

Transcription - Marty Strong Part 3

I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. This is the third part, the conclusion of our discussion with Marty Strong and in this section, we're going to learn about the value of multi trained teams, as well as seeking information or answers from outside your team.

The other thing is, I think, the diversity thing or vocational diversity. I really believe in this mix up or add in to a group of professionals, other people that have nothing to do with that particular topic or subject area, and do it on a regular basis. So it's not just a lark, it doesn't look like a joke or something, and empower them to raise their hand, raise their voice and say something.

I'll give you a perfect example. I was on a combat mission and what we did when we had to take down a building was we did this very fancy choreography, and we slid down ropes and helicopters, and somebody went up and put a special charge on the door, and we blew the door open, and we went in. And then we looked at every single solitary room for the bad guys. And we were very, very good at this. So I was putting my mission plan together, and I was get ready to brief it and this was just all gonna be bad guys in this house, nothing else. And a marine came over. And he said, What are you working on? I told him, because how are you going to tell you're going to do it? And so I told them, this is how we do a house like this. He said, Oh. I looked at him. I said, why'd you say that like that? So it's just really interesting that you would have all your people go through all that effort and helicopters, and you have to go in there and clear up your room and everything. What would you do? A Marine, we just send an anti tank rocket right through the front door from about 25 yards away. And I looked at him. And I suddenly felt like an idiot. I was the high speed Special Operations Officer, you know, I could do all this fancy stuff and he was just a regular grunt infantry Marine. But his was the exact right way to do that thing. I was so fixated on my training and he came up with this other, that's the way Marines would do it. Completely different. Now, I didn't go and ask him for his opinion. But there's so many examples like that in my life where I get all kinds of different people, sometimes I'll just talk to people, they're in real estate or something else and say, Well, what do you do about this situation? If you had an employee like this? They don't even have employees. Yeah, but it's funny. They listen to it, they go, Well, have you ever tried this, like, bingo, you know, because they're human. They're human beings. They understand human nature, and they deal with humans all day long as real estate agents. So yeah, open up vocational diversity, diversity of thought, diversity of skill set and knowledge base. And you can get some really incredible outcomes.

It's interesting for us, because we both come from a construction background and the organization that we first worked in 40 plus years ago, was one of the first to introduce what was called multidisciplinary teams, which meant that instead of having all the architects in one group, all the quantity surveyors in one group, they had someone from each of those disciplines in a project team. And it was completely frowned upon by the industry at large in those days. And yet, now we see it has been introduced far more widespread than we would have even considered would it be possible in those days.

Yeah, well think about age diversity too. Remember my story about being 18,19 year old kid that nobody wanted to listen to. Young people will come in and without any preconceived notions about what you're doing, how you're doing it, they haven't read the processes, they aren't experts in all your systems or anything and if you give them a chance and listen, and then you get to a point where you're asking everybody what their thoughts are, and you get to them and you say, So what do you think? As long as there's culturally and kind of made this a comfortable environment to open up without having somebody immediately smash them, you know, which, unfortunately, that's it to them, you know, the people are guarding their turf, where people are guarding their positional authority, don't want the new person to have a voice. They will open up their mouth and they will say something like that marine said to me. I don't know how many times that's happened and you sit back and go, Well, that's a simple way to do it.

I had a friend of mine who owns a business here and he wanted to put a QR code, you know, those little crazy QR codes, he wanted to put it on all of his new marketing materials. And the QR code has a link to his podcast because he has a podcast. He was going through a company that was doing all of his media work. I think the gentleman's about 42 years old, he had been doing this for a long time and he was paying a lot of money, I'm talking about, like, 15 to \$20,000 a month for this guy to do all this stuff for him. Credentials are impeccable. He calls him up. He's standing in the lobby of his business, he calls him up and he says, hey, I want you to put this QR code thing and the guy says, Well, that's very difficult, that's hard to do, can take a while, I'm not sure we can do it on our normal agreement. Let me think about it. I'll get back to you. Okay so, you know, he comes off the call, he turns and there's this 26 year old kid standing there, who's his customer relationship person. And the guy says, Oh, you need to put a QR code on something? He goes, Well, yeah. He goes, okay, because why do you know how to do that? Yeah. Really? Yeah, it will take about 10 minutes. Are you kidding me? He goes, You sure you know what I'm talking about? Yeah.

Good. I just heard you tell whoever you're talking to on the phone. I want to do this because I just needed to link to the podcast episode or whatever. It took them 15 minutes. So I had breakfast with this guy about a week after this happened. And he goes, You know, I've been paying somebody close to \$20,000 a month for about two years because I thought they were the expert, because they had the credentials, they had the resume. Yeah. And this 26 year old kid in the lobby, just saved me \$20,000 a month going forward. And I realized, I'm looking in the wrong place. I need to look for people who know how to do it, not for people that have been able to do it or used to do it. Those kinds of epiphanies only come if you're open enough to look for them and then use them, jump on them, apply them.

It comes back to the who not how situation which we've talked about in our previous podcasts as well. We have one last area that we wanted to cover with you, Marty, it's about leadership challenges that aren't talked about enough, or aren't talked about at all.

Hmm, what are my biggest leadership challenges? I know it can be done and I know the benefit of it. It is the cross training of people to do other people's tasks. And maybe not as expert as the most expert person in a group but enough that they could jump in in a pinch and cover. Yeah, we did this in the military. Definitely, in Special Operations units, you only have a small number of people, everyone's gonna be able to do everything. And there's obviously the person who's the best but I'll give you an example. We have medics, usually two medics for you know, 20 people. Everybody's trained in trauma care, everybody's trained in combat trauma care. Every time somebody gets wounded or shot or whatever, the medics can't even get in because there's five other guys, the machine gunner, the mortar guy, everybody's on top of that person stabilizing and getting them ready, because they were cross trained. And the bench strength, the unit resilience that's created by that's incredible. Now, obviously, that's a combat context. But think about a business, if you were one person deep in every lane and every every skill set. Let's say there's 10 different skill sets, you have 10 single points of failure, anytime any day, they could just get up and say I'm done. And now what do you do? And if Susie or Joey in adjacent cubicles have no clue what Janet was doing, then you go to the management team, well, you must know how to do her job, right? Well, no, not really.

When I first got out and I started managing civilians, I thought, Well, why are they so adverse to this? They'd never been trained on the way up to management, that that was a valuable thing to do. The second thing was everybody was afraid to teach anybody else their job, for job security. Yeah. So I

get that. I mean, in the military, you're taught to train your replacement. So you're always constant, everybody's a trainer, no matter what your rank is, you're always trying to train the new guy to be as good as he can possibly be. And you're relying on each other to be as good as you possibly can be. So there's a lot of emphasis on it and motivation to do so. But if you look at from the perspective of the average civilian commercial worker, if I tell Susie how to do my job, I'm less valuable, I'm less critical. If I stay a single point of failure, I have leverage, and they need me. So there is a lot of psychological resistance on an individual basis to do this cross training. However, when you do cross train people, it's better for the organization. And it's kind of what we were talking about with teams. You start getting into projects where people that have never worked together suddenly realize, the money people realize how tough it is for the salespeople to actually get a deal close, and people who are complaining about them over there and those over there, those guys in the back are suddenly much more empathetic, sympathetic, and they like the fact that they're all pulling together to try to accomplish something. And that can be a kind of a catalyst for justifying across training. And I mean, in any little pod of people that you have, any skill set, but that's the most difficult thing I've run across. And you can do it. I mean, I can't make it happen. I've got 800 employees across four companies, I can't dictate that kind of point of view down, then ensure that it's actually happening every day, I have too many human beings in the middle that may not want to do that.

Is that just a perfect example, though, of you, coming from an industry, an environment where that was ingrained into another environment where it's not even considered and getting that voice heard, getting that message out?

Yeah, the other two that I've found are emergency medicine and firefighters. Same reasons, everybody can pick up every tool and do everything needed to do with that tool. Everybody knows every step from the top fireman all the way down to the brand new person. And the same thing with people that are in emergency medicine. Everybody knows how to do everything up to a point. They're not all surgeons, but they can do a heck of a lot. And that just multiplies. It's a high leverage team / cross trained capability that's really powerful.

It gives them power. That's way they should be looking, in my view, is that it's only going to make them more powerful.

I think we have come to the end of our list of questions, that list of topics. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

I don't think so. I think if people enjoyed some of my thoughts and stuff, they can go to Marty Strong Be Nimble.com. That's where my books are. They're on Amazon but you can also go to that website and find it quicker, probably both Be Nimble and Be Visionary and some other stuff about me.

So certainly, we'll put the links to all of that on the page. We do thank you for your time and for your insights. I know that I have had things made more clear this morning, so it's been good for me.

I really enjoyed that session. You guys stayed right on track, by the way, I just wanna let you know.

Just before you go, Marty, I want to know about the other books that you've written, the novels.

Oh, yeah. So it's 2017. I want to write a novel, I want to write a business book. So I decided to go with a novel. And I came up with an idea for time travel book, which then became a series of four books, there's a lot of the SEAL, warrior ethos and honor code and all kinds of things baked into the characters in the stories. And then about, I guess, maybe at the time of my third time travel book, I decided to write my first SEAL novel. And so there's five of those. And in both cases, there's a character that carries through the series, so you can kind of see that evolve and go through different challenges as things get tougher for them. And all the proceeds of that I donate to the SEAL veterans foundation. So I don't take a dime of any of the novels. But yeah, there are a lot of fun.

Hearing you say that, are they cathartic for you as well? Is it something that you felt you needed to look at?

Look at you! I have said that word, describing it to friends but I've never actually had someone get me to say it in an interview. Yes, the writing process is cathartic. I get up at five in the morning every day, and I start writing around 5.30. The novels are very easy for me to see in my mind. It's like I'm watching a movie and I'm just trying to keep up when I'm typing, kind of thing. So as it as time went on, I got more confident. So then you're more confident and more comfortable and just kind of let it go, you know, you're second guessing everything you're doing. And then you realize it's fiction. So if Joe goes left instead of right, who cares? Yeah, if he's carrying a big knife, a small knife or spoon or nothing, it doesn't matter, you know? So once you kind of let yourself off that, oh, it's actually a lot of fun.

That's great. Well, thank you for sharing that with us. I'll tell you the reason I said it was because you face changes when you're talking about those books.

There's definitely a different feeling about business books. They're like doing a college term paper and then putting it out in the universe on Amazon for people to look at. You kind of go like, oh boy, you know.

You've done both now, you're a well rounded individual. It's good.

Yeah. People have been very kind to me about the about the business books. I'm thankful for that.

That's good. Marty, we'll let you go and enjoy the rest of your evening and we'll get through our day. Thanks for joining us. Check the links in Marty's bio for more information, both about his business books and the fiction books. For now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.