Clean EP 42 Resolve to Cultivate Culture Change

**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 Ideal Outcomes Inc. com

**Mike:** Happy New Year everybody. Welcome to 2024. Let's make it a great one. The first episode of The One Advantage Podcast in the new year, and we are starting things off like we mean to carry on. We have a full house of Jason, Leo, and myself here, and we have a good one today. Resolving to cultivate culture change.

No better time than early January. To shift gears into that and we'll get to that in a moment. Resolve the cultivate culture change. But before we do that, of course, let's check in with everybody. Did you have a nice Christmas break? Where were you before? Where are you going next? Leo, do you wanna start?

**Leo:** Sure. Spent Christmas and the day after here in California. Went to Denver between Christmas and New Year's. See the grandkids and and then yeah, just back at it, my first trip coming up to Omaha, Nebraska. Ooh. Where, which will mark my, actually my 400. Visit a presentation.

**Mike:** That is a big deal, everybody.

I, I also did around 400, I'm sure it wasn't precisely 400. And man, that is a big commitment and we're the, everybody's blessed to have you out there doing that. Leo, and you are just launching a brand new website, correct.

**Leo:** That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Available at Peer innovation dot biz.

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Leo:** A whole really fresh look.

**Jason:** Yep.

**Leo:** But it the important thing, it isn't just the new look of it and all that. There's, we stood on the shoulders of a lot of that work and developed a lot of new content as well that I think is gonna be really relevant to folks in 2024. So I'm really excited about that. Yeah,

**Mike:** exactly. Yeah. We'll be talking about that more. Everybody go check it out. Peer innovation.biz BIZ I think. Correct. Earlier. Yes. Yep. Beautiful. And Jason, how are we? Holidays. Awesome. Where were you before? Where are you going next?

**Jason:** Happy Holidays. Yep, happy holidays, team. Where am I going next? I'm, I'll be going back back to Southern California.

First step. Yeah. I've got some client engagement work in New York, and I'm getting ready to engage in a, in an international project in Singapore coming up in February. Some pretty exciting stuff going on there. I'm happy. It's, I'm happy we're in 2024. I hope everyone had a. Safe and happy holiday season.

I excited about 2024 and I'm excited about this conversation. I think a little bit of our conversation needs to be about resolutions.

**Mike:** Yes, there you go.

**Jason:** Yeah. What

**Mike:** are we as resolution resolutions of the New Year's kind? And let's try to keep it up all year, everybody. I yeah.

**Jason:** What are we gonna do differently as, as leaders in our organizations?

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. It's the things we need to be thinking about.

**Mike:** Yeah. I I love to be at home over the holidays, everybody. So I, I was with my family of course, and, played some golf. 'cause I'm trying to catch up with Leo. Not that's ever gonna happen. He's just so good.

We're gonna, we're probably gonna take a nice little road trip this year together and go play some golf with a special guest that we'll mention another time. And I was lucky enough to have dinner with Jason just before the holiday break in Orange County. Which is a rare and precious thing these days 'cause we're all over the place all the time.

That was great being with you, Jason, and yes, indeed. I think we've all got some big things cooking up for this new year of 2024.

So let's talk about New Year's resolutions that we can keep going all year. Everybody resolve to cultivate culture change. The beginning of the year is a great time to finally tackle.

Those lingering workplace culture challenges. Get tips on being agile in a changing world, using peer groups to facilitate change, defining a desired future state, diagnosing current cultural shortfalls, and creating actionable plans to bridge these gaps. Let's start with you, Jason. When you think about all of that resolving to cultivate culture change, what kinds of things come to mind for you?

Right out of the gate here.

**Jason:** What comes to mind to me right outta the gate is behavior change. Yeah. And I, and IBR brought up the word resolutions because I think I read recently, 88, 89% of all New Year's resolutions fail before the end of January. That's right. And they do and because they're focused on the wrong thing.

Ultimately a resolution has to be tied to a particular goal. But in my mind, resolution has to align with behavior change. So if an organization wants to have a resolution or come into the two in the 24 year and create a high performing culture, they really need to say, what are we gonna, how's our leaders gonna be, behave differently?

YEah. When I come back in that office or I open up the doors, or I'm on my first team call, my first zoom meeting, when we're talking about our first quarter plans or our first quarter goals, how am my leader gonna communicate differently? What am I gonna bring to the table? What behavior am I gonna change in order for us to have growth over last year?

ANd I think every leader coming into January, we're early January here, really needs to be looking, I, my opinion is to be looking at where they really want their organization to go this year. ANd the resolution isn't that end game, that resolution is how do I have to change in order to do that?

**Mike:** Yeah. Behaviors and the sort of disciplined application of some of the processes that. That you've got around that define those behaviors and those approaches, and it's so easy for us to have an ill disciplined approach to all of those things, not least of all the core. Cultural part of that.

Right, Jason? That's what you spend a lot of your time diagnosing and then leaning into helping to fix with your clients, right? Yeah. Really taking a close look at what's happening with the central cog of your culture. Correct.

**Jason:** That's you're absolutely correct. And it's going strong in 2024 already.

Yeah. We're on a pretty good growth projection. Yeah. Over 2023. But even with my team, starting the new year, we're gonna we're gonna set some cultural standards and some cultural resolutions even on my own core team. Yeah, but those resolutions are all gonna be tied to how do we ba behave?

Going back to our core values, how are we communicating? What messages are we sending, right? Yeah. How do we engage our employees, our partners, our team members, into the appropriate projects, right? And we'll run we'll realign some things. We'll look at program managers, project managers, deliverable people, their engagement in particular projects.

I'm just speaking from my own personal experience, my own business where you've even rolled out already. I. A brand new format of, team meetings, team calls, team accountability checks scrums, if you will, in, in an agile world. So right out of the gates we're, we've changed some policies and procedures to align with where we want to be culturally in 2024.

Yeah. Beautiful. Change to do we hadn change to do it.

**Mike:** Yeah. Beautiful. And Leo, as you frame this up in your mind, how do you begin to think this through?

**Leo:** So in 2022, I restarted a practice that was introduced to me by Chris Brogan called My Three Words, and I picked three words that will really guide how and who I wanna be in the world over the next 12 months.

It was actually the subject of the last CEO world article that I published at the end of 2023 to serve as a bridge into 2024. And the title actually was called Chief Executive Officer. So you can handle your three words any way you want. You can set 'em up as pillars. You can set 'em up as those that reinforce one another.

You could put a sentence together, you could do whatever you want. But one thought I gave to chief executive officers is to lean into what it means to be chief. In terms of being a leader, what it means to be an executive and how you model those behaviors in your company and what's the responsibility you have as an officer of the company in terms of the values and all of that and behaviors that are so key to being that leader in your organization.

And. The way you define those things for yourself can guide you. And I think to a bit of Jason's point, if a leader can set up those three things that kind of lean into what they're great at and have a point of view on it, but then you invite your employees to come up with their own three words in terms of how it taps into what we're trying to do together overall, then they have that sense of ownership of it, as well, which I think can be really exciting.

And, just a really good practice.

**Mike:** My three words for the year then could be long and straight given I want to improve my You go. I'm just joking. Of course, but I've actually had three words. There's a piece on my website where I describe my career in three words. So I love this.

And my three words are agile, breakthrough leadership, and they track to, in my twenties, when I came out of my MBA, I knew that I wanted to go into leadership. Not, banking, not consulting. I wanted to go into industry in a leadership role and then. As I became a, an executive and a managing director, I realized that I needed to, step up to a level of breakthrough leadership.

'cause just incremental organic leadership wasn't gonna do it. That's when I first went looking for the local Dale Carnegie franchisee in the uk. Jason and I found Jack Ross and we did a breakthrough program together. For the whole team to to introduce them to the concept of breakthrough leadership.

And then of course, 20 years ago when I took the leap from the corporate world and went independent and started to try to grapple with what I felt was missing in the leadership curriculum. I came up with the word agile. So breakthrough leadership isn't enough if it's traditional, long wavelength waterfall, right?

Kind of change leadership and change management. It's gotta be a heck of a lot more. Agile than that. So agile breakthrough leadership. I love that, Leo. And that kind of theme. What's your reaction to those ideas there, Jason?

**Jason:** I'm just thinking, what are my three words?

**Leo:** So yeah, so mine for this year are reflection intention and invention.

**Mike:** Nice. So yeah, nice.

**Jason:** And I might have an update for you in a couple weeks, but I think if I was put on the spot, I would have to go something like entrepreneurial mindset growth. I.

**Mike:** And isn't it everybody that's listening to this?

I think what's actually happening right here, right now is the power of words is so pivotal because if you choose those three words that Jason chose or you choose the three words that Leo chose, or my three words, it changes everything. The beha, the sort of granularity of behaviors that you will get into and define will be very different depending upon the three words that you chose.

So words really matter. Leo, I've heard you, I've heard you talk about that before. Tell us more.

**Leo:** Yeah, there's no question. Language is really powerful. When you think about it in every way and in every form we communicate to people in terms of what that looks like and understanding that, and we've talked about this before, the receipt of the message as intended is up to the sender.

And that we have to think of it, not in terms of what we wanna say, but actually how the message is gonna be received and how people are gonna feel. And there's a lot of nuance around that and a lot of really important details and attention to detail that needs to go into how we message to whomever.

And I think it's really critical part of yeah, of leadership for sure.

**Mike:** Yeah. And actually one of my favorite ideas is that idea that you don't feel yourself into acting better. You act yourself into feeling better. Which brings us back to the behaviors thing Jason, right? Which is, if I wanna feel better about my culture and therefore I wanna feel better about my future as a leader and as a business and as an organization.

I need to act my way into feeling better about all of that. In other words, I need to behave differently to give birth to all of that stuff. Correct.

**Jason:** Very correct. And that, and guys, I, everyone listening to us today, I. Every leader, every executive, every manager out there, their people have gone through the last couple weeks their holiday traditions.

Their holiday seasons. And there's so much perception and so much, granular and, presence in the holidays and everything else. This is a perfect time. For every executive leader to talk to their people that report to them, have them reevaluate their three words, have them evaluate and share what they're looking to accomplish in 2024, take the extra time to find out what your people want to accomplish this year.

Us as leaders, our role is to remove roadblocks so our people can be successful and accomplish their goals. This is the perfect time of year to really set back to really understand what all of your people in your organization want to accomplish themselves. And I, that's a missing point. We deal with that a lot.

We'll get into June and July and I'll be working with managers and leaders ask those questions. They have no idea what their people really want to accomplish. Yeah. Now's the time we have conversations.

**Leo:** MIke you really brought it up earlier. Words are powerful, but words alone are not enough.

Yeah, exactly. So I think what Jason's speaking to also is we think about, and the holidays is a great way to it, what are the rituals we have? Like for people who celebrate Christmas, does your family like always open a present on New Year's Eve and then it's a Christmas day thing? Do they do, what are these little things that you do as a family that are an expected part of how you roll as a family?

And this, it's no different when you've got a corporate situation and you've got three words. You've got your values, you've got your why, you've got all this other stuff. But what are the day-to-day things you do? What are the overlapping, reinforcing behaviors? What are the rituals? What are the things that people expect that set your company and set your culture apart so that you're living that culture.

You're not just saying and talking about that culture and have it be just words. Yeah.

**Mike:** Yeah, I love that. And you both know that I like to bracket all of that with my phrase C to C conversation flow to cash flow. And all of the executional behaviors and actions and infrastructures and processes and traction creating things that you have to do to get from, the top line of your conversation flow to the bottom line of your cash flow.

And it's so interesting because I did a strategic retreat with a client I think back in November and left them. Leaving with an executable plan that I call a traction plan, a very visual one page overview of everything they need to drive traction with in a well triaged way, as we call it.

And one of the, one of the things that they knew they had to change their behaviors around was meetings. Because meetings were a source of wheel spin, not traction. They were a source of poor culture, not great culture. And so I said to them, Hey, in a few weeks before Christmas, can I come and sit in over Zoom one one of your key meetings?

It was now a long meeting. And I just did that earlier this week and it was not good. And I let them know that I don't see a behavioral change here and everybody, I love to, to do that because a meeting is like a sort of microscope of culture. It's like a Petri dish of culture. It's where a lot of culture happens, isn't it?

The quality of the questions, the quality of the thinking, the quality of the answers, the quality of the behaviors, just getting there on time and being fully present, things like that. And it's just amazing. You might imagine that will surely. The behaviors we display in meetings must be the easiest thing in the world to crack.

If I wanna change my culture, and actually it's one of the most difficult. Jason, would you agree it's one of the hardest things to crack? Yeah. At the core of your culture and your core values?

**Jason:** No I, yeah, I don't have a lot to add to that, Mike. I agree with you a hundred percent of what you're saying there.

**Mike:** Yeah. I

**Leo:** get, you just have to ask yourself why every once in a while, like, why are we having this, why is that? We've been doing this for five years and that, okay, great. But why? Maybe. This has outlived its purpose here, right?

**Mike:** There's and by the way, it brings up another of my favorite points, which, Leo and Jason know that I like to walk a bit of a tight rope.

I don't mind, I don't mind walking on thin ice occasionally. There's nothing I love to do better than stand in front of an executive team and look at them square in the eye and say, and you know who some of the worst offenders are, all of you. And you are not resolving to, to align with your core values that are on the wall over there and the behaviors that you want of everybody else.

If you are not prepared to do it, why on earth would you expect that everybody else does? And every time that you deviate, you are training them that it's okay for them. Too deviate. Correct. So this is, in some ways, Jason, culture sometimes comes over as the simplest thing in the world, and yet in many ways it's the most complicated thing in the world to drive the success of a business.

Is it not?

**Jason:** I've always thought, so again, you talk about vuca, you talked about so many, we talk about all the time, so many external factors that impact business results, stock price, across the world. But think about culture. All the external factors are impacting the people that make up your workplace experience.

**Mike:** Yeah,

**Jason:** right? You have all these things externally attacking every individual in your organization, and whether they bring that into your organization or not, bringing that in, consciously or subconsciously, you have all these dynamics. If you got a company with a hundred people, 200 people. You've got dynamics going on with each and every one of them that has an impact on your organizational environment.

Yeah. Think about a company with 15,000 people. Yep.

**Mike:** Right now

**Jason:** you got 15,000 people that all have all these external factors that are pinging their attitudes, their mindsets, their emotions, and all those types of things. This is where emotional control, emotional intelligence, comes into play in our business.

But all those touch points of impact. That can impact the environment that we work in on a daily basis. If we're not considering that we don't. We're not open to that. We don't understand what's going on in people's worlds. We're gonna have a hard time

**Mike:** evolving. Evolving a culture. Yeah. Yeah. And everybody think about your business and all of the different kinds of infrastructure that you have in your business to help your business run.

You've got machines on the factory floor, you've got business processes, you've got software systems, you've got all this sort of infrastructural stuff. And yet, oftentimes when it comes to your culture. You don't have much infrastructure. A culture requires as much infrastructure, as much design as any other aspect of your business model or otherwise you get the culture you deserve, not the culture that you want.

That's right. Leo, what would you add into all of that?

**Leo:** Yeah. I think it can be a particular challenge for companies that are growing, right? 'cause what tends to happen is as they're trying to scale and they're building processes and they're adding, and they never take anything away.

So now it becomes so overwhelming. People get upset with each other because messages and things and happen, and balls get dropped, client gets upset, and you start creating a culture. Then that starts to be a blame culture based on a lot of the things that, to your point, by design, we're set up to fail.

This is not, a shock that, that things go in this direction when you allow, for that to happen and correct. So I, I think that as we're looking at things like this and as we're looking at scaling, we have to look at the efficiency and effectiveness of what we're doing as we get bigger.

And because if we keep adding, we're gonna be in a world to hurt.

**Mike:** Yeah. And when I think about infrastructure, I naturally go to the metaphor. You often use Leo of scaffolding and you've gotta have the vertical parts of the scaffolding. But the more you have the horizontal parts of the scaffolding, which is the peer innovation stuff then the stronger the whole infrastructure gets.

And everybody, Leo is actually joining me on January the ninth. To drop into a little virtual forum that I've been running for the last five or six weeks, just for two hours a week with people, mostly in the uk. So it's all virtual and and it's, it's been amazing how just over the course of five or six weeks that we've been doing this together once a week for two hours doing true peer forum, peer innovation stuff with 10 people who barely knew each other before, they might have seen each other in the odd sort of, zoom session here and there. It's amazing how quickly the culture of that forum has become so caring, so transparent, so challenging, so accountable. And so high performance. It's amazing. And the quality of the conversation flows and the action setting and the behavior setting flows coming out of that form is just amazing how quickly that brewed up. And we're back to behaviors, Jason, where we started. What else would you wanna throw on the fire here, Jason, as we come to the last five minutes of our first session of the new year?

Anything else you want our listeners thinking about?

**Jason:** Again what do you want to accomplish in 2024? In my world, in, in my organization, we're not rocking the boat. We're going into a growth year and we're gonna stick to our core principles, and we're gonna have we are going to be an organization that remains to be very client-centric and focused on growth.

Our mindset for that to accomplish. I would challenge every leader, every executive, take a look at their group, take a look at their team, make sure you make the resolution to your identity, right? Who do you want to be known? What do you want to be known as, and what are the core principles or the drivers or behaviors that'll get you there?

Yeah. And that, that's gonna help set the roadmap for your 2024. I challenge everyone to take a step back, get with your team, get in the room with your guys, if you will, your, your team and set that roadmap for the

**Mike:** year. Beautiful. Beautiful. Yeah. Leo, what else would you throw on the fire here?

**Leo:** I just think picking up on what Jason said, knowing our goals, really understanding our why for sure. But also challenging our teams to say what are we willing to contribute and give of ourselves in service of what we care about ourselves one another, our clients, our craft, all of that.

And I think that probably a pretty great way to start the year.

**Mike:** Yeah. Beautiful. And everybody, if you wanna get a little injection of inspiration here, then go pick up our ebook called The One Advantage, how to Introduce a Peer Powered Culture of Agility into your organization, and you'll get a nice injection of inspiration here at the start of the year.

I. And what I'm actually working on Jason and Leo is an addendum to that as a, just as a PDF because you both know that. I've actually up framed a sort of fourth level and a fifth level on top of that, the top level of which is this concept of collective intelligence. Which is really what we're talking about here, everybody.

The more intentional you get about your culture and your core values, the more you can really liberate the full collective intelligence of your team and not be suffering any collective unintelligence. To put it mildly, and I'm really excited that I get to do a keynote about that in February, a sort of Ted talk, like keynote for 18 minutes at a big event down in San Diego, and I'm really excited about it and I.

I decided to. Do a dry run of doing a real time collective intelligence experiment on the stage, which I'll be doing in February, and I just did a dry run of it last week at a keynote I did in Orange County with a huge glass jar of golf balls and using Menti Leo people got their phones out and made a guess.

Of how many golf balls were in this glass jar. And then they saw the results and the average, and it was close. It was pretty close, and it, that didn't matter so much. It was more just getting their heads into the thought process of, the wisdom of crowds and the concept of collective intelligence and all of that.

So I'm really looking forward to all of that. Everybody. We're just gonna continue to try to our, do our best to inspire you every couple of weeks, everybody with the One Advantage Podcast. We're looking forward to a great year together. Yeah. Hope everybody had a happy holidays. Final thought, Jason, for our listeners,

**Jason:** I just wanna say welcome to 2024.

Do everything you can. Leave no doubt they make it work.

**Mike:** Leave it all on the field. Leo, what final thoughts?

**Leo:** Yeah, just give some thought to the three words that are gonna guide you for the coming

**Mike:** year. Yeah, beautiful. The one advantage could be the three words. Everybody come on back and join us again for more episodes as we go through a great year together.

Thanks for being here, and we look forward to having you with us next time.

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