

Transcription - Valuing Your Worth In An Unpaid Role

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we're going to look at sort of a case study, semi-case study, and I'll change the industry to protect the people who are involved, but what we're looking at is someone who has some time, working in an entrepreneurial fashion, has some time, and has lots of interest, and has now the opportunity to work using the skills that have been developed over the years, essentially in a consulting role, to a business, another business, but the business is in a field that's always been of interest, but not ever anything that he might have considered taking on as a career or as part of his entrepreneurial collection. So let's say that it's in car racing, what we've got is the opportunity this fellow has to work with someone who is already racing cars, has a couple in the stable, but they're not business people.

What their focus is is racing, racing of the cars, that performance time, rather than running the business that is associated around getting sponsors, having employees, just getting work done that is business related to support the act, that particular activity, which is the focus of the business.

So he's in a situation where he has been offered the opportunity to work with these people. He wants to, I think he offered rather than that they asked.

And increasingly over the last, let's say, three months, he has spent more and more time looking after that business, suggesting things, trying to help with the day-to-day running as well as the some-forward planning. Now he is, let's say, part of the furniture, he's feeling as though he is just expected to do things, still not getting paid for any of it, and not feeling at this point, like he's getting the same sort of return in terms of learning about that industry that he wanted and that he expected from offering to not be paid to do this work.

So we've talked in the past about, if you think that you'd be a right fit for a job somewhere, that you could offer to work for a week or so without pay just so that people had a chance to try you out. It's like that, but it's a little bit different, that he's not looking for the job so much as he's looking at having a business in that area or taking over another part of the business that is already there. He's gone into the situation thinking about it in business terms, but now feels like he's being "used and wasted", were the words that he used, that his skills are being wasted on the almost the insignificant things that are part of the business. And yes, he's still learning about the industry, but he obviously is feeling that he's not getting the meat out of the situation that he would like. So where does he go from here, given that the owners have decided that they're comfortable with him being the "bad partner" - he does all of the nasty stuff, he does all of the bringing the staff back into line or telling them no, they can't get these supplies or have this paint or whatever else it is that they want to do in terms of the racing activity. He's the one who has to say no, basically, because the owners have said it to him that they appreciate the fact that he will do it for them because they just can't do it. It's not in their nature to do it because their focus is not in business or the bottom line.

So he's the bad guy, but he's in a situation where he has to do the bad stuff, but he has no real authority or responsibility and he has to keep reinforcing that with the staff so that they don't just go behind his back or in front of him and go back to the owners and say, "But I want to do it this way."

How do you address that, given that you appreciate the opportunity and you have learnt stuff and you do still want to stay involved? Where do you draw the line with the owners and say, "Okay, we've had this amount of time. I've done these things for you. This is where you need to go going forward, but you can't afford me anymore."

Well, I think two things there, seriously, is looking at it as a business opportunity in this example, this person is looking more at business and whether that's where he wants to land, make an income out of it. If that still is the case, I think now he has demonstrated to them that he has value and they're using it and it's with them. What they like about it is that he's doing things they don't like doing and it's not costing them anything. So I think it's time to make it a bit more formal and to say, "Look, this is really good. I've really enjoyed it. I know more about racing now than I ever did before, good industry, etc. Your business model looks quite attractive and all of that for me, I can see myself fitting into your business model and this is what it looks like. But I also understand if you're not prepared to turn it into a business, I'm happy also, thanks for that and we'll just stay friends and that's it, right?" Because at the end of the day, the most important thing is with people from this example, it looked like they're interested in the racing rather than the business, so they don't tune into that. So maybe they would really appreciate it if he turned it into a bit more structure and say, "Okay, you can continue to do that. If you want me to do these things, this is what I'm looking at. I'm happy to do it. This is what the dollar sign is for my wages. It's got to be formal. It has to be that when I'm talking to people, yes, they can have this supply or no, they can't. It's a formal position, they have to do this, not the other way around. And you have to let me do that. And I say no and you say yes because you're a nice guy and interested in the racing."

"That's one. Two is, who is responsible for what and who has authority for what? What is the appropriate remuneration and that for that? If you say you can't afford that at all, that's fine. I'm just saying that's the model that can work for you and I enjoyed it, good bye. Or maybe I can only do it two days if that's all you can afford and I can do this in two days but don't expect me to do all of it because I can only give you two days to match your budget or whatever."

So the options are definitely the first thing. It's to get some structure around it, either make it clear what the role is and what expected salaries. Yes or no. Go or not and stay friends, enjoy the experience and go and apply it somewhere else. Or just say no, this is half way. I can still help you, I'm still interested and we can do it that way. So otherwise I think both parties have already benefited by exposure to a new industry for the individual. and the owners benefited from the skill and experience this person has and he also given them future food for thought. If they're not ready now, maybe they can come another time.

I think the important thing too is the timing. If you're in this situation, when you get to the point where you think they're using me, I'm not enjoying it anymore, I feel that it's a not an even scale, that's the time to sit down and do the plan because that's when you will think about what you are worth and you'll be able to review what you've got out of it, what you are prepared to offer going forward.

You can't just sit there and inwardly gaze and say, "Why don't they recognise how good I am? Why can't they see what I've done?" Give yourself 10 minutes to have all of that conversation and then move forward because if you don't move forward, then you're poisoning all of the

good stuff that you've done already and you get to a point where you resent the whole exercise and nothing good comes of it. And you might well have lost the opportunity to be in an industry that you hadn't ever thought of before.

I think we've covered that quite nicely. We'll leave it there, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.