

**The eLearning Coach Podcast: ELC 052**  
**The Story of Becoming a Great Manager**  
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- Connie: Welcome to The eLearning Coach Podcast, online at thelearningcoach.com. I'm Connie Malamed, bringing you ideas, tips and best practices for success in creating effective learning experiences.
- Connie: Hello everyone and welcome to episode 52, are you a new or experienced manager? Or perhaps an aspiring manager? Or do you want to better understand your manager? Then I think you'll find this conversation valuable and relevant from any of these perspectives.
- Connie: In this episode I speak with Katy Tynan, author of *How Did I Not See This Coming?* Katy discusses the misconceptions people have about management. What the research says about managing people who work in creative fields. How to become an effective manager, and so much more.
- Connie: Katy is an author, speaker and internationally recognized expert on how work is evolving, and how the employer, employee relationship is changing. She works as a talent, strategy and organizational development consultant with a focus on helping individuals, businesses and educational institutions adapt to the evolving landscape of work.
- Connie: You can get the show notes and the transcript at [thelearningcoach.com/podcasts/52/](http://thelearningcoach.com/podcasts/52/) Now, here's our conversation.
- Connie: Hi Katy, welcome to The eLearning Coach Podcast.
- Katy: Thanks Connie, it's great to be here.
- Connie: I really enjoyed your book and I like the way it was written in a story format, that must have been kind of hard huh?
- Katy: You know, it's funny, this is my second book about management and when I was talking with ATD Press who published it, I said to them "I have this idea for a book" and it was like this big theory book about work and why we work and all these things and they said "You know, that's great Katy, but we really want you to write a book about management. Basic management." I said, "I can do that, but I already did that."
- Katy: So we went back and forth and I said "Well, let me think about it and let me think if I can find a way to talk about this topic in a different way." So I was thinking about it and rolling it around in my head and at the time my editor was off in Patagonia, he was on vacation and as he flew out I sent him the first three chapters of what ended up being this book. I said "I have this weird idea, I wrote this, let me know what you think", and so then he was gone for two weeks and I didn't hear anything. Then I got a text from the airport that said "I need to know what happens to Julie" and that's when I knew we

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were on the right track because you know, if you've read it, after the first three chapters, things are not looking good for her.

Connie: That was a really great way for your editor to respond.

Katy: Yeah, it was really encouraging just to make it something different and something that feels a little less like what you get in a lot of intro to management books. I really wanted it to be something people could relate to.

Connie: Right, right. Well, what were you seeing in the world of management that motivated you to write "How Did I Not See This Coming?"

Katy: Well the book is about primarily a person who's going through the process of transitioning to management and she is a software developer and the principles apply to every industry, but I spent 10 years in IT and what I saw over and over again early in my career was that we would take these lovely wonderful smart people who were great coders, or great project managers, or really good infrastructure designers and we would say to them "Okay, your career path is to become a team leader, or to become a manager, or to become a project manager." Many of them did not really want to do that, they loved the technical parts of their work, they loved the work itself, but they saw that they had to go into management in order to progress.

Katy: So, they would do it, but typically they would get put into those roles with no training, with no support, with no development and they would fail. They would have a terrible time and they would be unhappy. Everyone on their team would be unhappy. The organization would be unhappy and all because they weren't supported and helped through this transition process, which is frankly a really big deal it's hard to go from being an individual contributor to being a manager. Let alone, being a really talented, good, supportive manager that brings out the best in people.

Katy: So, I saw that so many times in my early career that I felt like I just really needed to tell that story and help people understand that it's not easy, that it is a big change and that without support there's no way that these nice, wonderful, smart people are going to be successful in these new roles. So, that's what I was seeing and not just in IT, I see it across all industries, but really I personally experienced it as part of my IT career.

Katy: I was one of those people when I was promoted.

Connie: Yes, I was one too.

Katy: Mm-hmm (affirmative) and it's not fun. I mean, I always say when people ask me about horrible bosses and some of these other topics that I write about, I've never met a person who wanted to be a bad boss. I've never met anyone who intentionally was trying to be a terrible manager. Every single I've worked with has every intention of being great and supportive and helpful, but that doesn't mean it comes naturally. So, the intent is right, it's just the skills and the thought process and the mindset that aren't there.

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- Connie: And that's true, the mindset is just so different. Can you talk a little bit about what you think is at the core of being an effective manager?
- Katy: If you boil it down to one thing and when I talk to new managers, I say "Look, we're going to talk all day today about theory, about vision, about goal planning, about performance management, about all these technical aspects of leadership and management. But if you forget all of that when you walk out the door, right? When you get back to your desk. If you forget everything we talked about, the one thing to remember is at the end of the day management is about caring about people. It's about wanting people to be able to do their best work and helping them get there. So if you at a manager come from that place of intentionally wanting to build people up, intentionally wanting to help people get better at what they do ... You will be a good manager and all the other stuff are skills and tactics and ways of doing that. But if that's not your intent, none of the skills will help you and if it is your intent then the skills will only make your better."
- Connie: Mm-hmm (affirmative), that's a great way to describe it. Everything seems to boil down to people. Whether we're talking about technology, management, design, development, it all comes down to a human centered approach. What is the relationship between management and leadership? Because I think a lot of people, when they initially get in that role, think of it in terms of keeping a project on track, rather than leadership.
- Katy: Yeah, and that's right, it's a fuzzy idea. The difference between leadership and management and you'll find all kinds of opinions on this so in my view there isn't a right and wrong answer. However, it is really worth thinking about, so leadership is something that everyone has the capability of doing. Anyone in an organization can be a leader even if the only person you're leading is yourself. Leadership is the practice of creating a vision and then either pursuing it yourself and inspiring yourself to do good things and great things, or pulling together a team of people and inspiring them. So, I think of leadership as being that inspiring process of getting yourself or other people to pursue a common goal.
- Katy: Management is a job title. Management is the practice in a tactical way of getting things done, achieving project goals. In terms of keeping all of those things on track, making sure that things are happening on the dates and days they're supposed to take place. So, it's not the inspirational part, it's the doing part to me is what management is.
- Katy: Management and leadership have a relationship, a good manager is also a good leader and vice versa. But, at the same time, there are some people who are exceptional leaders. They're really great at that vision development, but they're not good at the tactical management, the day to day "how do we get this done?" process and vice versa, there are some people who are really great at that practical organization of projects and figuring out of milestones and doing the Jenga of putting people's strengths together to get everything aligned, so that we can get where we need to go.
- Katy: So, they do have a relationship, absolutely. They are not the same thing. At the same time, everybody has the capacity to be a leader and management is in many ways how

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we get stuff done in order to achieve the vision that exists by a leader, or through a leader. Does that make sense?

Connie: It totally makes sense it's a very good differentiation that perhaps we don't talk about enough, but in terms of the vision, how can someone get better at, and how does someone develop the ability to create a vision so that they can be a better leader?

Katy: I think vision is all about asking the question "why?" Why should we do this? Why are we doing this? Not what are we doing, but why are we doing it? So as a manager if you're spending all of your time focused on the "what" and the "how" and never on the "why" then that's where you're going to have a gap from a vision perspective. Because, the vision is what holds people together. The first book that you should go read about this is Simon Sinek's book "Start with Why". And that principle, that idea of people doing things because they understand why they're doing it and what the end goal is, what that future is going to look like when we get there. Then they're able to make better decisions along the way about the "how" and about the "what".

Katy: So, the vision is really the "why" and I think as a manager, if you want to get better at vision and get better at building that in, you need to be asking yourself "Why are we doing this?" "Why is this on the list?" "How did this get to the top of the list?" Because that's really where you create that vision, is by asking why we're doing these things.

Connie: Mm-hmm (affirmative) and do you also think that vision has to do with seeing some kind of ideal, some kind of difference between what is and what could be?

Katy: Yeah, I think there's a lot of different ways to create a vision and one way that organizations will create a vision is to do that sort of visioning exercise, right? Where we sit and think about what would it look like? What does it feel like? How do we experience that in a tangible way so that when we get there we know we've gotten there? I think there's an element to that, but at the same time if you're too specific with your vision when you're at a leadership role you have the potential to run into the problem where it becomes rigid. Right? It becomes inflexible.

Katy: So, yes, there's an element to visioning of creating this future state that everybody understands and can see, sort of picture in their mind. But, you also want to make sure that, again, it's about why we're trying to get there, not about what it looks like.

Katy: Just to give an example, if you were building a playground and you were working together to build a playground and you all sat together and created this vision of, you know "It's going to have a jungle gym and it's going to have merry go round and it's going to have swings and it's going to have all of these different things and it's going to have a sand pit." Then, when you got into the course of building it, you discovered that it was too expensive to put in a sand pit, so instead you put in a water park, or whatever the differences are. You don't want people to get discouraged because the end product is not exactly what you intended, because the result, the "why" is that kids have fun playing there and they don't care whether it's a sand pit, or a ball pit. They care that it's fun.

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- Katy: So, that's the difference between having an overly specific vision, versus having an understanding of the impact you're trying to create.
- Connie: Yeah, that's a good metaphor. Love those metaphors. So, when you're out there teaching this and in your conversations with people and in your research, can you name some of the most important misconceptions that people have about being a manager?
- Katy: I think the most common misconception about being a manager is that you get to tell people what to do and they do it. People think "when I'm the manager, when I'm the boss, I'm going to get to tell everyone else what to do." That's part one, "And they're going to do it." That's part two. So I do think a lot of people come in with bad ideas about management, because of who they've had as managers.
- Katy: I talked about this in the book, that Julie had these two managers early in her career who were wildly different in their styles and approaches and so she had to reconcile those two different approaches and why, even though she felt productive under one approach, it wasn't right and vice versa, what was right about the second approach.
- Katy: So, when we think about what a manager does ... And I do this exercise a lot when I'm speaking at conferences, I ask people to write down at least one example of what a manager does. Typically what comes up is performance reviews, giving feedback, evaluation of work, setting goals, all of these established things that people do.
- Katy: Well, if you look at the research and particularly I really like Teresa Amabile who is a professor at Harvard Business School, she did a study back in the '90s. This isn't new, this isn't groundbreaking, but she did a study about creative work and you know this from the work that you do, creative work is motivated differently than work that is repetitive and Daniel Pink talks about this in his book "The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us", this idea that when people are doing work that is not clearly understood, so it's not "I come into work and I hammer nails", it's "I come into work and I try to design a better hammer." That kind of work, which is what all of us do is motivated differently.
- Katy: Yet, most of our management styles and most of our management practices are holdovers from the industrial revolution. What we're taught to do as managers, we're taught to manage people who are doing repetitive work. Today, our working environment is not like that and so the things that motivate people to be creative are very different.
- Katy: So, when I ask people in those conference sessions to name those things, I then pull out Teresa Amabile's research study and there are six specific things in her research study that are de motivating to creative work, those six things are almost always the things people name as what managers do. It's "surveillance" I watch the people who are working and making sure they do what I told them to. It's "evaluation" I tell people whether they're doing things right, or not doing them right. It's "limited choice" which happens to all of us, all the time in the working world, but when we restrict people's choice it de motivates their creativity. It's "thinking about extrinsic motivation" in other

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words, "you're being paid to do this, go get your job done" which is very de motivating if you're trying to be creative.

- Katy: So, there's a lot of interesting research out there that says most of what we think managers do is totally wrong and what good managers do is the opposite of that, but we're still not teaching those things well enough, if even we're teaching anything at all as we talked about in the beginning. So, we're either throwing people in the deep end and saying "figure it out", or we're teaching them things that are out of date, so we need to do a way better job of helping people understand what things are effective in order to not have the results that we currently have which are horrible bosses most of the time.
- Connie: Right, and I guess I was reading somewhere that that's one of the main reasons that people leave their jobs is because they don't like their bosses.
- Katy: Yeah, there are a lot of people who are saying that and Gallup who does a poll on engagement every year has found year after year, that people really do quit their manager, not their company. So companies are spending all this time trying to create employee engagement practices and employee experience practices and make sure that their benefits are up to snuff and make sure they have these beautiful offices for people to sit in and food and all these things, but what it really comes down to is your direct supervisor has the most impact on whether or not you are engaged with the work that you do.
- Katy: So, if you have a terrible boss, it does not matter what tuition reimbursement you're offered, or how many holidays you get or any of those things because none of those things make up for the day in and day out stress of working for someone who is not a great boss.
- Connie: Yeah, that is so true, and so many of those constraints and misconceptions that you mention also happen in the educational world, but that's a whole other conversation.
- Katy: Yes, I agree.
- Connie: In light of what you just said, what are some of the most common mistakes that managers and new managers make?
- Katy: I think part of it is, and it comes from this place of thinking you get to tell people what to do, right? I did a series for ATD of videos on this called "Horrible Bosses" and "The Fives Kinds of Horrible Bosses", so these five horrible boss archetypes are what new managers, and managers in general do wrong. The first one which we all know so well is the micromanager, the person who needs to be down in the weeds of everybody's business and needs the update every hour, on the hour of what you're doing and wants to tell you how to do every little thing.
- Katy: So, the micromanager is a new manager mistake where they feel like they need to control everything. That's huge, the opposite of that one, which I also see all the time

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and sometimes people ricocheting in between these two is the invisible manager. The person who goes in the office, closes their door and never talks to anyone. That's typically a result of being told not to micromanage. Right? Okay, well then I'll be a hands off manager and I will just stay out of everyone's way, well that doesn't work either.

Katy: There has to be a balance and it's almost always ... These mistakes that new managers make are almost always because you're out of balance between being task focused and being people focused. So, if you're too task focused, you're a micromanager, if you're too people focused, you're going to let people tell you "Oh, everything's fine. You know, don't worry." And then you're going to wake up one morning and everything's not fine.

Katy: So, that's a problem. Another mistake that I see a lot that new managers make is they feel like they have to be the expert. They feel like they have to be the smartest person in the room and if they don't know more than everyone else in the room someone will find them out. It's the imposter syndrome idea which is that they need to know more in order to make decisions and it's impossible to know more than every single person on your team most of the time. In fact, you can't have all the strengths of everyone else on the team.

Katy: Your goal is to understand those strengths and to know how to get the right advice and the right guidance from the people who know, as opposed to being the person who knows everything. So, those are some of the big mistakes that I see that new managers make. I think the other thing that happens is managers can get into this, and this is a byproduct of trying too hard to be a coach when you don't totally understand how to do it, they become manipulators. How can I manipulate somebody into doing what I want them to do? That is just a breakdown of trust.

Katy: If you think somebody's manipulating you, you are not going to be doing your best work and you're not going to be trying to get better. So, the ability to come from a place of authenticity to be able to understand yourself really well is important in terms of being effective as a manager.

Katy: I know I just covered a ton of ground in that answer, but it really is hard to become a new manager and there are a lot of things that new managers do in response to that which are not helpful.

Connie: Mm-hmm (affirmative), no it was a great answer, I could visualize it as a continuum. One the one end there is the manager who is always thinking only of the people, then the other end the one who's only thinking of the tasks. But what they need is to balance in the middle where they complement each other.

Katy: Exactly.

Connie: You know, in your book, early on you mention the importance of having a team vision. Can you talk a little about that?



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- Katy: Yeah, I think it's hard for a lot of new managers to feel like that's something they're allowed to do. The reason I put it specifically in the book is because many people who come into management dive in at the tactical level. "What am I being held accountable for? What's due? What are my next deadlines? What am I going to get in trouble if I don't do?" And they never get around to, again, "Why are we here as a team? What does our company do? What does our customer want? And how do we help make that happen?"
- Katy: So, to me it's a grounding exercise that every team should do at least once a year, is to revisit that question of "What value do we provide as a team to our customers? What value do we provide within the organization? What are we doing here together?" And then each individual can reflect a little bit on how they play into that value all of which rolls up into this idea of a team vision that says "This is why we're here, this is our touchstone, this is what lets us remember when we're having a crappy day, when we're over our head in crazy customer requests." It lets us take a step back and prioritize and say "Which of these things is most important to doing what matters to us as a team?"
- Katy: So, I think it's an important exercise, I think too many managers feel like that's the job of higher levels of the organization to know and decide. I think it's important, certainly, for companies to have a vision. But, then from an alignment perspective that has to flow down through the organization. Every person in a well aligned organization should know how their work contributes to what that company's trying to do and what that organization is trying to do.
- Connie: Yes, I think that's a great idea having a team vision statement and I have not lead a team where we did that and I think it would be of great value to new and experienced managers. As you keep talking about the "why" it reminds me that this is a basic principle of adult learning, so of course it should be a basic principle of anything that's happening with adults which is people want to know why they are learning, why they are doing their jobs, what their goal is. It's just the basic way that adults think.
- Katy: Well and you've hit on something important which is management is really facilitating a learning process for the people on the team, because that's what we're all doing. We're all learning and growing and trying to figure things out. None of us typically walks into every day and knows exactly what we're supposed to do and just does it, because things change so rapidly, technology changes so rapidly. We have a very dynamic global mobile marketplace right now and so the result of that is we're all in a learning mindset, or we should be all the time.
- Katy: So, you hear that expressed in the management world as growth mindset and how to have a growth mindset for yourself, how to encourage a growth mindset in people. But, for those of us, you and I, who have to spend a bunch of time in L&D and have read and understood adult learning theory, there is so much overlap between what managers do and facilitating learning. It's all the same.
- Katy: So, I don't think we've gotten to the point where we have really said that out loud enough, to say "That's what good managers do, they help other people learn and get better." But it is absolutely true, you're 100% right, they're the same thing. The good



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management practices are a good talent development practices which are in turn helping people learn.

Connie: Right, part of helping people learn is understanding and supporting their strengths and supporting what motivates them, so how can a manager discover what motives each of their team members?

Katy: The short member is you should ask them and I think this is another thing that new managers worry about and then don't do. Which is you as a manager should be having one on one conversations with the people on your team, ideally every week. I know a lot of people who feel like "Oh God, I couldn't possibly have a weekly one on one", it doesn't have to be an hour long. It doesn't have to be a long process, but you need to spend time with people to understand what motivates them. You need to ask them "What work do you love? What work frustrates you? Where do you feel like you're doing your best work? Where do you feel like you need to grow?" Being in that mode of asking questions, as opposed to giving direction is the sort of secret sauce to being a good manager.

Katy: It's not about telling, it's about asking and seeking to understand. So, when we go back to Stephen Covey and Ken Blanchard and some of the really big original names in leadership, what you'll hear over and over again is you need to seek to understand. You need to try to truly connect with people.

Katy: It's also the basis of servant leadership, which is another very popular type of leadership theory that hearing a lot about today. This idea of being a leader by serving others. So, the whole process and it all goes back to what I said at the very beginning, right? You have to care about people. And if you don't care whether the people on your team succeed or fail, you're not a good manager and you probably should look for another job. If you really genuinely don't care, that's a big problem.

Katy: So, I think the real root to understanding motivation is getting to know people individually, not as their resumes, not as what they can do for you, not as what's due next Tuesday, but the same question ... Why? Why did you take this job? Why do you want to do this work? What is it about this work that's exciting and interesting to you? And wouldn't we all love to have more of those conversations at work as opposed to "Have you gotten this done? Are you on target with this deadline?"

Connie: Absolutely, it's so true. Now let's say somebody is listening and they want to try to get better, but they don't have the support or resources at work, or at least they're not aware of them, how can someone continue to grow in this role and somehow get support from their higher ups that will allow this?

Katy: I think the first stop, if you have one, is the HR department. So, HR and, by extension in larger organizations the L&D team, the talent strategy team, all of these different groups exist and have grown over the last decade because companies are investing in these elements in order to improve retention. In order to improve engagement.

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- Katy: They understand all of us who are in the business, who read all these articles and go to conferences have heard time and time again the impact that engagement has on company success metrics. So, there absolutely are programs and support processes within most organizations to help people get better as managers. With that said, you might not find all of the answers there and we all know that our companies are not necessarily responsible for every aspect of our personal professional development.
- Katy: So, you may need to take it into your own hands. So, for example, if you're not a leader yet and you go to HR and say "I want to work on my management skills" and they say "Well, you're not in a management role, so you're not eligible to enroll in this program that we have" then you can go outside of your organization and what you'll discover is there's tons of resources so Lynda.com which was bought by LinkedIn has tons and tons of on demand learning programs.
- Katy: You can go to your local university and take courses and classes there. You can hire a leadership or a management coach, somebody to help you develop those skills. So, the resources exist and, in fact, quite a lot of them are either low cost or no cost. There are plenty of basic resources out there to help people understand some of these things including things like the books that I write, there are lots and lots of tools to go help you figure it out but your first thing that you need to do is know what you're trying to do.
- Katy: There's so much content out there, that I think it could be overwhelming and so if you're a manager and you're saying to yourself "Gosh, I think I need to get better, but I don't know which direction." That's when a coach can be really useful to go have a conversation with someone, to do some kind of a self-assessment. To say where am I struggling? What skills am I trying to develop and to get an outside objective perspective on where are you? Where do you want to be? What do you need to get there?
- Katy: So, I think there's tons of resource, but it is a matter of curating them and also a matter of getting some outside perspective to know what you need to work on specifically.
- Connie: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so what you're saying is first someone should try to understand the direction that they want to go and what their goals are and then seek those specific kinds of resources, because there are so many different avenues that kind of merge together to form an effective manager.
- Katy: That's right and I just wouldn't discount what exists and what's available through your own organization. I would look there first because so many organizations have programs, but a lot of times people just don't know they exist. Or they have subscriptions to things like Lynda.com, or Skillsoft, or some of those other online content. Harvard Business Review has Harvard ManageMentor, there are lots of on demand content providers out there and many companies offer subscriptions to those to all of their employees, but employees just don't know that that's available.
- Connie: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Some manager is failing to disseminate that information to everyone.

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Katy: Right. Right.

Connie: Katy, I want to thank you so much, this was a fascinating conversation. It's something we haven't covered at The eLearning Coach Podcast and I think new and experienced managers can benefit from this, so thank you so much.

Katy: Thank you so much for having me on the program.

Connie: I hope you enjoyed this conversation, Katy is good at pointing out that as L&D teams reset and adapt for the future, management also needs to keep up with the changes by adopting modern management strategies. You can get the show notes and transcript at [thelearningcoach.com/podcasts/52](http://thelearningcoach.com/podcasts/52) while you're there you can sign up for my monthly newsletter and free eBook on writing for instructional design. I will talk to you next time, take care.