

Transcription - John Tarnoff Part 3

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. We are concluding our discussion with John Tarnoff and with co-host Jamie Wadley in this session today. We're going to look at how you identify, and why you should identify, your superpower and how we are not human "beings", but human "becomings".

The final question, then we'll go on to some general topics, was about the fact that in this podcast, we've spoken lots of times about building networks and that's something that I'm particularly uncomfortable about because I don't like talking to people generally. I don't like letting people in.

And you run a podcast, so that's kind of, it doesn't make much sense, right?

Well, you know, this is my foray into things that make me uncomfortable.

Right, well, that's good.

In terms of building a network, where do you start if you've always worked in isolation? So if you've always worked on your own as a consultant, gone in, done the consulting thing and moved out, for someone like me who has always worked, not always, but for the last 40 years, has worked away from an established corporate environment where I wouldn't ever go to the same place, how do you start? I live in a regional area, I'm in the wine country area, I'm away from the major cities. How do I start building a network when I do, and I am, comfortable working in isolation? Do I need a network?

I mean, there's there's an interesting semantic question here because, in a way, isolation is not solitude. In a funny way, people who have worked in corporations and in certain cases, one corporation for their entire career or for the bulk of their career, are in a greater state of isolation than someone who has worked for multiple companies or who has consulted or freelanced. We all have relationships, we all have friends, we all have people that have been in our lives. And the older we are, chances are we have more people that we can connect with.

I think the bigger question is, who are we and what do we want to do? And in the three step process that I advocate, I call the three elements career builder framework, it starts with defining your superpower. And if you can define what that is, that you deliver, that you do, that moves the needle, that can deliver transformation results for your client or your employer, then you have something to talk about. If you don't have that superpower, it's really hard to network because how do you start a conversation, right? What are you going to say? I would also say further that if you have that superpower, you'll find that it's much easier to network because you're not searching for something to say, you're not tongue tied, a wallflower at the, you know, at the bar at the corporate event or whatever, wherever it is that you are, you actually know why you got up that morning and what your agenda was because you're looking to fulfill the ambition of your superpower. So that's what you talk about.

In terms of the superpower, is it something you define yourself or could someone tell you

what your superpower is?

Well, someone can help you define it, but at the end of the day, you have to define it for yourself because it's yours, right? If you try to adopt someone else's superpower, well, it's not yours, right? So it's going to be hard for you to own it. It is difficult for many people and I'm thinking of a current client right now who is mid-career. He had a very successful run in his field. He's done lots of different things and he can't quite pin down which of the things he's done is what he wants to do going forward. He needs to do this because he's not getting traction and that's something which happens, we're at the stage where people expect us to have it all figured out, they want us to be leaders. They don't want us to be followers because they can get cheaper, younger people to do that. So if they're going to hire an older person, they want to get some value out of it. So the superpower has to be authentic. It has to be you, but it's not in isolation, right? It is something that you have to continue to refine as time goes on and as you can and then you can converse with other people in your network. The network really has to become a community.

That's the second element that I teach, the idea of turning a network, which is kind of this random collection of people that you've known and met over the years. Who among them are really aligned with you, what you believe in, what your values are and your superpower and they can support you in better defining it and better finding other people who can then support the work that you want to do? You want to really define it more narrowly and people will often say, oh well, but that's like, I'm leaving money on the table. There's so many things that I can do. Why would I limit myself to that? And my answer is, yeah, there's lots of things you can do, but you know, in marketing, being everyone's solution means being no-one's solution. You're going to get a lot more traction if you narrow it down to that superpower, to define it narrowly and you're going to get many more quality hits from people who are really interested in what it is that you have to offer. Don't worry about the people that are not on target with you. Just focus on the people who are really the most resonant with what you do.

And then the third element, which I think is the part of it that really kind of brings it all together and this is something Kim you were saying a little bit before about, you know, how do you kind of get it out there, is this idea of professional branding through thought leadership, the idea that you need to stand up for what you stand for. And if you're feeling like you're in isolation, first define that superpower, you now have something to talk about to, maybe it's only a few people in your community that you really feel comfortable with, but that number is going to grow. And then if you have something to say that's more kind of central to the why you're doing this and to what people are facing in your professional community, use LinkedIn, as an example, to reach out to new people to talk about your thought leadership topics. Find other people who resonate with what you're about, go to mentoring opportunities, professional organizations, look for opportunities to talk about what's important to you, do lunch and learns with companies, mentor younger workers.

That's how you can build it out, build out your expertise, your reputation, and that's going to become a flywheel that just keeps getting richer and broader as you do what you do, talk about what you talk about, refine your superpower even more and it's the gift that keeps on giving.

I really like what you say there, John, I must admit. What I'm hearing is that you want to find your community where you can be the hero rather than just part of the

Yeah, and if we can find a community where we are the hero, yeah, yeah, it's good for our standards, good for the people. Everyone in a community is a hero to everyone else, right? That's the essence of that community. You're all kind of drawn together by these shared ideas, shared goals, shared values, and you're looking to improve everyone's life. So the 80/20 rule, the Pareto principle, you know, my take on that is that you want to be giving to your community 80% of the time and asking for favors 20% of the time. And that if you are approaching your networking and your community building as a giver, then you're going to reap amazing rewards from that because every time you send a message, someone's going to say, oh, there's Jamie, I'm sure he's got something interesting to share with me as opposed to there's Jamie calling, what does he want, right?

It's the welcome guest, not the annoying pest.

Exactly right.

I'm going to put Jamie on the spot about the superpowers because I know that that's an area where our listeners struggle to identify for themselves. And I'm going to ask Jamie, how long did it take you to recognize your superpower and has that changed as you've changed industries?

How long does it take? Well, if I look at my watch now, I think it's almost there, but it's probably taken me 80%, 90% of my career so far. It's only now that I'm actually comfortable with it. The thing I'm dancing around is, I tend to be able to build rapport quite quickly with strangers and that works for me in a whole lot of areas. I used to look at that in terms of offering what I call a world class experience with the business I still run, that those same skills transfer to me doing one to one or one to many communications with the role I'm currently performing. It takes a whole long time. I think we get hints of what we think it might be and I agree with you that we have to define our own superpower, but sometimes a nudge from people who are close to us along that path who say, you know, the thing you do, that's really good. It just shines a light on where we should be looking.

It's a cooperation. It's a build and I like that you're saying it's taking you 80% of your career to figure that out, absolutely right. That's because we are, I mean, this sounds corny, but rather than thinking of ourselves as human beings, we're kind of human "becomings".

Right. And I think if we look at it that way, that gives us a large margin of error to experiment and to grow into who we are. I think that's the great gift of aging, is to get the sense of, oh my god, I've come so far, right. I've learned so much. I feel so much more comfortable now than I did 20 years ago, 40 years ago. Right. So this is the gift that I think we have to embrace. And that's why the, I think the superpower can be something that is such a welcome idea for us to kind of put together and share with our community. And have them give us feedback. Oh, you know, that's so right on but if you thought about this, let me add an element to that or why are you doing that? I mean, didn't you stop doing that years ago? It's like, yeah, why are you still talking about? I don't know. Let's get rid of it. Right. All of that stuff is great.

I must admit, you've simplified my whole life by doing with the human "becoming" thing! I'm so happy with that straight away. Stress has just dropped by 50%.

It makes it easier, right? It's like I'm a work in progress.

It does. It's great. I'm going to quote that. I'm going to do every time I can and acknowledge you

Please. I'll be looking for the checks in the mail.

John, just in terms of your own career, did you try to make the change, to write the book, to focus more on helping other people? Was it a defining moment or was it a gradual realization that that was where your strength was?

It was more gradual, but I feel like it was like a ping pong game, back and forth in many ways. But it's very funny. I had a lunch last week with a former colleague of mine from one of my first jobs as a literary agent and really hadn't kept up with him, but series of circumstances arose and we decided to get together. He said to me, "So you're a career coach now?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, it makes perfect sense because you started out as a literary agent helping people figure out how to sell their works and coaching them on how to be better writers and better connected and learn the business."

And I thought, "He's absolutely right." So I've basically been a people focused professional all my life in one form or another, even when I was just focusing on content. At the end of the day, making a film is all about people. It's all about casting the right people for the right roles in front of and behind the camera. So there is a consistency to this, but I really hadn't thought of it that way. It's interesting, right? How these themes tend to emerge if you're looking for them and help us define the work that we do, even through all these changes and work arounds. But I find those underlying themes to be really emblematic of most of, if not everyone, that I work with and that's really what we look for in my coaching work, is to really find those underlying themes that are the core motivation and the core skill set that people bring to the work that they do.

So in terms now of our listeners deciding that yes, they need to sit down and think about this and work through the process. Tell us about the book. Is the book going to be a workbook for them?

Well, what I would suggest is an easier way to go about this, is to work with a worksheet that I have on my website. What you do is go to johntarnoff.com. That's J O H N T A R N O F F dot com slash 4 questions. That's a worksheet that uses the ikigai questions to help you figure out what you do best, what you love to do, what your world needs and what you can get paid for. And that's, I think, a great start to this process because it's going to get you going on all sorts of pathways and help you to reach out to the people who can help you and support you in this process to start the conversation going.

We'll put that link and we'll put the link to the book as well, on the website. Just before we go, the people listening can't see, but I'm very intrigued by the photo of the dog behind you.

Oh, yes, yes. So that is that is my Australian shepherd, May, who is eight years old and that was painted by my partner, Dina, who is a wonderful artist. Yeah, so she painted it for me so I could have, I mean, May is around her somewhere. I think she may actually be out in the garden, but she's just a wonderful little Aussie that makes our lives complicated and fun at the

same time.

Oh, what a beautiful man you are.

John, thank you for joining us today. It's been a real pleasure to hear and share our journeys and thank you to Jamie as well for contributing your part in the case study.

Thank you. It's been great to meet and speak with both of you and I really appreciate the opportunity to have a great conversation. I've had lots of fun.

Thank you for joining us and we'll certainly put the links, as I said, on to the page. We thank Jamie Wadley for joining us in Fulyana's absence, I'm Kim Baillie and this is Inside Exec.