

Ep #77: Influential Personal Development



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 77.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal Podcast*, a not so typical, educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy, by refining your most powerful tool: your mind. Here's your host, certified life coach, Angela Kelly Robeck.

Well hello there, my very happy and empowered school leaders. How is summer treating you guys? I'm loving it. I'm so fabulous. I am still on a major buzz from my trip to New York and I have been working on building news media connections so that we can expand our network of empowered school leaders and open up some conversations about how managing our thoughts and emotions in our profession is how we are ultimately going to change it.

It is such a huge mission, yet I feel so called and so compelled to bridge this gap of understanding between personal development and education, which is what we are going to talk about today. I had a realization flying back from the Unfair Advantage Media mixer event that I went to in New York, and so I decided to dedicate this podcast to my big a-ha.

Let me start by sharing a story of why influence is so important so we can focus on how to create it both at work and at home. So, this networking event included a group of entrepreneurs and authors from a variety of all kinds of backgrounds and every single person there had a goal, or has a goal, of creating businesses that better serve fellow humans.

And what I loved about this event is that the people who attended were not just meeting people on the surface just to say hello so they could pitch their businesses. They were there to genuinely connect, meet new people, and get to actually know you. They wanted to hear about you as a person,

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where you live, did you have kids, what got you inspired into your current work?

And it was so cool because many of my business events and retreats are centered around either life coaching or business building, which I absolutely love and I attend on purpose and I learn amazing things, but this event was a mix of all kinds of passions and professions, which really pushed me out of my bubble and comfort zone of people I work with on a regular basis.

So this meant that I had to be able to explain what it is that I'm trying to do in my mission and my vision to people who are outside of the coaching industry and outside of education. It really helped me to clarify and better articulate what it is that I'm trying to do for all my compadres out there in education.

And one of the first people I met, actually, I shared an Uber ride with her from the hotel we were staying at to the event. Her name as Amy Lacey, who I had never heard of before, or I thought I hadn't heard of her before, but once I knew who she was, I was pretty star struck.

Amy is the creator of the cauliflower-based foods movement, such as cauliflower pizza crust. And she wrote the cauliflower cookbook and has the company, the Cali'Flour Food, I think is what it's called. Her company was founded on her need to alter her diet after being diagnosed with Lupus.

She decided that she needed to change her habits, but in doing so, she wanted to create real foods that complemented both her needs and her pallet. She wanted to have amazing food and have it taste good if she was going to have to change her dietary habits. And I was so amazed by her story because, you know, some people who receive a diagnosis of any kind

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might spin out in disbelief and resistance and grief and it could really take them down this dark hole.

But she used her condition to drive herself and to be open and vulnerable and she had this willingness about her to find a solution and share her recipes and cooking tips with the entire world, which by the way, has resulted in millions of people choosing healthier food options and lifestyles and she's been very highly successful in her business financially.

But what's cool about that is that it then allows her to continue serving people in new and bigger ways. It's not about the money. She didn't create the business for the money. She created the business to serve people, which does serve people, then they pay her for her products or services and then she can expand her reach and her ability to serve more people in new and exciting ways.

And I just love Amy Lacey so much. If you don't follow her, please follow her on Instagram and you can check out the website. And what blew me away about this event so much is that she was just one of dozens of people who attended this meeting and who are committed to sharing what they have to offer to the world.

Everything from, like, investment support to relationship wellness to gut and brain health, there was all kinds of people there. It was amazing. And every person who attended had the goal of creating influence in the world. They were there to inspire people into taking actions that would benefit their own lives, the lives of the people they're trying to serve.

So no one in that room was there to be a scam or manipulate people. Every single person has a personal story from their own experience that they wanted to use to share with others so that other people in the world could benefit from their experience or their expertise.

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And it was then that I realized why influence was so important, and that is this; influence equals impact. You decided to go into education to make an impact. As a teacher, you wanted to have an impact on students' lives. As a principal, you're expanding your impact to not just students, and your reach goes beyond your classroom to the entire school, but your reach also impacts every staff member on that campus and the entire parent community and probably community members outside of the parent community.

And in order to make a lasting impact of the magnitude, you must be able to leverage your ability to influence people into action. And how do you do that? Here is the secret; your level of influence and impact is directly correlated to your ability, willingness, and effort into building authentic relationships.

Taking the time and energy to meet and get to know people for who they are, see past the surface, see past the mirror, maintain connections with those people and build really deep authentic genuine relationships with them and really show them that you care and you want to serve them to the best of your ability is how you create influence and impact. It's really that simple.

And this a-ha moment in my career led me to think about how we can use personal development, which is what I teach, into our current educational system so that we can build more genuine relationships and inspire people into taking action that serves both them and those they serve. This is how I created the idea of influential PD - creating professional development experiences through the use of personal development tools and strategies; PD and PD, right?

The one thing that I firmly believe is that we cannot create lasting change in education if we don't stop to understand why we don't make significant change on our own and we have to allow ourselves how to change.

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Districts spend thousands of dollars on professional development each year and the goal of that professional development is what – it's change. We offer PD because we want people to change the way that they're teaching or the way they collect data or the way they set up systems in their classrooms, whatever it is.

We want them to change an action or a result that is occurring or is currently not occurring on campus and we want them to change. But this means that if the results we want to see, those tangible outcomes, then people have to be inspired into action in order to implement those changes that we want to see.

So today, we're going to discuss why I believe traditional PD doesn't work at its best and to offer some new ways to consider approaching professional development. So why doesn't PD work as well as it should?

Number one – you all have heard this, you know this to be true but it continues to happen every single year – it's top-down. We typically plan professional development based on what we think, as administrators, should be the solution and we're always chasing the shiny object. Or even if teachers have a say in the topic, like maybe somebody comes as a teacher and says, I've got this great idea or I went to this workshop – yeah, yeah let's try that. Let's do that – it tends to be about the how and not the why.

So there's often little to no input from the people who are actually learning the content and if there is, it's very little. So they're not really opting in. It's given to them. Have you noticed this before? I hope that you're willing to see the truth in that. It leads teachers to think that each school year has a PD flavor of the year and that it's the shiny object and this too shall pass.

And let's be honest, you guys, we can't say this is never true. We've experienced it as teachers. And now it's happening as administrators and

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we really believe that we're doing right by our teachers and our kids by trying this PD and trying that PD and researching PD, and this one's the best and it's so exciting – but you have to admit, it still gets approved from the top-down versus it being this organic in nature.

So that's one reason. It's kind of an obvious reason why PD doesn't work, but it continues to be an issue. Number two, when PD is top-down, especially, it doesn't inspire people into action. And I believe that there are PDs out there that I took as a teacher that I was super inspired by and I was an eager beaver learner. I wanted to learn and I wanted to try new things. Some people are more eager than others, and that's fine. But the reason it doesn't inspire people into action tends to be because it focuses on what they're not doing well versus what they are doing well. So it focuses on their weaknesses versus their strengths. And that's not inspiring, you guys.

Can you think of a time when you've been trained on something that's not very inspiring to you? I can certainly. So just be aware that we have to tap into what inspires people to actually take the action of implementation.

Number three, there is very little to no follow up after a presentation or a professional development has occurred. And in my years of school leadership, I can say that I've been to a significant number of professional development presentations, and I will say that over the years, people have realized that the one and done approach doesn't stick for very long and that there is some level of follow up that is necessary.

There is a great level of follow up and I've seen different approaches and I don't have the solution to that other than to say, if and when – and there's more coming up – but if and when I provide professional development at a site or district level, that there needs to be this buy in. There needs to be inspiration into action and there needs to be consistent follow up so that people can continue to take consistent action in order to create a result.

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So many times, we try it once, twice, three times, doesn't work, we're done, it throws out the window. Now, I can tell you, and you know this, there are even studies of what kinds of professional development techniques stick best with people. And hey, by the way, I have a very, very special podcast episode coming up next week as I interview a researcher from Harvard who studies on how teachers learn best and how to create impact and influence in professional development and in the way that you present. It's fascinating. More on that next week, I'm so excited for you guys.

But one of the reasons the follow up is so important is because it's challenging to stay in massive action. Have you ever decided that you were going to commit to something positive at work such as being in classrooms more or maybe you want to write positive notes to your teachers or to kids or something, so you set the intention at the beginning of the year and you start the year on point? You're getting to those classrooms and you're writing those notes.

And as things slowly creep up and the school year gets busy and chaos happens, it starts to slip, that practice slips a little bit. I mean, think about this, the same is true for anybody who set a New Year's resolution to hit the gym more often. You know what I'm talking about? January, February, that gym is packed. And by March, no one's there.

So, there's very little inspiration when the focus is on negative accountability versus positive accountability. So think about this, when we want people to take different action but we inspire them with consequences, punitive consequences versus positive reinforcements, how inspiring is that and who wants to continue doing that work? No, so follow up has to be both positive in nature, consistent in nature.

And there can be some accountability measures that can freak people out and nervously inspire them into action, but it comes from a place of love and trying to serve them for the greater good.

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Number four, and this one, I feel like it's going to be hard to say and it's going to be hard to hear, but it's true and I need to be honest with you. As leaders, we're not always willing to be the example of change. We tend to point the finger at others, especially when we are overwhelmed and exhausted ourselves.

We think that it's the teachers who aren't doing enough or they're not using correct techniques. We blame those bulldozer and helicopter parents and say they're up in our business or they're being mean or that they're just trying to do too much for their kids. We say it's a lack of funding, it's a lack of resources. I get it.

It's not that any of those aren't true, it's that every time we stop and spend our time and energy blaming and pointing the finger at other things outside of us, we're disempowering ourselves as influential leaders. We have to be open to taking a look at the way we currently operate and see where we can do the personal work of taking ownership of our own growth and development.

So, what can we do? Number one, we can take full ownership of our current results. It's one of the hardest things we can ever do as a leader, but if you know a leader who does this, they are fabulous and they are fascinating. If we always try and start with ourselves, we're going to eliminate a lot of time wasted assuming the problem is outside of us and that someone else is to blame and that they should be responsible for solving the problem, not us.

We do a lot of that in education and it's time to take back that ownership because that is empowerment. Anything we judge is actually a reflection of something within us. Our thoughts are a mirror into what we think about ourselves.

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I think this is really hard for humans at large, but individuals, to choose to believe this, that we actually have so much more ownership than we think we do. But once we decide we're going to fully own any result we've created, then life gets so good because it's not just about the bad part. It's not just about having to feel the burden of our own results and being responsible for everything in our life, which is kind of daunting. And we have to take ownership and feel bad when things don't go as planned.

We also get the joy and excitement of possibility that comes with accomplishment and knowing that you have so much more control over your life and your career than you first thought. Number two, we need to be open to changing ourselves. So once we take full ownership, then we have to implement it and apply it.

We have to be the example of how change is possible. This next step is to openly show those around us how we use thought management tools to analyze current situations and adjust our approach based on the results we are getting. As leaders, it is our job to inspire people into action and the best way to do this is to show, not tell. Have you heard that phrase before in education, show not tell?

People are most inspired when they see someone getting a result that they want. They want to know how that person did it. And the way to do it is by shifting your beliefs, which impact the way you feel and act so that you can achieve those goals.

So back to the example of visiting classrooms more often, the reason you decided to have this goal is that you had a series of thoughts about it. It started with just a thought. You were thinking something along the lines of, I should get into classrooms more often, I want to know what's going on, I want to be more connected with the kids, I want my teachers to see that I care about what's going on with them and children, I want to be seen on campus.

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Whatever your thoughts are, you had a series of thoughts and you were like, this series of thoughts played in your head, not just once, but over and over again until you were inspired into taking action to achieve that goal of being in those classrooms. The thoughts that you generated in your head triggered emotions of positivity because, think about this, you believed that taking those actions would result in a positive impact on your staff and students which feels empowering to you because you make it mean that you're a better leader when you positively impact staff and students.

Do you see how our thoughts work? Do you see how they create emotion within us and drive inspiration into action? And taking that, massive action is how you get new results.

You have to be the leader on this. And I know, it's scary to share our thoughts and emotions, especially with people that we're leading. Our current culture does not invite or honor people who put themselves out there, but I'm telling you, it is the path to influence.

Having influence on your staff starts with you. So please, I invite you to lead by example on this and I promise you, if you do, it will change your impact as a school leader.

Number three, when you plan PD, I want you to include PD. What I mean by that is when you're planning professional development for your team, you have to be sure to include personal development. Influential PD includes a personal development component. And to me, that is what's been missing in our industry.

I want to commend Dr. Anthony Muhammad. I know I've mentioned him in prior podcasts. But I really love his work in school culture because he's done so much research on how the culture – he says, “The culture will eat the system in a district any day of the week.” And that is so powerful to

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know. His work on building school culture in order to create effective systems is monumental in the educational PD world. So check him out.

And I want to add to that work and say that the goal must also be to include the emotional mindset and the emotional stamina of change along with the specific tactics and strategies and changes that you want to make. And here's why; change is extremely hard for our brains.

Everything in our brain is wired against change and it's not the actual switching of our actions or the approach that is the hardest part. What's the hardest part is the shift in our mindset that occurs in order to make our emotional vibration different in order to inspire us into creating that change.

So it's not the change itself. It's getting our brains into the mindset to take action in order to create the change that's hard. You guys, there's so much more we can talk about this as it relates to PD, so much so that I want to share with you, first and foremost, I am planning to create a webinar to share this concept of influential PD with the greater educational community.

So please, follow me on social media for more information on the date and time for that. It's not going to be for a couple of weeks because I've got a lot going on and I want to make sure I get this message out right. I want to inspire people into action, so I want to make sure that I plan it accordingly.

Furthermore, I am going to – well, I actually already am in the process of creating an entire PD series to support you school leaders in this mission of providing more influential PD. So I'm going to package this as influential PD. If you are interested in more information, please feel free to reach out to me at angelakellycoaching@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

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I would look forward to hearing your input and your insight. I want you to have a voice in how this PD should look, how it should feel, what you're looking for, how you want it to be different than traditional professional development. I invite you to provide your input and insights and all of your knowledge and experience.

You are so important to this process. I love you guys. Have an amazing week. Talk to you next week. Take care, bye-bye.

Hey, quick question, what do you want to be saying and doing and thinking and feeling one year from now? Have you thought about that? Or is your career simply on rinse and repeat? Do you plan out your school year, your career goals, your personal goals, and your fun goals? Or are you the person who looks back and thinks, "Wow, I have been doing the same thing over and over and over for the last five to 10 years, what happened? Where did the time go?"

If so, June is the absolute perfect time to reflect on last year and set new intentions in place for the next school year. If there's any area within your job or your life where you would love to change or make improvements, now is the time to set those changes into motion while you have the luxury of time to plan and process and play.

If you're curious what life coaching for school leaders looks like, let's jump on a call together and talk about your biggest dreams and goals for yourself. You want to start today so that a year from now, you're not saying to yourself, "I wish I had started a year ago."

There's no one else out there who offers this type of support for school leaders that I offer you. Sign up for a call before summer is over and you're bogged down with the demands of the school year once again. It will be the best way to have spent your summer. It's all about saying yes to you.

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