shares in the company. And so that hit me really hard. I couldn't quite figure out what it was about it that hit me. But then we were going through the effort, we'd already decided what our y was when we came to the point of knowing that we wanted to build a world. And when I say build a world, that doesn't mean we just want to build the receptionist, we want to build Denver, we want to build a world where a company's profits fueled up mission to be in service to the employees and community as a leadership team. After doing all the work we did about what our why was, we came down on this particular thing. And we came down together, kind of like we did with developing fabric, it was very organic. And so getting into what is employee supremacy, they're probably kind of three different will actually, let me start out with saying, it's about decision making, who, when you're making a decision in a company, what is it, what's driving your decision making, and under under shareholder supremacy, it is I have to, I have to increase the value of the shares of each one of my investors. And every decision I make has to be around that. So let's say for instance, you're saying to yourself, at the company level, we have our investors, we need to make sure that we're driving growth, we need to drive profit. So we need to figure out what is it that we are going to focus on in terms of employee benefits? Well, if you're trying to figure out what you want your employee benefits to be, which are an expense to the company and have no real impact on the bottom line, potentially, you are going to drive down your employee benefits to the

lowest possible amount that will still allow you to have come have employees who work for the company and you can attract the employees. So now let's think about it under employee supremacy. Now I'm making my decisions based on what is best for the employees. And I'll go into a little bit why you're making that decision. But if you're doing that, you're not saying that you're not saying I need to drive benefits down to the least level it can be, I want to actually increase the amount of benefits that my employees have. Because if I do so they're going to feel secure, they're going to feel that the company trust them, they're not going to be worrying about whether they can make ends meet at the end, they're going to know that if an emergency happens, because benefits are there for them, they're going to be able to rely on them. And so as a result, their feeling about the company, they're feeling about their safety, and as an employee, their feeling of that value is there. And then what do employees do, who actually feel trusted, who are the people who are in front of your customers, it's your employees, I'm not there, right, I can't be in front of all the customers, I know, my employees have to be there. If your employees are trusted, they don't need to be managed, like I need to give you a script so that when the customer says this, say this, because I'm having to manage that, now, what you're doing is you are getting some of the best employees possible because they know that it's a great place to work. And they are then doing the best job they can for the customer. And the customer feels gets an experience that they've never had before, which is something our customers talk about all the time.

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Mitch Simon 18:17

So tell us about tell us, tell us about some of those experiences, your your product is your product is amazing. It's I remember experiencing it for the first time where you you know, go to a location and the receptionist has an iPad and usually works faster and better than if you talk to a receptionist. So about that for receptions out there. But, but um, tell us about some of the stories of your customers noticing, noticing the acts of employee supremacy and going man, this is awesome.

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Andy Alsop 18:50

I actually have customers who will seek out my email address, and send me an email to tell me stories about the experiences they've had. And they're doing it all over GE to Capterra. There's the places we collect the reviews, every single one of them as I can't believe it's so easy to work with this team. And so what's happening is that the employees rather than having to, you know, sort of adhere to a script or whatever, are actually doing things that are in the benefit of the employee. So, for instance, I had one customer who reached out and went on about the experience that they had that they felt as though actually what they said was this was the best experience they had ever had in the sales process. Right? How many times do you feel like do I can I trust this person or when we're actually they're coming to me and saying the customers are saying the one of your salespeople even said they thought our solution might not be the best for them. And that here's another solution that might be better for them. And then they're sending me an email saying this is what one of your Got one of your employees said, and many, maybe a CEO would say, why would any employee you know, why would any employee do that? I actually like that. Because when that customer goes out and talks to somebody else, they say, I talked to this, this company, and they actually said their solution wasn't the best solution for them. And that's part of the trust and building those trusting teams and things like that. So I've had there lots of examples, you know, where people are it within slack, we use Slack, where employees are posting something that they received, or that was said in a chat or whatever else about how extraordinary the service was, and how engender the the customer now feels, and loyal, they feel to us, because they feel like there's real people on the other end, not trying to just, you know, enrich the shareholders, but they're actually knowing that I'm trusted as employee.

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Mitch Simon 20:56

That's great. Um, so you've been, you know, your company has been hybrid for a very long time. We'd be interested in how do you build trust in the workplace today, especially now that your hybrid or many employees might be in fact, virtual? What are some of the things that you actually do?

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Andy Alsop 21:13

Yeah, in terms of just hybrid versus virtual, we were hybrid, we went completely virtual. Now some of the employees are going back, we maintain our office and employees are going back to the office, mostly, they want to see each other and stuff. So they want to collaborate and things like that. So it's sort of kind of virtual and everything else. But I think some of the things that, that we've been able to do in terms of building trust, I mean, it's, I don't know that we've actually ever changed anything that we're doing about building trust, because of say, the pandemic or having to be hybrid or being all virtual, or whatever. We've always maintained that we need to be investing in our employees and make them one of them, that makes them the focal point, because they're the ones who are talking to our customers. But one of the things that I think we did learn through the self discovery and coming up with a chest cause is, we couldn't figure out what we were doing in the past that had our employees trusting us in such a way that now we've actually put it into a chest cause. And we've actually talked about this employee supremacy. And now we know what we're doing. And we're able to communicate it now. We're actually broadcasting it to the world. This is the way we're doing things. And we hope that other people will look at us and say, we want to do it this way. And but I think in the end to answer your question, yeah, I think that we're doing what we've kind of always been doing all along, but maybe formalizing it a little bit better, so that our employees really understand it.

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Mitch Simon 22:51

So if I, if I wanted to take my team or my company, and I wanted to implement employee supremacy, what are what are some of the steps that I would need to take to get there?

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Andy Alsop 23:02

I think one of the first ones is actually to use traction. Because traction, I think, I really love traction, because it took our company from chaos, where we had long meetings, and we didn't get anything done, and brings it down into a workplace where people can work and get jobs done. And not be in long meetings, we have an extraordinarily efficient system for meetings where we can go and have an hour and a half quarterly strategic meeting for the whole company, and get through everything we need to do in about an hour and a half to two hours and be able to communicate all that information and engage the employees. So it's not just, you know, leadership sitting there saying, here's this pie chart. And then here's this other pie chart. The other thing after that, I think is what what worked for us is using Simon cynics infinite game, the infinite game, I think that is so important to figure out what is your why and what is what is it that is kind of bringing you from behind what are all your past experiences, causing you to kind of operate the way that you do through your why. And then coming up with your your just cause and how you want to you want to move that forward. So that is I think, the the format. And then once you have that, and you have those things in place, and you are committed to building trusting teams and things like that. Now you can put in place employee supremacy, which means that you are making all of your decisions based on what is going to be best for the employees. And it doesn't mean we're just going to give away

the store to the employees. It just means as leaders, instead of saying we need to drive growth because of the shareholder supremacy and making sure their shares are more valuable. You're actually saying we're going to make this company more valuable, then we can under shareholder supremacy, using employee supremacy, to increase the increase the productivity of your company, give better service to your employees, I'm sorry, to your customers, and to be able to create trusting teams that know how, what, where you're trying to take the company, all three of those things put together I think are what can really bring a company around to employee supremacy. And there's something I haven't said yet. I say this all the time, we have to grow as a company at the receptionist, because here's this, this small, little startup in Denver, Colorado, telling everybody how they should run their companies, the best way we can, we can tell people to do that is to show them how we grow. And so we are committed to growing this and creating a more valuable company, and increasing what the value of the shareholders holdings are gonna be. But doing it a different way, rather than through decision making for the shareholders, instead decision making for the employees. That's great.

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Mitch Simon 26:07

So where would we go to learn more about the receptionist? And where would we go to learn more about employee supremacy.

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Andy Alsop 26:16

So the first would be go to the receptionist comm our website, and then we have the fabric podcast. And we also have our blog as well. But I think the most important one is the fabric podcast, I have recorded some of my own podcasts specifically about employee employee supremacy, and the difference between shareholder and employee supremacy. And we're going to be adding more podcasts about it, what our experiences are examples of it, that type of thing. And then the other thing is seek me out on LinkedIn. I'm pretty I'm very active on LinkedIn. My name is Andy Allsop, I believe I'm one of the first ones that come up, put in Andy Allsop the receptionist, and you'll find me. Yeah,

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Mitch Simon 27:01

a lot of ease in the name. Well, great, and it has been fantastic. You know, for those of you who haven't picked up the receptionist, you know, please go for it, check it out and check out Andy's podcast, the fabric podcast, yes.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 27:17

And what I have found incredibly different is that your own folks can show here's what the customer has said, look how I have delighted the customer. Look how great it is to fulfill, you know, fabric, that you have the employees themselves so engaged. And in terms of what's happening today in the workforce. That's magic.

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Andy Alsop 27:52

I love it. I love it. And I think if you go to the fabric podcast, you'll find a lot of episodes that were reported with our employees, asking them about different things. And you'll hear about the the how we're so

focused on our core values and how important it is for them to be working with the receptionist, because they're part of this. This just cause this isn't just the leadership team or myself. This is our whole team and we all feel passionate about it.

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Mitch Simon 28:21

That's great. I'm gonna go check that out myself the fan right now. All right, great. Well, thank you so much, Andy. And thank you so much again, Ginny. And thank you to all of our amazing listeners. If you've loved this podcast, please go and share this with your friends. As long as they're not a receptionist, with your, your family and your colleagues. And please give us please give us some five star reviews so more people will know about this podcast and until next time. We will see you on our next episode of Team anywhere