



Human Optimization

Pod Club Discussion Questions



E58: Being in Charge vs. Being a Leader

Guest: Thom Mayer, M.D.; Medical Director for the National Football League Players Association and author of the book, "Leadership is Worthless, but Leading is Priceless."

The three big questions explored in the podcast:

Question 1

What is the true distinction between being in charge and being a leader, and why is that distinction important?

Question 2

Why do so many people struggle to make the leap from being boss to being a leader, and where do they typically fail?

Question 3

How can we stop merely managing and start leading, regardless of our title?

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you share an example from your own life where you encountered a boss who was not a leader? What about a true leader who did not have an authoritative title?
2. In your professional experience, when have you had to consciously "toggle back and forth" between managing and leading, and which felt more challenging in the moment?
3. Do you agree with the premise that leadership is a present state, not a future aspiration? How does that realization change your approach to your work today?
4. What is one "stupid thing" that you've identified in your organization that could be replaced by a "smart thing" through bottom-up leadership and innovation?
5. What is a specific piece of advice or affirmation you have received that helped you overcome professional doubt or insecurity?
6. How have you personally overcome the "I'm just..." mentality?
7. How can you integrate "generative joy" (creating joy in others) into your daily work to sustain your commitment to continuous leadership improvement?
8. Based on this episode, what is one small change you are going to make to help improve in this area? How are you going to keep yourself accountable to that and measure your success? (Be sure to keep it simple, start small, and make it very clear).