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**Brian:** Welcome to the One Advantage Podcast, exploring the intersections of pure power, culture, and agility. Your host, Jason Richman, Mike Richardson, and Leo Bottary, co-founders of The One Advantage Community of Practice and Advantage Peer Groups. For more information, please visit us at idealoutcomes.com.

**Leo:** Welcome everyone to this week's episode of the One Advantage Podcast.

My name's Leo Bottary. I'm joined by Jason Richmond today. Mike Richardson is on assignment, as we always like to say, when one of us can't be here. But just a start of a fabulous week I think. And Jason tell us a little bit about what you've been up to. I know you just get back from A wonderful retreat, if you will, with your team.

So if you can tell us a little bit about that.

**Jason:** Absolutely. And you talk about, what we're talking about today is the power of we. And individual strengths and strengths of a team. What an experience. We've just had. We had a three day retreat down in the US Virgin Islands in St.

Thomas. It finished on Saturday evening. So everyone departed yesterday. And it was all about team and the power of individuals on this group. And I gotta tell you, Leo, we spent. We spent three days and we do this every year, but we spent three days, working on the business versus in the business.

And just the benefits and the impact and the motivation and the just enthusiasm that comes outta that was priceless. Impactful. The way we shifted gears on some stuff. We even renewed our mission and vision and made some tweaks to that. We really we really spent three quality days working together.

Creating common ground. So it's a perfect it's a perfect time for this topic for me, really, to be honest with you.

**Leo:** Yeah. When I think about real estate, they always say location. I think the same could be hold true for retreats maybe as well.

You certainly started off being in a great spot. But what I love about it is when you can get people together in that way that's kinda away from the day-to-day of work where they can. Really connect with one another on a completely different level, not just as coworkers, but tap into their shared humanity, if you will.

And it's just a different conversations. It's, and there's a certain, what I love about what you said too, there's a, there's an intentionality around it, where you can really dig in and talk about. Things that create a level of clarity that sometimes we always don't have time to create with one another.

And, it's just fascinating to me cuz I would imagine as much as you all work together during that time there, everybody leaves with a sense of. Okay, starting when we get back, what's my role now? How do I best contribute? What is that? I think there was a certain bit of clarity created around that, but by the same token, there's also that individual challenge to myself and to, and for others, right?

That we're gonna, we're gonna bring our best kind of going forward, and we know. More precisely what that is. So how did you kind feel about that?

**Jason:** In reflection of just these three days, wrote down some notes as I reflected and one of the things that I had written down was individual

common ground . And, and one of the big team benefits that came out is renewing that common ground. We've got some new people on the team that had never met face to face. My team is coast to coast, so to come together sometimes, some of these people don't get a chance to see each other, but once a year.

So it's a hundred percent remote organization. And what I mean by common ground is tapping into you as an individual and walking away with such a heightened sense of camaraderie, within the organization, within the team. The level of engagement right now is as high as it's ever been.

And it's all driving to, having the type of culture where we all can perform. The systems and the and the current projects we've got and the project teams, not just the education and the knowledge of what's going on with every person's role and responsibility, but we walked outta this team meeting now with such a higher level comfort level of tapping into resources from other people on the team.

That can bring value to a project that they might not have normally thought about. And that's just because they learn so much more about their personal strengths, their passions, the value they can bring. And doing that collaboration effort really is gonna help us in our quality of product time to market the, all the way across the board.

So it, the individual common ground. When we talk about the power of we it, it's built up of a whole bunch of individuals and we need to understand. Where we have that common ground to build from.

**Leo:** Sekou Andrews is a poetic voice who had a quote in my second book where he talked about being part of a community where you feel small among them and they look at you like a giant.

Yeah, and I think about how profound that is, right? In terms of you understand the gifts of the other people on the team and in the room you recognize what they bring to the table and it's almost awe inspiring, right? You're wondering, do I belong on this team? Yet? By the same token, they recognize the special gifts you bring.

To the table, and there's that incredible mutual respect, and there's that trust that builds over time, as well. Certainly there's a story, interestingly enough, we all think that this is just team members, but I've seen it with CEOs as well. While you were in St. Thomas, by the way, I was in Fort Wayne, Indiana and in Atlanta, Georgia, which by the way, Great communities, great places and all of that kind of fun stuff.

But I was working with CEO groups and we talk about the importance of being, being committed to the group and attending those meetings because a CEO might think to himself hey, if I've got a lot going back at the office and maybe I don't go the meeting's still gonna go on. It'll go on without me.

But what they don't always recognize is that it's never gonna be the same meeting because their gifts are missing from that table. And there's a story actually that I've written about, which there was a gentleman, his name was Richard, and he was a ceo and his attendance was really sketchy at these meetings and he was upset about the conversation that was going on around attendance.

So he stands up in the middle of the meeting, makes lectures, the group about, look, I'm here when I can be here. I pay the dues. He went on and on. And then says, and when I miss a meeting, I'm the one who loses and then he sits down. So all of a sudden now it's, there's this, oh no, you know what Now with this conversation, right?

So anyway I'd looked to the member right across from him and I said, Hey, would you mind giving me one minute on what's lost when Richard can't be at this meeting? And I said, oh, man, when Richard's not here, he brings a whole perspective that nobody else around this table brings. Right Now I go to a secondment by the time I go to a third no kidding.

Richard was welling up in tears. So now of course I'm going back to Richard and I basically said, look, I didn't do that to show you up. If I asked that question about anybody around this table, you all would've responded exactly the same way. As you know how much you matter in your company, you're the CEO now.

You just found out how much you matter in this room. And there's this idea in that realization, not only for him, but for everyone else around that table that said, you know what? I have to own the contribution that I bring here and that what's lost when I'm not here, when I'm not truly committed to everyone else.

And I think when we can do that, whether it's being part of a peer group or really I'm sure as you were able to do this weekend with everyone on your team, that is extremely powerful.

**Jason:** Yeah. And I, you said a few things there that sparks of a thought and the power of differences.

Understanding, having, we spent a lot of time talking about, just being present in the moment all the time. And how important is when you're collaborating or when you're working in teams, you know what it says about you as an individual working in a group of people, working in a peer group to when you're there, you're present.

And what comes outta that is, is sometimes the differences of us as individuals. Just like that CEO says, I'm the one that loses. But at the end of the day, no one really gets a true understanding of some things that he might, differences he's bringing, he or she's bringing in unbelievable great ideas.

And I think focusing on, we spend a lot of time talking about our gaps and. And our shortcomings and the things we didn't agree on. And it, it drove it drove us to really think about as much as we're alike, we have some very unique differences, but how that's benefiting us, one, it's driving innovation.

It's forcing people to think differently. It's driving a high level of creativity. And how we tackle projects or programs or business challenges. And it's impacting our decision making, right? Understanding how our decisions now impact the other people that we work with and the other people in the company has been really heightened.

And that's because everyone was present and that's why, and that's where we focused on us as individuals. And some of our differences, I we're coming outta here with a, with an instant raise in, in quality of outputs because of that. And I think our decision making they're gonna is going to be stronger.

We're gonna have a higher level of creativity. We're gonna be driving more innovation because we can appreciate the fact that yes, we're a lot alike in a lot of ways, but we all have unique differences also.

**Leo:** So tell me a little bit when you said that you feel like engagement right now is as high as it's ever been I'd love to know.

Kind of where that comes from, because I know oftentimes when we think about when we can recognize our own strengths and we can see the gifts that others are bringing to the table, right? And we can do and we can spend time working on the things, not only that we're really good at and we really love to do, but where we can add the most value.

So is, do you feel like that factors into this level of engagement that you feel like you've got people doing what they love to do, what they're really good at, and how best they can bring value to the table?

**Jason:** Absolutely. But then also where else they want that path to go, right? When I say a level of engagement, we any good meeting, you gotta have action items, right?

You don't get together just to get together. There, there's gotta be that purpose of annual retreats and annual strategy meetings and those types of things. So any really high quality meeting is gonna have some action items and that level of engagement is demonstrated by this appetite.

Appetite to take things on that challenge me as an individual and challenged me in a way to help strengthen even my, even some of my strengths and also maybe get stronger at some of my weaknesses. And it was just apparent at the end from reassuring our action items and what we were gonna be working on and how quick people were jumped to say so you know, these two people were gonna work on this project.

And. And to be committed and excited and have enthusiasm for that, knowing that they can tackle this together. I just seen that level of passion in the work they do in the heightened level. When we ended, and that was just, even in the last hour when we summarized it, figured out, these are the 10 things we're gonna go out and do, because of our time together.

**Leo:** It's so interesting too. I think that part of that also is getting people to feel comfortable around one another, to be open about what they think they're really good at. We shy away from those conversations. We don't wanna say, I think I'm really good at this is my superpower or all that.

Many years ago I was pitching in Babe Ruth baseball and there was a guy in our neighborhood that was actually playing minor league ball and he was home for a weekend or something like that. And we were playing catch outside and he asked me about what position I play and all that as a pitcher.

And he says, are you good at it? And I'm a kid, I'm kicking the dirt saying I'm all right, whatever. And he stopped. And when I threw him the ball, he stopped for a minute and he said, if you're good at it, say so. It's okay. And I felt like it was one of the first times as a kid because I was really given permission to be able to say, you know what, Hey, if I'm good at that's all right to say that it's all right to own those.

And I think part of and we'd like to get her, I know on the show at some point soon, and her name is Angela Myers. And Angela Myers does work and she has not-for-profit called Choose to Matter. And it actually starts with young kids being able to, own their gifts and to really be.

Recognize the contribution they make. And I think if we could start our kids off as that way and continue that process I've got graduate students where I work and teach for Rutgers University who say they have a very difficult time talking about themselves to, to others. And yet we know if we don't. I think value ourselves as sure we can deliver value, we're never gonna convince anyone else that they should believe it, right? So when I think about this idea of engagement, how do we get people, adults to really step up and own those gifts, own that contribution they can bring to their team?

**Jason:** Yep. We, and I always work on the, the power the power of personal storytelling. And using the example that you just, yo everybody that we deal with, everyone we work with, everyone. We deal coaching with everyone. We le, en engage in leadership development with, the, getting people in the mindset that they can share those defining moments, those personal stories that have stuck with them.

Really highlight some of their strengths and some of the things they're really good at. I and I think being able to share that with your colleagues and peers and people you work for is a huge step towards just that. But understanding that your personal experiences, your personal stories, even if it's all the way back to childhood impact the way we contribute to our organizations and our teams today.

**Leo:** That is such an excellent point. And we talk a lot about storytelling, but yet by the same token, it's that untold story oftentimes that doesn't give us insight into someone and how they work and how they see the world. That when, how many times when we hear that story, It's like an aha moment for us, right?

Or it's a, oh wow, now I get that. I never realized such and such, right? Yeah. And it makes us look at that person in their actions, quite frankly, entirely differently than if we didn't have access to it. So did you, in the course of the retreat, have people share stories this time around or if you've done those kinds of things in the past or

**Jason:** I've done it in the past and I continually do it and we, we did it here.

Ideal outcomes, we're gonna practice what we preach. So working inward, working on ourselves. We did our own culture assessments. We rated our own culture and our own company and our own organization identified culture gaps, made commitments to work on those things.

Something I've done that was fairly new and I, I would recommend Leo and your peer groups or. Or a workshop is, we spent a fair amount of time on, on Friday. We I had a, an expert come in and do and facilitate for us. We spent time doing some improv and doing that as a group of working colleagues, peers, professionals, that, that have to work, really broke the barriers down and got people out of their comfort zone.

And improv exercises and it let people get out of their own way. And it really demonstrated, some of the true self of people who they are and how they feel and their comments and their stories. And I, we're going to do, be doing a lot more of that, not only internally, but externally and integrating more of that improv.

Exercise and thought process in, in, in team building and leadership engagements

**Leo:** So I can imagine how tricky that must have been if you think about it, right? You have people that are used to, they own the room. When they're leading a training session they own that whole thing, right?

They, usually yes, there'll be questions or things that come their way, but they've seen it before. They've done it. They're extremely well prepared. They get it now of a sudden, to your point, they gotta fly without a net for a little while. Yeah. And that's gonna be really scary, I think, for someone who's used to being in that position.

Is that a fair. Description or

**Jason:** That is a completely fair description, Leo. We but again the impact it made, the conversations we had about it, it was amazing that after we were done with that for the next day and a half, just people in our conversations were referring back to it and almost duplicating some of the things we've just gone through.

It be it started to become, More behavioral based than just having exercises. And it, we had a mindset shift there and I think, organizations, if they have the right environment set up, that type of engagement, you talk about the power of, we, you get to really deep understanding of individuals that you're working with on a daily basis.

The force fields, the shields kind of drop a little bit.

**Leo:** Oh, sure. So in thinking about stories now, not necessarily from this weekend or, and I certainly don't want you to name names or anything, but in your mind, is there a particular story that you think you've, you heard and that others heard about someone that once they heard that story, it just was game changing for them in some respects?

Is there one in, I, like I said, I wouldn't put you on the spot, but is there one in particular that kind of comes to mind? Anything like that, that, that hits you?

**Jason:** I think there was just a lot of defining moments in regards to our leadership or our education or our growth potential. And one particular story that, that, I've repeated and heard is from a coaching aspect, from a performance aspect individual that went from an individual contributor to a leader and never had that.

Never had that ability to really separate and understand the difference. And that individual, his first couple years of leadership was still being measured by him by on, on personal performance. And where he was, where he was leading, he wasn't leading, he was polling everybody instead of encouraging and developing and pushing and persuading.

What eventually happened is they hit their capacity. They absolutely could not produce higher results cuz they were at full capacity. And after working with a coach and analyzing it, they realized that they haven't been leading at all. They've just been delegating and pulling people along instead of focusing on them, developing them, getting their performance to where it needs to be and have team performance rather than, In individual's performance.

And it's, it was a story that came out. It comes, that type of story I hear a lot is when they transition from that individual contributor to that leadership position now and entitle and enroll and responsibilities and everything shift, but mindset has not.

**Leo:** Sure. I've even heard too people sharing stories about, Like horrific things they went through in their childhood, for example.

And you start getting a sense of who they are. You and you, just you. You just see that person very differently. Not even about the specific experience, but you just recognize. And look at one another in a more total way, not just as a coworker or somebody, that kind of thing. You just see them for a full, complete human being in a way sometimes that we don't always default to.

And I think retreats and things like, you know what you did, and giving people that time. To spend one, one another is not only something that, some people feel like, we can't, we don't have time to do that. We can't afford to do that. But and without being, but I think for organizations they can't afford not to do that because the benefits of it, I think the benefits of what cuz I know how excited.

You were after this particular and are still after this three day retreat, and I can only imagine, you're probably thinking to yourself what the benefits of this are going to be that never may have been realized had these folks not had that reflective, intentional. Time to create clarity for themselves in one another.

**Jason:** One one of 'em is gonna be in how we communicate. And just the structure. The structure of communication. And the involvement of communication. But in, in line with what you're saying, another, stories that I hear, stories that work from is going back to more. Stories about the people that influence people's lives.

It could be a grandfather, a grandmother, it could be a parent, could have been a coach, and the values that their experiences from a sporting event or from a learning event or from a work event, as a very young age, how that at their core develop their personality and who they are now.

That is a very common type of, story, it's not necessarily so much about the story, it's more about the individual who that was, how they influenced you, the advice they gave you, and how you've carried that on through your professional life. So again, it's understanding that is huge.

**Leo:** Oh, yeah.

And a great way to get to that. Oftentimes, and I've done this with groups where I've asked them, To talk about a leader they admire. And not someone from history or someone from, that they don't know, but someone who's been a part of their life in some way. Yeah. And is always amazing the range of people.

That are talked about as you go around in the room, cuz someone will talk about it was their mom. Somebody will talk about some CEO they worked for. Someone will talk about a baseball coach they had as a kid. Whatever that may happen to be. And then when you get them to actually dig in and talk about what was it about them that.

Was so valuable and important and impressive to you, and you really get a sense of who they are and what they value and where that comes from. And I think that's incredibly powerful, not only for a leader to get to know about those on the team, but for as people understand that about one another, I think it's extraordinary.

**Jason:** One thing, one thing is in a professional setting, one thing you will find. If you're effective of having events like this and how to measure engagement. Most work groups find themselves in competitive situations. Quite often individuals in the team compete against each other. Some might be subconsciously, but they do compete.

Get them and get go. Going through an experience like this. We had a lot of time to, play some games and tho those types of things. And you could easily observe the difference between I want to win, or I'm competing here to more, no, I want to help you get better. Or, I want art.

It turned into more collaboration exercises instead of a competitive situation. And if you have a team that is, At that level of not so much concerned about if they win or the competitive side of things, but make it more of a collaborative, work environment. You as a group, you're gonna, you're gonna perform well.

**Leo:** And some of that competition is really healthy and good from the perspective of someone modeling certain behaviors that you think, boy, I want to be as good as that person. It helps me step up my game. Yeah. On the collaboration competition though, piece on my website, I have this very short video where I had CEOs in a room in Scotland and I made them thumb wrestle one another.

And I this is hilarious cuz they asked him to do it and they're all like, they turned into eight year olds like that fast. But anyway, they're all in the room. I asked them, look each of you, I haven't gonna work on their little thumb wrestling skills for a second. I said, I'm gonna give you 30 seconds.

And I said, at the end of 30 seconds, I'm gonna go around and find out whoever had the most pin. And whoever has the most pins is gonna win whatever prize I've got at the front of the thing. So sure enough, they go 30 seconds, they're all in and they're loud and it's crazy and it's really fun.

Anyway, they're done. I now, I go around the room and I say, all right, how many pins did you get? Someone says, three, I got two, I got four. Then someone says, I got 50. And I said, all right, hold on for a minute there. And then I go back and then I go back to the person who got 50. He says, all, tell us how you got 50 pins.

He said, we agreed that if I'm just gonna let him beat me as many times as possible in 30 seconds, then we're gonna split the prize right. So what you've got, collaboration beats competition every time at that, right? When you decide that you're gonna be in it for one another, and that, each of you can get this exponentially better result by working together than from competing in that negative way, of course.

So great fun and yeah and a great retreat game, by the way, for anyone who wants to do a retreat. Little thumb wrestling. Did. Isn't gonna hurt anybody. Even now that we're post covid, we can kinda do that.

**Jason:** None of that, none of what we're talking about can happen if we don't make if leaders if colleagues, if we don't take the time to dig a little deeper and really understand the individuals within our groups.

That's the foundational starting point. Really get to understand the people you're working with and who are working for you.

**Leo:** And I think whether we're the leader of the team or from time to time, we are called upon or have to step up and be a leader in the team. I think everything you've just said is so true and so important, and I think it absolutely, essential that we call, understand that the power of we, that collective group team, whatever happens to be, begins with each of us.

It begins with our contribution and our understanding of. How we're going to contribute, how we're gonna make a difference, and then how we set the tone for everyone else on the team. And that, in and of itself is real leadership. All, all often but anything you'd like to add just before we sign off here today?

It's really enjoyed the conversation.

**Jason:** No I just want to challenge all our listeners to. Continually find ways to really get to know the people in your organization, their strengths and what they're bringing. It will fundamentally change how you lead 'em how you communicate, how you inspire, how you work together.

But you gotta take that challenge. You gotta take that on and you actually have to be authentic about it, transparent about it, and yeah, I just challenge everybody to do that.

**Leo:** You bet. Again, the power of we begins with each of us. And once we accept that and understand that and accept what comes with that we can go a long way.

Jason thank you so much. Another fun episode of The One Advantage Podcast. And for our listeners, of course, I want to make them just make the point also that we've got the One Advantage ebook coming out really soon. So we hope you pick up a copy and we will, until next time we will we'll see you in a few weeks.

All right on now.

**Brian:** Thanks. Thanks for listening to the One Advantage Podcast. If you liked this episode, please consider helping us by rating us wherever you listen. Spreading the word, having us as a guest on your podcast or webinar and mentioning us in social media, find us at the One Advantage Podcast where you can get more information about us.

And this episode, thanks again for listening and we look forward to more great episodes to come.