

TCM – 103 - Rebecca Ahmed: Leadership Techniques for Raising Energy Levels in Hybrid Work Teams

Mitch Simon: Welcome to another episode of Team Anywhere where CEOs, leaders, and experts at building teams,

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: companies,

Mitch Simon: organizations,

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: and amazing cultures share how to lead from anywhere in the world. I'm your co-host on the East Coast, Ginny Bianco-Mathis.

Mitch Simon: And I'm your co-host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us to Team Anywhere

What might be happening when your team isn't delivering as much as it used to? When your team members are exhausted or when your team isn't being as innovative as you need them to be? According to Energy Leadership Index™ Master Practitioner, Rebecca Ahmed, your team needs energy. On the podcast, Rebecca shares with us, how to source your energy and the energy of everyone on your team, how to raise your level of energy and the benefits you will have by heightening the team's energy as you 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 our amazing, brilliant, beautiful co-host Dr. Virginia Bianco-Mathis.

Ginny, how are you today?

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Oh, well, I'm great. Good to hear that. I'm beautiful but no one can see that.

Mitch Simon: Today on the podcast, we're excited to have Rebecca Ahmed award-winning speaker, business consultant and an Energy Leadership Index™

Master Practitioner, and someone who has led HR operations for companies with over 16,000 employees, Rebecca. Welcome to the podcast.

Rebecca Ahmed: Thank you so much. Good morning.

Mitch Simon: Good morning. So, our first question is, and it always is what has surprised you the most over the last two years?

Rebecca Ahmed: Oh, my goodness. Over the last two years, what has surprised me the most? I would say the shift in the workplace. We are seeing a huge shift, about commercial real estate, how we use the office, how we interact with each other communicate. I don't think anything's changed as drastically as the workplace has.

Mitch Simon: Okay. I'll ask a personal question. What does surprise you about you? What have you learned about yourself that you was like, gosh,

Rebecca Ahmed: I like to sleep. I never slept before. So, before COVID I was like, oh, I only need like four hours. My dad was like that. He's a cardiologist. And then during COVID I had nowhere to zoom off to, so I said, you know what? I'm gonna sleep a little bit more now. I know how much I love it.

Mitch Simon: Great. I love the way you used the word zoom there. That was kind of like ironic. So, before we get into any more questions, you are an Energy Leadership Index™ Master Practitioner. What is that?

Rebecca Ahmed: Yes. So, I went to iPEC and learned all about leading with energy. And so I come with a lot of energy, if you can probably quickly tell

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I love it.

Rebecca Ahmed: And I really wanted to understand when you ask people, what is the gift that I bring? So, these are different exercises we do in coaching. And when you consistently see everyone say, you come with energy, energy, energy, I wanna understand. So—

Mitch Simon: yeah,

Rebecca Ahmed: I went to school for a year and became certified in understanding energy leadership through iPEC school, which was also, recognized by the International Coaching Federation. And I found that when you can understand your energy, you can make shifts so that your energy can

work for you versus against you. And so many people always say, how do you accomplish so much in one day? And I'm saying, because I'm using my energy, I'm using it for me versus against me. And that's just so powerful and fun to be honest.

Mitch Simon: Okay. Great. So, I know that, there are a lot of experts who are diving into energy. I think it's Dan Pink or the Heath brothers right now. Can you share, what might we not recognize about it but we should start to recognize about energy?

Rebecca Ahmed: Yeah, there's a couple things. So, when I'm defining personal energy, I'm saying the vigor or the capacity that you have towards a goal towards an action. And so, when you understand your emotional, physical, mental energy, your vigor towards that, you're able to make shifts in your perspective because your energy comes from your perspective, how you see things, and that's what your history, how you were raised, nature versus nurture. But by understanding that you're able to say, oh, let me look at this differently and that is really powerful, especially in a setting where you're working with other people or communicating. And I think that's the difference that people don't talk about. They just look for it more on the health side, like working out and yes, these are all things that bring you more energy, but understanding how you personally can make shifts is where the power comes in.

Mitch Simon: So, you're saying your perspective will shift your energy, not your energy will shift your perspective. So can you give us examples of what types of perspectives would lead to, let's say good energy or a lack of energy.

Rebecca Ahmed: So, if you look at this challenge as just a challenge and say, I can't do this. This is too much think about even COVID. The initial reaction from a lot of people is I'm not able to do this. I don't wanna go to work. I can't cope. But if you looked at it as where is the opportunity, if you got curious and said, what can I learn from this? How can I grow from this? That's a shift in perspective.

How you live your day, how you do everything that day will change. And that's the really, the cool thing is like when you think about people like having a bad day and say they fall out the bed on the wrong side, you can just pop back in that bed and go on the other side if you want to. But a lot of people don't, and they'll be like, I will drag this all day along with me. And so, we talk, when I work with my clients and I work with organizations, I talk a lot about that is like, where are you? And where do you wanna go? Because you have that power.

Mitch Simon: That's really cool. And for those people who put their bed by the wall, that's a tough one.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Are those people who fall out bed in the middle of the night. I've heard those stories.

Mitch Simon: So, could you share with us other, perspectives that someone can create that would in fact give them more energy just to follow it along some more examples?

Rebecca Ahmed: Yeah. I'm a millennial. I talk a lot about, different millennials and how we like to collaborate. And collaboration is a form of energy. So, you get creative when you can bounce ideas off of each other. I work with a lot of gen Zs for instance and they really work in the digital space and collaboration is important, but it's not, you don't have to actually be there to be doing that. And so, I think they lead a lot with like entrepreneurship or that curiosity I talked about by asking questions, to understand someone else's perspective.

And I love gen Z so much because they're finding themselves and they're trying to define themselves, and I've never seen more definitions in any generation to say, this is who I am and how I'm feeling and what I'm thinking. Everything about when you go on an app, you're like there's 27 classifications here. It's that curiosity, that's really leading them. And coming from hospitality, if you are someone who leads with service, someone who loves to really care for others, that's a big energy boost, as long as you're able to prioritize your own needs. So, these are different levels of energy. There's actually seven of them and I'm talking about the higher levels because that's really where you start seeing people fly. They get into flow; they get really excited and energized.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Rebecca, is this a fair thing to say? That consequently to shift my energy. I perhaps need to identify what are those things where I get energy. So, you mentioned the millennial and the millennial likes to collaborate. So, if I'm sitting here and I'm not feeling it. Well, that's because I'm not collaborating. Let me get two people on a Zoom call 'cause that's gonna give me energy. And maybe energy is a short spurt of listening to music. Do I not have to identify, so then I can make the choice to shift the perspective?

Rebecca Ahmed: You're absolutely right. Sometimes listening to music. It could be when you look at your calendar, especially people who work from home, they'll say I have no breaks and I feel exhausted. By putting in those breaks, like listening to music, maybe like a quick little 10-minute comedy, calling your family member, these little pieces will bring you energy throughout

the day. So, you are more sustainable. Absolutely. But you do need to identify those and everyone's different,

Mitch Simon: It takes some energy to identify the energy that gives you energy.

Rebecca Ahmed: But it's fun. Right? So, like lean into what you love. Lean into what brings you joy naturally. And you'll start to see, oh, I'm more energized when I do that. That's just a natural thing that'll come up. Obviously as you start digging in deeper to make bigger shifts, but little things like that will change your day quickly and you don't need to spend hours trying to figure it out.

Mitch Simon: Yeah. If you really want to achieve the things that you wanna achieve, that you have energy to get there and to do that, you would want to identify those things which actually boost your energy. You have to do a little work there to figure it out. But I know this morning, I did an eight o'clock in the morning call or workshop or whatever. And I knew that I needed to go listen to some rap music because before eight o'clock. It took me a little bit to YouTube where's the rap music? And then I was good. And that created energy for me.

Rebecca Ahmed: That was your energy boost. I love that.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And look what you did. You then build your infrastructure to make it easier for you, to tap into it. So, I would guess, Mitch, there's a button you can push somewhere that goes to your rap music, right? A button I can push to watch some people dancing. That is what gives me energy. And to your point, I didn't realize that until the other night. My daughter, I sent her a text said, oh my God. So, you think you can dance in on again? And she says, you have no idea, you do this every year. you send me this note, this really excites you.

Mitch Simon: Wow.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: And now I'm gonna build that. I'm a former dancer, but watching it takes me back and it gives me energy. If we move this to an organization which probably where Mitch is going soon. Identifying with your team, what are our [inaudible] and then creating the realities and space for that.

Mitch Simon: Yeah. I could see that having a list 'cause we love putting these tools together. I'm sure you have it as well Rebecca is, having a list of everybody on the team and what gives each person energy.

Rebecca Ahmed: Absolutely. Then you can speak to what motivates them, because how you're motivated is going to inspire you to be more energized and drive yourself towards your goals. But if you're not aligned and you don't know what really makes people tick and gets them excited, it's like running against mud, how long can you do that? It's not sustainable. And when you look at so many people, when they say I'm exhausted at work, that's what they're doing. They're running in quicksand or they're running in mud. It's like, let's just remove that.

Mitch Simon: Great. Okay. So, you mentioned different levels of energy. And I know before this podcast, we talked about this and I was absolutely fascinated by those different levels of energy. So, can you take us through those seven levels?

Rebecca Ahmed: Absolutely. So, we'll start with level one, which is the lowest level of energy. I call this the safety zone because in level one, what your body, what your head, those little voices in your head, what they're doing is telling you don't take risk. Be safe. And that's where a lot of self-doubt comes. A lot of fear comes and that's okay. You need that. Every single level of energy, every zone has an advantage and a disadvantage.

So, the advantage of level one is saying, don't cross the street until it gives you the little walk sign, don't mitigate risk where you need to mitigate risk, but also it'll be where, Hey, don't take this challenge. Don't jump out of this. You have a new opportunity at work. Ooh, don't do that. That's gonna be scary and you have to recognize, okay, that's gonna come up. Thank you for that concern. Thank you for putting that risk out in front of me to evaluate, but I'm gonna make a different choice and that's where you start going up.

So, when you go to level two, level two is actually where most organizations sit between level two and level three. Level two specifically is about conflict. It's about powering through pushing through that stress. The pro about that is someone's coming at you. You need to be able to react quickly, right? Bear in the woods. You're not gonna be like, oh, let see how we can chat and how we can build rapport. Level two is really important when you need those moments to push through things, but it's not sustainable, right? When I talked about running through mud, that's that level two energy. It's constant conflict.

And then when you get to level three, level three is the first level of energy that starts really becoming constructive versus destructive. But level three is all about that silver lining and it's a beautiful energy to get you out of level one and level two, when you're just really icky and saying, where can I find the silver

lining? Where can I find, the positivity in this space? And that's such a great gift. The challenge is that and especially from COVID, people will sit in level three and they'll be like, how's work? That's fine. How's home? Fine. How are the kids? They're fine.

You can live in level three and just be fine. And that is scary because that's not thriving. That's not excitement. And I have to remind people, especially with level three, 'cause you're so good at telling yourself it's fine. Don't poke the bear. Like it's fine. But this is where you can start making shifts.

And so, level four is about caring for others. Coming from hospitality, I opened up, Encore, Cosmopolitan, so many properties, and especially last year, I was speaking for, Caesars and to really work with people in hospitality, to see how much they lead with level four. Like how much they care about their team, care about their customers, care about everyone. It's just so beautiful. But with level four, the disadvantage is you're just constantly caring and like giving out what I like to kind of call, let's say you have a basket of flowers and you just keep giving it out. Like what happens to your basket? It's empty. You need to prioritize your energetic needs. Just as much as others to be able to constantly give that attention and care that you love so much.

Mitch Simon: Before we get to level five, you've used a bear metaphor twice. You've gotta have a bear metaphor for level 5.

Rebecca Ahmed: Can you tell it's my favorite animal?

Mitch Simon: I was thinking about throwing into care bear here. When we get to level five, I just want you to be thinking about a bear.

Rebecca Ahmed: I always say I'm like a bear to my team. I'm the mother I'm like anybody messes with my cubs man. That's not being the oldest of nine. It just happens when you have—

Mitch Simon: you're the oldest of nine. That is just amazing.

Rebecca Ahmed: I have one sister, seven brothers.

Mitch Simon: Where'd the sister pop up? Was she like—

Rebecca Ahmed: She is number five. I usually refer to everyone as numbers. It becomes easier.

Mitch Simon: Did you have the most energy of the nine children?

Rebecca Ahmed: Oh, absolutely. If you ask my family, they're like she's exhausting at time. She can keep ongoing

Mitch Simon: All right. On track to level five is what?

Rebecca Ahmed: Level five is really that leading with curiosity. So, when you are leading with level five energy, you're looking at everything as an opportunity to grow, an opportunity to learn. So, challenges become opportunities, and you're able to make that shift quite quickly, rather than letting a challenge kind of weigh you down. I'm trying to think of a bear and a honey pot for some reason. Now that you've got this bear thing going.

Level six is, creativity, collaboration. That's energy. Csikszentmihalyi Mihaly. I don't know if I said his name right. But he wrote an entire book on Flow and that's level six energy. That's that creativity zone, that creation zone.

And then level seven is just an energy you can tap into. I like to call this the climactic energy, right? So, it's those aha-moments that you're like, I got it. I got this innovative idea or I had this out of body experience that was just like, wow. And those moments that you, especially when you're playing in five and six, you'll have hits of these seven that are just super energizing and super innovative and they make your day just so much more fun.

Mitch Simon: How would you create level 5, 6, 7 in your day?

Rebecca Ahmed: Yeah. So, leading with curiosity, leading with the questions of where is this an opportunity? What can I learn here? How can I grow from this? Because once you do that, then you start to collaborate with people around you, right? You just get excited and start bouncing ideas off or you call your family member you might call your husband, your wife, your brother, and be like what do you think of this? Like, this challenge came up, but now it's an opportunity. My brothers and I do that with each other all the time in the workplace and we have such different roles. I love learning about even International Tax Law, my brother, number two. That's what he does. He actually makes that super interesting for me, 'cause I'm always learning in that space. That is not my space.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I love that.

Mitch Simon: So, can you share with us how you've worked with companies? To raise the level of a team or a company. Ginny and I are very fascinated with leadership, very fascinated with teams. How would you do this with a team? Or how have you done this with a team?

Rebecca Ahmed: So, what I've done is, we administer an energy leadership assessment. So, what that does is it tells me how is the team operating? So, I will see on an individual level or I can do it on a 360 basis to see how is this working together. What type of energies are they using? And so, if I see a team that's really in a stress place and they're really just every day is exhausting they're level two's popping up a lot. I'll have a lot of conversations. And the first one is, what do you value? What excites you? How do you lead your life? What values do you like lead in your life? And then we can energize those because that speaks to those motivators.

What I'll do is then say, okay, if this person values fun. If someone values fun and they really want their workplace to be that. If it's a very stressful environment, they're not gonna operate really well. So how can you shift the office to have the, these energetic moments of fun? I think about when someone is innovative. If they're not given the space to be creative, how can you create an innovative environment?

And so these different shifts that you're able to do, cause you're speaking to the motivators will get the team working together to be able to go towards that same goal. That's where those perspective shifts come in. Especially when you don't see eye to eye. Everyone's not gonna see the same perspectives, but it's about respecting each other's values and saying, we're all going towards this end goal. How can we do it most efficiently and using energy that's gonna get us there in a space that we're excited about.

Mitch Simon: I love it. And so, my next question is lines up really with this is I am going to have my next meeting or workshop with the entire team and I wanna create level five, six, or seven. How would I look at it and then what would I do so that for the next hour with my team, I'm gonna get them at like level five, six or seven?

Rebecca Ahmed: So, let's say you have a project, you have a challenger project that you need to work through and you really wanna look at five, six or seven. So, first is leading with that curiosity. So, how can we learn from this project? What do we wanna accomplish outta here? Leading with a lot of questions, right? Digging deep, and then collaborating together to say, here's this one end goal that we've established together. And now let's work with each other's

motivators or values, and say, we can now leverage each other's tools, leverage each other's, natural capabilities to be able to get in this space that you are flowing.

And everyone's gonna be in different ways. Someone might be more mathematical or analytical and you might need to speak to them and that's what they focus on. Someone might be the person that loves to present and really focus on the presentation piece, like focus on that creativity for them. Everyone has different tools that they have in their pockets. Let them have fun with those. And that's how you really get into that space with that team.

Mitch Simon: I love it.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: So, it sounds like you need to have a conversation with your team about energy. You give them this inventory even share the results, have them identify well, given that, dealing with numbers, like your number two brother, is energizing.

So great. We're gonna be looking for you to contribute in that way. To create an excitement around. Have that discussion with each member and then move into, all right, now let's start tackling this project.

Rebecca Ahmed: Absolutely. And you see, what you just said. It was so perfect because you'll see transparency and personalization. If everyone understands where they're coming from, what they value, what each other's value. They'll start speaking to that. They have respect in that space. And then you realize, it's not a one size fits all. So many organizations will say, okay, this is the leadership. We're doing this one workshop, but everyone's having to lead the same way, but that's not how we operate. Everything is becoming more and more personalized and when you speak to these personalized methods of how everyone communicates and works together, what you see is that people get so much more engaged, 'cause it's speaking to them.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: I love that. You said transparency. So that's personalization really hooks into all this stuff. Quote -unquote stuff around empathy and honorability and collaborating in the sense of, I see my role in this.

Rebecca Ahmed: Yep. And That's where intersectionality comes in. Those gen Zs with focusing on intersectionality, where is that person coming from? And this is why they're bringing that perspective and seeking to learn that and I think that's so beautiful rather than making an assumption, asking. I think that's just the coolest thing that you're starting to see in the workplace, especially with this

younger generations, how would you like to be referred to? Simple question. Oh, how do you self-identify? I'm Pakistani-American. That question never came up before. People would assume they'd start speaking me in Spanish and I'm like, I speak Spanish, but I'm not Hispanic.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: Oh, that's hilarious, right?

Rebecca Ahmed: That's the difference. Now you go in these meetings and people will go around and just be like, how would you like to be spoken to, how do you identify just to better understand where you're coming from rather than making an assumption. And I think that's a really cool place that we're going.

Ginny Bianco-Mathis: It is.

Mitch Simon: Can I use your tools to figure out if I have like a team of 10, how each of my 10 team members creates energy?

Rebecca Ahmed: Absolutely. So, I have a values assessment that I have, on my website. And I always do that first because I wanna understand what does each person value. And then I do the energy leadership assessment with them because I wanna energize their values. And so, when I get to do that, it's so fun because it's like all of a sudden they start leading their life with their values and you make confident decisions. Anyone who has like challenge making decisions, as soon as you align your values to your energy, you are able to make confident decisions and quickly because you'll say, I'm gonna alignment with my values. And people don't realize that until they actually get that on paper or actually look at that and say, okay, this is how I lead. This is what is important to me.

Mitch Simon: This is great. So where are we going to be able to find you and this assessment?

Rebecca Ahmed: My business is called Energetic Impact and so it's energeticimpact.com. And sign up and you'll get everything. Just reach out anytime I have love working with clients and it's easy to find and reach out.

Mitch Simon: Okay, great. Well, thank you so much, Rebecca. It's been a pleasure. I don't know if we've ever interviewed someone with eight siblings or they haven't told us, but that is just amazing. You must have had a lot of energy to keep it together in that family, or it must have just been a whole heck of a lot of fun.

Okay. So, thank you so much, Rebecca. Thanks for letting us with information, how we can find you energeticimpact.com, two words that both gimme a lot of energy. Thank you, Ginny for, co-hosting and I want to ask our listeners if you've loved this podcast, go ahead, give us five stars. Hopefully it's provide you a lot of energy. Share this energy with your family or friends or colleagues, and we will see you next time in our next episode of Team Anywhere.