Just Good Followership in Forensics

Intro [00:00:01] RTI International's Justice Practice Area presents Just Science.

Intro [00:00:08] Welcome to Just Science, a podcast for justice professionals and anyone interested in learning more about forensic science, innovative technology, current research, and actionable strategies to improve the criminal justice system. In the final episode of our Resilient Leadership Mini-Season, Just Science sat down with Brian Hoey from the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory to discuss the importance of practicing good followership within a resilient workplace. In the field of forensic science there is often an emphasis on practicing good While few resources are devoted to cultivating good followership. As all practitioners oscillate between positions of leadership and followership, there is a need to better understand how both roles contribute to a resilient workplace. Listen along as Brian describes his experiences as both a leader and a follower, creating a culture of mutual respect and how to identify effective future supervisors. This episode is funded by RTI International's Justice Practice Area. Some content in this podcast may be considered sensitive and may evoke emotional responses or may not be appropriate for younger audiences. Here's your hosts, John Grassel and Ben Swanholm.

John Grassel [00:01:12] Hello, and welcome to Just Science. I am your host, John Grassel, with RTI International's Justice Practice Area. We are recording at the 2023 American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors Symposium in Austin, Texas, with the theme Resilient Leadership. Aiding me in this discussion today is my co-host, Ben Swanholm. Thanks for being here with me today, Ben. Would you do the honors of introducing our topic and guest today?

Ben Swanholm [00:01:37] Yes, thanks John. Today we will be discussing building resiliency through a strong culture and good fellowship. Here to guide us in our discussion is Brian Hoy from the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory. Welcome Brian, thanks for talking with us today. Thanks Ben. So our first question to start off is, can you talk a little bit about your professional background and your journey to become the laboratory director in your role at Missouri?

Brian Hoey [00:02:02] Sure. I've been with the Missouri State Highway Patrol now for 30 years in the crime lab. I started off in DNA and I had a really good career in DNA. I took my first supervisor job, my first formal leadership job in 2004, so it's been nearly 20 years that I've had informal leadership. I became a DNA technical leader in 2008, gave that up in 2016. In the middle, I became manager, so I was managing a couple departments. So I was just managing departments as well as trying to be the DNA technical leader. That was that was absolutely miserable. I became our assistant director in 2016 and then our director in 2018. I always wanted the DNA technical leader job. It was the job I most coveted and the job that I couldn't wait to give up.

Ben Swanholm [00:02:45] So talking about what we're kind of hidden on here today, let's get into like, I guess you could say, right, the Midwest meat and potatoes of your topics, but so when you talk about that building resiliency through a strong culture and good fellowship, can you summarize what that means for you or what that has looked like in Missouri? Well, I think, you know,

Brian Hoey [00:03:05] In order to have good resiliency, you have to have good cultures. I know when this symposium was being planned, there was a lot of discussion about how

we were all resilient or how we came out of COVID. And I think the strongest cultures that came out of COVID were those ones that were strong, were resilient, and were able to pivot very quickly. And sometimes, if you have a good cohesive culture with good followers in your laboratory, that can feel that sense of urgency. Create that buy-in, create good working groups to where when we say we have to, you know, immediately start working from home or we have pivot to this or that or whatever the thing is, a good strong culture is able to pivot very quickly. And we can go from what we KNEW knew to what is NEW knew very quickly, and I think that's really strong cultures, I believe, make.

Ben Swanholm [00:04:01] Good resilient workplaces. You've worked on that most likely consistently over time, Like COVID didn't cause you to be resilient, right? It showed the resiliency that you've built, right.

Brian Hoey [00:04:12] You've built, right? Exactly, Ben. That's exactly right. COVID just was just a blip in time, but it was because we had a strong, resilient culture that we were able to get through it fairly easily. I tell people, and I don't know if my followers would actually believe the stuff that's coming out of my mouth right now, but they did have a strong culture. They were resilient. I don t think they realized how much they were. At the very beginning, you know, our leadership apparatus basically made the decision that we we're going to stay in the laboratory. You know, we were essential workers. I had some pushback on that from some of our followers. You know, you're not going to get 100% compliance or buy-in. But we worked at it. Myself and our management team worked through it, tried to calm everyone, tried to get that sense of urgency, tried get that buy- in. And within week or two weeks, people were coming in the laboratory and working every day as if it wasn't going on. The thing about that was, I think for everybody, that was a comfort, right? Because nobody's routine changed. Everyone was coming in. We were doing what we always did. And I think that comfort and that strength was the thing that really was the

Ben Swanholm [00:05:17] glue that held us together. Going back to like building it, it's kind of like you're doing the work when nobody's watching. You're doing it and you're preparing for the.

John Grassel [00:05:26] Unknown Brian how does you mention a good point of good followers yes and that's a unique term can you explain more about that

Brian Hoey [00:05:33] Well, you know, if you Google leadership, you'll get like over four billion hits. If you Google followership, you only get about three million hits. And I think we place a premium on leadership in our culture, our broad culture, right? But followership is really important. Every one of us have to be good followers, right. We all have leaders. I'm the leader in our laboratory, but there's a boss above me and I have to a good follower to that person. I have serve that person When that person is absent or not around, I need to fill that void. I need fill that gap. And I need be the responsible person to be the leader. We're sitting here in this building, this nice large hotel here today, right? And if there's like a tornado or an earthquake or something like that and all the lights go out and the maintenance guy shows up, we're all leaders here. But we're gonna have to follow that maintenance guy to get to the safe place, right. We're not gonna sit here and go, oh no, I'm a leader. I'm leader in my laboratory. I'm not following you. So I think. When you have a strong culture, you have to have good followers that have the courage to take responsibility when needed, have the courage to serve their leader and not always argue with their leader, but also have the courage to have that crucial conversation and tell the leader when the leader might be wrong or heading in the wrong direction. I have two

assistant directors. Who are the greatest people in the world. And you know, when you have exemplary followers, they're your loyal no-sirs. There's Stacey and Debbie, they're always no-serves. They're always pushing me and challenging me in a very respectful manner. And I think that's good, you know? They're good followers because they do challenge my leadership and do not allow me to stray. They hold me accountable. And that is what a good exemplary follower does.

Ben Swanholm [00:07:23] And I think to that point, too, though, we talked about this the other day in that you also, as the leader, have to recognize that your followers need to lead. So you, yeah, I am the leader. But there's opportunities and times where you need to not be the leader and you have to recognized that and let your followers become that leader for you in a circumstance, or many circumstances.

Brian Hoey [00:07:50] Yeah. And so in that regard, you know, you as a leader or me as a leader, I have to hold them accountable to fill that gap and be that leader when they need to be. And we need to allow our followers to have those opportunities to do that. And that really is everybody in the laboratory, we need to get everybody a chance to both lead and follow. And strengthen both pieces of that. If you think of it, an organizational chart, right? The big Hollywood organizational chart is the leader at the top. So I had a leader years ago, 20 some odd years ago maybe even close to 30 years ago tell me I don't want to lead a bunch of followers. I want to leave a bunch of leaders. How ridiculous is that? Who's actually the leader who's holding whom accountable. I think that leadership and followership should be more of that person at the top is both a leader and a follower, and then the people below them are both leaders and followers. And there is a state of leader and followers ship. The suffix ship is really the state we're in, right? An intern ship.

Ben Swanholm [00:08:54] Mm-hmm

Brian Hoey [00:08:54] I'm in the state of being an intern right now. Craftsmanship, I'm the state of being a craftsperson right now, leadership. I'm a state of leadership. Followership, I mean a state a followership. And I think if we can switch between both of those and we can do them seamlessly, know when we have to lead and know when we have follow and be exemplary at both of them. I think that is how you build a resilient culture because everyone knows their role. They know their status. They know the role and status in the group. When we're in our groups, we know who is the formal leader, who is informal leader, who is doing our goal orientation. And I think that all works very well and build resilient, strong cultures.

Ben Swanholm [00:09:39] So when we talk about building those cultures, right, culture is a large, broad term that's easy to throw around, right? You see it in an interview, I wanna have a good culture. Oh, congratulations, right. But what does the elements of a good culture mean to you or what you have found to be successful in that area?

Brian Hoey [00:09:59] Think about culture we often think about it as an iceberg. What is above the water is what we see of our culture. It's our artifacts, it's our norms, it' our patches, it you know it's it's who we are. It is our big law enforcement emblem on the outside of our building and we see that and we think oh this is a good culture. Look at our shiny police cars, look at our shining uniforms, look at our shiney emblems, look our challenge coins. But really culture is what is below the water. Most of the iceberg lies below the So as leaders, we have to continue to look below the water to see what is going on in our culture, the conversations that are being had. The emails that are being sent, the relationships that are being made, how the technical review process goes when I hand you

a case record and you're going to tech review it. Is that done in a respectful manner, or is that done like MMA in the octagon? Right. But we frequently do not look below the water and see what's going on in our culture. And when we're not looking below the Water and seeing what's happening in our cultural in how people are actually. Operating, there's a difference between the policies, procedures, directives, gender orders, and how people are actually perceiving them and operating. If we're not looking below the water, we're not investigating those relationships, holding people accountable, keeping those guard rails on. But when our cultures aren't strong and we're, not looking under the water. We're not looking for off task behavior, then people start to stray and they outside the guardrails, they get outside the accountability. The cohesion begins to break down, the culture begins to breakdown. So I try to coach all of our managers and all of supervisors to continue to look under the water and review those relationships, hold people accountable, keep them on task.

Ben Swanholm [00:11:51] So, I've seen and found where it's a component of especially for individuals in our profession where it is not lever pulling, right? It's creative thought process, problem solving, you know, we have to give them the ability to operate on their own within the world that we want, right. I've see books and read stuff and really kind of like a proponent of self-determination theory which talks about... Autonomy, mastery, and purpose, and being really good at those, or as an organization, you try to allow the individual as much of those as you can. Have you found those in your organization, have you used those types of things of giving people autonomy where it fits, you know, in purpose, and how to get their mastery set up? I would love to hear from you.

Brian Hoey [00:12:36] To see the look on our followers' faces if they do decide to listen to this podcast. They don't listen to me when I'm in the laboratory, so I'm sure they're not going to even listen to this. But it would be funny to survey the people in the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Lab because there's nearly an email that goes out for me that does not mention autonomy, mastery, and purpose. I'm a firm believer in the fact that you can never over communicate. So I frequently send out emails just to encourage our folks, kind of keep them on task, let them know what my leadership thoughts are. And I frequently talk about purpose. And our vision statement, the Missouri State Highway Patrol says, our vision is to make Missouri a safe place to live and visit. I remind our folks of that all the time. That's the purpose of what we do. And it's interesting that you put it in the way you did, right? And I know what you're referring to when you say autonomy master your purpose. But it really should be the other way around, right? We have to give people purpose first. Then we have to get them the mastery to do their job. And once they have the purpose and they have the mastery, only then can we give them the autonomy. And that autonomy is big. All of our workers want autonomy, and you're right. What we do in crime laboratories are algorithmic tasks, right. They're not linear widget making tasks, they're algorithmic. Then we need to give them the autonomy to figure out how to navigate that. Am I gonna look at the shirt first? Or am I going to look at the shoes first? Am I going look at pants? I always thought that was really cool when I was working on the bench that my supervisors, my leaders gave me that autonomy to work my case the way I was trained and the way I felt the way that I could do it. I don't know of another job that gives you that much autonomy that early on. But autonomy without accountability, autonomy without purpose, autonomy with out training, autonomy without guardrails is dangerous. And if you're given too much autonomy, then we get what we talked about. But we get challenges. Challenges and all that stuff, right.

Ben Swanholm [00:14:29] And so you also mentioned there, it's kind of a small piece, but the communication to your team about that. And I think that when we're talking about

resiliency in the organization, I think communication, you know, helps to solidify that, especially when you have a larger, I mean, it, it it's important when you all labs, right? But when you a smaller lab, that's let's say a five person, 10 person, 12 person lab. May be a little bit easier to communicate those things and have an ability to impact the culture directly, versus someone like yourself in an organization with labs in different areas of a state and large enough where you don't see people every day, much less maybe six months or a year. You may not even see it. Like, oh, I didn't even know you worked here, right, type of thing sometimes.

Brian Hoey [00:15:22] So so where I say, you know, I try to always over communicate or I try to communicate as often as I can. And Ben, I'll tell you, I don't get it right. Right. Right? There are there are days and weeks that go by where I'd say, oh, I haven't sent an email out or something like that. Or I try to communicate through our other leaders, right? I tell my message to our assistant directors or our managers and expect them to continue that on. So there are a lot of ways to communicate. But you're right, when you're decentralized like we are, that communication doesn't get out. And if I'm relying on only one mode of communication, like an email.

Ben Swanholm [00:15:51] Mm-hmm.

Brian Hoey [00:15:51] I'm also relying on the fact that my folks are gonna open it and read it, right? And oftentimes they, you know, like I said, I like to over communicate. And a lot of times they'll see Director Ho and they're like, oh, here we go again, you know and just right into the trash, you now? And quite frankly, I don't blame them. So it is, communication is huge. And you know going back, when you're looking under that water, right, and you're look at the culture and you trying to motivate the culture, you're trying to motivated your work groups. You're trying to look at your work groups as they're forming and storming and norming. And you're getting in there and you're doing the hard work. Communication is key. And you have to communicate and people have to understand what you're communicating. And you'd have to encode that message. They have to decode that massage. And boy, do we get that wrong. Yes, a lot. A lot, you know? And, you. I will tell something to somebody or ask somebody to do something. Give a directive. However you want to package that, right? I will communicate something. And oftentimes it has to go to like one of my assistant directors and to a manager and then to a supervisor and then a follower. And we all know about the telephone game. And it is amazing sometimes when you do the feedback loop. You know, what did I say? It's like, holy cat. How did you interpret that out of what I said or emailed? Holy smokes. But it happens, it happens. And another part of a resilient culture, and this is something I'm working on very recently, is when the communication goes bad or things go poor. I get my management team or my close admin team and people are like, my God, how many times do we have to say this? And I'm like, probably more or a different way. Right. And they get frustrated because people aren't listening. Is it people not listening? Are we not communicating? Or is it somewhere in between? I get frustrated too. And I'll be sitting having meetings with my assistants or managers and we're frustrated that the communication doesn't get through. People aren't listening. Why aren't people listening? And we're arguing amongst ourselves about why aren't are people listening. And I'm thinking in my head, why are we not communicating better? Maybe that's what's missing. Maybe we can't speak email semaphore.

Ben Swanholm [00:18:08] However we need to communicate. Yeah, and I think that that also, right, a lot of times your best intentions of the communication, and they get twisted because they already have a preconceived notion about what you're trying to

communicate, right? So then it's myself. We're in a lot a transition with one of my teams. And they have a low staffing volume and a high workload, which is a lot of teams in forensics, right. So I'm adjusting their workload. And we've had meetings. Week after week, month after month, about how we're adjusting that, right? So it's like, okay, we're here, and now we're gonna take this piece and we're going to push you all over here, right, to do this work. We're over maxed. You're giving us more work, right. Exactly. No, we just talked for the last three months about how you're taking all this other work away, but I didn't communicate that line path, right like. Here's where we were in step through the process. All they heard was, you're giving me extra work. So then I had to reset. I had go back to them and lay that whole foundation again and then like, oh, all right, yeah, you right. We're good.

Brian Hoey [00:19:14] That sounds that sounds very familiar, right? That sounds very familiar. I do that all the time. I'll communicate something and I'll read the email or I'll, I'll go through the message in my head that I'm going to say out loud, I write it down, and I'll email it, or I say it. And I think, man, I stuck the landing. Holy cow, that's that's a 10. I stuck that landing, you look at put the gold medal around my neck. And I get the feedback back. And then like reviewing the communication. How did this go so wrong? Right?

Ben Swanholm [00:19:42] And I think that some of that comes from the ability to create, like, good fellowship or good relationships within your organization. So what do you think are some of the elements that you work on or try to strive for to help mitigate when your communication maybe isn't as effective or your culture communication or your resiliency communication isn't effective?

Brian Hoey [00:20:06] Well, you said it right there, relationships. I have good working relationships with my assistant directors, managers, people I have worked with for years. We know each other. We've worked on building those relationships. I had a supervisor of mine for years, we worked with each other for about 20 years. We had such a good working relationship. Oftentimes when I was having a bad day or he was having bad day or I just needed to be heard or needed to feel felt, I would sit in his office for a long time and we would just talk. And it just turned my mood around, turned the day around, got me more motivated, and it was great. And I have those conversations with the people I'm most close to, but there is a dissonance between me and the person who just showed up for work last week, right? I don't have that relationship with that person so when they read or see an email from me or hear a communication from me, they don't that relationship from me. So I need to have the people who are between me and that person, I need them on board with me and knowing me and my personality and what the purpose and the mission and all that are so they can translate that to that new person. Does everything go well in your laboratory or my laboratory even with our closest people? You know, I've been married for almost 23 years, and my wife and I don't see eye to eye, right? We gotta figure that communication out. But the fact that we have that relationship, we can be vulnerable to one another. We can be angry with one another, we could disagree without being disagreeable. Just recently, I mean, it's been within the last two or three weeks, I had a few fraught conversations with one of my assistant directors, Deborah. And we get in the morning and I say, hey, you know, I'm sorry, that, that conversation didn't go well last night. And she's like, yeah, it really didn't. You know, let's, let's reset, right? And we sit down and we here's what, here's how we need, what we need to do for the laboratory, for the relationship, for the mission. And we, we have mutual respect and we have a conversation and everything gets worked out quickly like that in a minute or two. But if you don't have a good relationship with somebody or haven't worked on the relationship built the relationship or most important, the mutual respect for the person, you get disagreeable

almost immediately. And that's where I say, you know, a lot in our laboratory, a lot of our problems come from tech review. I give you a case record, you tech review, you tell me there's a few errors on there, now all of a sudden, you just, let's get in the MMA ring. You know, we don't have that mutual respect for one another to say, okay, I'll just fix the errors and move on. Because if I'm right, what does that make you? Wrong. Exactly. Right. There is no mutual respect right there. We're already the 6 and the 9, right? The perspective. I see a 6, you see a 9, and all we're going to do here is just sit and argue. You say 9, I say 6, blah, blah blah. And then someone walks up and go, oh, you idiot, the G fell off the sign. It's not a 6 or a 9. It's all about perspective. But so many of our workers, they just want to be right. And they're one part of the conversation. And the other person then is the villain. Or the victim, and all of a sudden we have this problem. But if you have strong relationships, you get through the problem quickly. You get back on text, you get back mission. But unfortunately, when we don't have those relationships, or those relationships are new, or raw, or vulnerable, when we have little blips, they turn into big things. And then we start blogging about it, we start texting about it and it just festers. If we don't have good leaders that can get under the water, into that culture, see those things happening, put the guardrails on it, it's going to continue to eat away at that cohesion and then we have big problems.

Ben Swanholm [00:23:51] I mean a luxury I feel we have at Phoenix compared to say you're that like as a single entity Right. So we have one lab essentially one customer, you know those sorts of things but more just the same location Right. And so what we've like to do is you're fresh out of new Right. This is your first or second week is as I meet with all the new new ones right, we have a 30 minute hour conversation, right and It helps me learn them and it's a lot more about who you are, but it's also to try to lower the level of I'm not a scary monster. So trying to build that relationship within that first week or two weeks to set the standard because once they go forth with their training programs, which we barely see them at all because they're in their cube or they're in their lab or that sort of thing, and they're with the employees. That if you don't have a strong culture or you have a person that maybe is outside of your strong culture, they're trying to get what? They're trying get that person on board with them, right? So then hopefully that little bit on the front end can mitigate the attempts to take them in the path of culture that you don't want.

Brian Hoey [00:25:09] It's always, it's always amazing. Socialization is a huge piece. Right. You get that new person in, you want them to come into a well-socialized group, and you want them to be socialized by the right people. But unfortunately, our HR departments don't have you know, psychologists, non-boarding professionals, and that type of thing. We just have an applicant pool, we have an interview process, we go, yeah, you look good for the job, boom, you're in. And we have to rely on our groups to effectively social...

Ben Swanholm [00:25:35] Person. I'm glad you kind of connected that because one of the questions I wanted I wanted to ask was how do you think or what do you think the future looks like or should look like trying to research or somebody to research how we do these things. I think a lot of your experience and I'm taking a guess right and but I know my experience is getting burned right so like trying develop Waze system processes, onboarding, interview questions, et cetera, because we found that, well, that didn't work, Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it would be great if there was some sort of psychological research or sociological research or those sorts of things, partnerships with universities or organizations that can invest in doing a study of the successful people in forensic science and their makeup and what made them successful, you know, grit, determination, creative

thinking, those sorts of things. Like, is that something you think could be good? You know, what's your input on that?

Brian Hoey [00:26:37] What's input on that. I do and I think a lot of those programs are great and I think we have a lot that you know we have the Leadership Academy here at Azclad. We have a really deep thinkers here at Azclan. I mean Jody Wolf is one of them. I means she's a pioneer in this area and yourself and Tim Scanlon and you know there there are a lot a really brilliant minds here who could bring a lot this stuff to our laboratories. I think when we look at our laboratories don't we look our turnaround times and our backlogs and metrics and all these things. We go to our leadership apparatus and we're asking for humans that could get the backlogs down and turn around times and all that. If I go to my leadership apparatus and I say, I need to hire a bunch of sociologists and psychologists, it's not gonna go over really well. Despite the fact that I could probably be successful making the connection and giving them the why, but I just don't know if it's gonna land really well to say these are the people we need in our workplaces and to be able to diagram it enough to show that we're gonna get 40 hours a week. Out of this job and what they're going to do. So, but I think there might be a space for it, but in advance to that, Ben, I think what we can do better at, and I'm trying to do better at, is get people leadership training and get people some of the psychology that you and I have been talking about now for a little while, well, for years now, quite honestly. But if we could start training people in some of these things and teach them how to use it effectively with their followers and do it quicker before they become supervisors or before they make the choice to become supervisors. I don't want to denigrate any supervisors that are out there, that's not my intent. But so many people take a supervisory position for monetary reasons. Not because they want to create good followers or they wanna take care of their followers' needs and the organizational needs and fill that gap. They're looking at the fact that they can get a $500 raise a month or whatever the case may be, and that's what they covet more than they covet leading people. They take that job and they realize that leading people is hard. People are messy. And they do get off task. They do become the informal socializer.

Ben Swanholm [00:29:01] Mm-hmm.

Brian Hoey [00:29:01] And if I don't know how to deal with that and I don t know how do artfully apply the science leadership to these people, I'm going to mess up and I'm gonna screw people up. And I say that not out of malice, but I really do say it out of coaching and love because when I took over as a supervisor in 2004, that was me, my friend. Right. I messed up a lot of people. Went to school to be a forensic scientist, who had a dream of being a forensic scientists, came to my laboratory to be successful, only to run into me who was a crappy leader and did not ethically lead them, did not support them, did not coach them, did not train them appropriately. And our culture suffered for it. And I said, oh crap, this is my fault. And so I then began reading in earnest and going and taking classes. And you know back then we had the FBI's leadership symposium, went to that every year, started coming to Asclad. I went and did my MBA so I could be a better leader. I didn't know if I'm a better leader, the people who tell you how good of a leader you are, are who? Your followers, right? Right. So I don't, you know, I can sit here and tell you all day long that I'm a good leader. But the only people that are gonna tell you about my leadership are the people who follow me. That said, I hope I've become a better leader and I hope the message that I wanna get across to the people I lead or future leaders in my organization is that I haven't stopped my learning of leadership. We go to chemistry school, we go to biology school, we learn chemistry, biology, we read paper after paper. I come out of DNA. I've read more mixture papers and I don't know if reading mixture papers ever made me a

better mixture interpreter, right? But I did it. When we become leaders, we don't read about leadership. We don't sharpen that saw, as Covey says. And why is that, Ben? I see a lot of our supervisors, they have to bridge that gap, right, first line supervisors, they still got to do some casework, you know, they still gotta stay proficient, They've got to lead their people, they're bouncing around. I see so many supervisors get so focused about the next homicide as their people are over here off task. I walk through the lab. I see a whole group of people off task, like, where's the supervisor? Oh, they're back in the lab, like what are you doing? And a lot of it is they're avoiding the leadership because it's hard. They know the science. They know how to work on evidence and that's their comfort zone. They're avoiding the people because it's hard. And the learning of it is hard.

Ben Swanholm [00:31:43] Of it is hard. Well and I think you know to add to that point is you know a lot of the time supervisors or the high performers in your lab they've done things successfully right? Right. So they get to that uncomfortable position because they potentially have to do different hard work or confrontation hard work so then they go to their safe space. Yes. Right? Which is lab space type of thing right? As well as the lab space and often the lab analysis gives you an answer that you can say, well, I got the answer, even though the answer is negative, I got to answer and it is the right answer. Yes. And with leadership, with leadership it's such a soft skill as well as an art skill that the application of it from one person to the next doing the same thing could be right and wrong at all the same time. And it's not as simple as that.

Brian Hoey [00:32:34] It's just like the state, you're both right and wrong. And the only way we know that is feedback. You have the leader throughput process, right? You have inputs to a process, you have throughputs, and then you have outputs. And as a leader, that's what you wanna do. You wanna affect those outputs in a positive manner. And if that output is not where it should be, the performance is not up. The ability is not, the motivation is not. We have to get the feedback from the follower, the feedback form the environment or the feedback from the culture and change what we're doing. We're scientists, we should be able to do that. We re-hypothesize, we re-test, we draw another conclusion. That feedback loop has to keep iterating. The problem is, as some of our leaders go, I see the problem, boom, here's solution, I'm back to the laboratory. And then you talk to them, that oh, I solved the problem. I told them to do this. I did this application of this science to this person and I'm done. No, you're not. Have you gotten the feedback? Have you tested the hypothesis? Have you seen it in action? Is it working? Because through my lens, that person is still off task. Right. No, just because you had the conversation, just because you laid down the theory, just because did an action, does not mean it's working. And again, going back to our talk about conversation, I'm as much as at fault, right? I over-communicate, I send out an email, here's my directive, here's thing. And then you throw that out there, and I expect people to read the email, I expect call to action, I expect to just do what they're doing. The best part of getting better is the awareness piece, right, knowing that you have to be aware of these things and work at it. And I think that's where a lot of our leaders. Fail in their leadership. And to your point, we take these high-performing people off the bench. We have high- performing, on-task people. We take them off the benches, we make them supervisors, and they become low-perform off-tasks people.

Ben Swanholm [00:34:29] Right. I mean, you threw them in chaos when they had control. I'm going to steal that from you. Going back to our autonomy mastery purpose component, right? They lived in a world where they had all of that figured out, right, and now we just threw them into a world where they have less autonomy, no mastery, and they're still trying to figure out their purpose, right. Friday, they were cool. Monday, they're not good

anymore, right So, Brian, I've really enjoyed our conversation today. Thanks for your time and your willingness to discuss. Thank you, my friend. Anytime you have a microphone in front of me, you know I'm a happy guy.

Ben Swanholm [00:35:03] Right, right.

John Grassel [00:35:03] And Ben, thank you for co-hosting with me today. If you enjoyed today's episode, be sure to like and follow JustScience, our platform of choice. For more information on the RTI justice practice area, visit rti.org. I'm John Grassel, and this has been another episode of Just Science.

Outro [00:35:22] Next week, Just Science will be starting a new season discussing trauma-informed research with Drs. Jaclyn Houston-Kolnik, Hannah Feeney, and Rebecca Pfeffer. Opinions or points of views expressed in this podcast represent a consensus of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of its funding.