

Disrupt Yourself Podcast
Episode 25: Stacy Olsen DiStefano

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption and today, we are going to do exactly that. This will not be a typical interview. After the [Stacy London episode aired](#), some of you suggested that we do a [live coaching session](#). I had no idea how it would turn out but, in the spirit of being discovery-driven, I put out a call to my newsletter subscribers and asked, "Who's interested in a free coaching session that all the world will hear?" Stacy Olsen DiStefano—she raised her hand. She'd been with her organization more than ten years, was in a newly created innovation role and her big question was, "How do I create a satisfying future for myself here or decide I need to go elsewhere?" You're going to hear me making lots of notes, scribbling on a paper as we talk, so here we go.

Stacy: So I'm at a place—an interesting place—career-wise where I'm happy with the work that I'm doing. It's exciting, it's...there's room for a lot of innovation, there's a lot of freedom, um, but I'm also somewhat interested in, for obvious reasons, you know, the three to five year plan and then the five year beyond plan. I'm not sure if this is a make-your-own-path situation within my organization. I'm not sure if I should be looking outside; you know, I've been here 11 years in three different roles, but, um, I'm trying to determine if this is the place for me. Um, and if it is, how do I move forward with the existing political climate inside the organization, um, and trying to move us forward without, um, being the only one pushing the rock up the hill, so to speak. Does that make sense?

Whitney: Yeah, it does. Um, so you've been at this organization for 11 years and how long have you been in your current role?

S: So business development, um, for the past four years with the title of VP of Innovation since January, which is a newly created role.

W: Okay, so in terms of creating that role did you go out and sort of say, "Hey, our organization needs this. Here's what I think it needs to look like; here's what I can do for you." How did you get tapped for that role?

S: Yes, I did exactly that. I was, um, dissatisfied with the limits of the role I was in and I really saw an organization of our size, um, and our potential lacking that person to really spearhead innovation. Not only within, um, the context of the field that we work in, but within the context of, you know, we have 6000 employees within our organization and I didn't see a real intentional movement to get people excited within from the ground up, to sort of—I love the term I've heard of 'smoke out the innovators'—to find other people to partner with. So I really pitched that as a way to maximize morale and get people excited about

the work inside but also to partner with nontraditional partners outside in our field, and just figure out ways to infuse more innovation into the work we do.

W: So really the question you're trying to figure out is how...now that you're in this role to drive innovation, how do you do it and how do you do it in a way that, um, isn't all too painful. Too, too painful.

S: Right, and doing it in a way...there's really a very small amount of financial resources put to this.

W: Okay.

S: You know, we're in a nonprofit climate so we have a slim margin to begin with. So it's really about maximizing with not very much money behind it, um, you know, the internal and external role. But, um, I know I have a tendency to get to get big really fast with my vision and my ideas...

W: Yep.

S: ...and my plans, so I'm trying not to burst my own balloon and so I'm trying to pace myself and manage my own internal frustrations because I get very, um, 100 miles an hour forward and I'm usually...I'm far beyond where everyone else in the organization is and then have to kind of snap back. That's a frustrating process. So I'm trying to be mindful of my own personality quirks and my own workstyle while trying to do this.

W: When you first took on the role, what, what did you articulate to them that you were going to accomplish?

S: So, first of all, just a, a PR campaign internally about what innovation is...

W: Okay.

S: ...why we need it and why folks should get on board. So I've used some of my, my own department money to partner with two smaller firms, one in the tech community and one in the innovation space to sort of consult and help us create some internal projects so there's a tangible thing going on that people can point to and say, "That's innovation," in addition to reframing some of what we do as innovative work.

W: So that was one of the things that you set out to do, that you were going to do this PR campaign; it's underway. And you're happy with how it's going so far?

S: Uh, yeah, it's mixed reviews. It's interesting because some of the leadership is very for it and some of them want to control the message within their own

teams. So that's an interesting dynamic I didn't really anticipate was, you know, 'yeah, folks can do this but not if it's interfering with their other work.' So, you know, it's been mixed reviews. But I think, you know, that's with anything new.

W: Right. It's like...it's the 'I want to travel to foreign lands as long as I don't have to leave home,' right?

S: Right, right.

W: And when you pitched this job and they created it for you, what else did you suggest that you were going to do and what did you agree with them that, that success would look like in this role?

S: We have as an organization been extremely innovative with clinical models of service...

W: Okay.

S: I don't think we've been innovative in our approach to solving higher problems within the organization that are common to all organizations.

W: Okay.

S: So I'm trying to look at problems differently and get different people connected.

W: As of right now, what did you think you would have accomplished already and where are you in terms of meeting your goals or your milestones?

S: I think, probably at par. I do certainly understand the need to focus on, you know, the burning fire rather than something else, but I feel like if as an organization if we're always just trying to put out the next fire or look to the next quarter then we're not really big picturing and putting ourselves in a place where three years we want to be. So that is frustrating. I guess I thought I would have more onboard support. It's kind of like, 'yeah go do that, but we don't really intend to help you...'

W: Okay.

S: and that's been I think the most frustrating part.

W: So when you go in for a performance review in a year, what do you think your boss is going to want you to have accomplished in order for him or her to say, "Okay, Stacy, she had a good year." You know, spiked the ball in the end zone. What do you think they're looking for?

S: I think that's a great question and I don't really know the answer to that because we've not really formally discussed that as far...

W: Okay.

S: ...as specific outcomes.

W: Okay.

S: I know, certainly, part of my role around Business Development is the maintenance and management and constant massaging of relationships around contracting and new states and new services. I do all that on a regular basis, so of course there is a certain percentage of corporate growth that's my responsibility. And that's easy and tangible—not easy, but it's easily identified and it's tangible and that's a marker I can set.

W: Yes.

S: But around the innovation piece—that really hasn't been a discussion. It's...there really isn't a goal set and maybe that's part of the frustration is, you know, when I know a goal I can exceed it, but if I don't know it's there...

W: Yeah.

S: ...I mean, I'm not sure what I...I'm not sure if what I'm doing is, is measurable success to all parties.

W: Okay, so what I'd like to do is just switch gears for a minute and take a look at the diagnostics that you've...you did. What was interesting to me was taking a look at the Disruptive Strengths Indicator that looks at the different, you know, the different accelerants, or how you like to disrupt, or what kind of disruptor you are. And, um, your score for market risk was incredibly high. Um, it was high both on an absolute basis, because you were 24, and, um, but it also was high on a relative basis because it was your highest score. And just to kind of recap for you—because I know you've read the book—but just, you know, the market risk is this idea of a willingness to play where others aren't playing. Either because they haven't thought of playing there or they don't want to play there. And so I think your willingness and asking for...to be in this role of, of trying to bring some structure around innovation inside your organization certainly suggests that, you know, this is the right role for you. One of the questions that come up for me...comes up for me, you know, as you're asking this sort of more meta question of 'do I want to do this somewhere else;' I mean, based on this score, it would suggest that you're actually right where you should be. This is something that you want to be doing and I would suspect that you're not going to be happy in a role that's not

giving you an opportunity to sort of test the boundaries and see where they actually are. The second thing I thought was interesting, again on both an absolute and relative basis were your strength scores. Um, it...you came out at 22, suggesting that you not only know what your strengths are, you're in a situation where they are unique, so you're doing something well that others do not. And, um, and you've figured out how to use those strengths in order to move up a learning curve and in order to move up an S curve. Um, what are your, what are your thoughts on that?

S: Yeah, I think so. I mean, I'm pretty...I feel like I'm pretty confident in most situations and I'm pretty comfortable saying what I don't know.

W: Yeah.

S: And learning that or pairing with someone who could teach me; I think that's probably pretty accurate.

W: So it sounds like they came out where you thought they would and you're, you know, again...a lot of people don't actually know what their strengths are and they certainly can't really know how to consciously play to them when they don't know what they are. And so there's an element here of being aware of them; um, putting yourself in a situation where what you do well is unique and also being willing to own it, and acknowledge, "I'm good at this." So all important things. Now, um, your constraints and entitlement on an absolute basis, again, fairly high, 21. Middle of the pack in terms of you. What caught my attention actually was, given how comfortable you are taking market risk, um, that your step back scores and your failure scores were, um, on a relative basis, much lower. And I'm curious about your initial thoughts or response to that. Because typically, when you're willing to push boundaries that means you're a person who's pretty comfortable with failure because you've got to have the resilience to sort of go to the...go to the perimeter of what you do well and make a mistake and bounce back, etc. So I'd love to hear your thoughts on, on why you think maybe, sort of, you're really good at taking on risk and you're really good at playing to your strengths; you're not as comfortable when it comes to trying something new, stepping back to do it and/or with the failure aspect of it.

S: Yeah, I guess I, um, I expect to succeed...

W: Uh huh.

S: ...and that's like a high expectation for myself, but I have very high expectations of colleagues, coworkers, partners, um, and that's sometimes a friction point because, um, you know, typically, the majority of the world isn't at, you know, 110%.

W: Yep.

S: And so even though I know that intellectually, that's extremely frustrating for me and I tend to harp on that...

W: Okay.

S: ...internally. So if I see someone on my team who's, who's time after time not doing things the way I think they should, or to the level I think they should happen, or at the speed, I can caught, you know, down that rabbit hole of just obsessing about it and getting really frustrated about it, um, and that's...it's hard for me to let go of that piece sometimes.

W: What....

S: I want to be a huge success and so it's really bother...it's bothersome to me if the project or whatever it is doesn't happen at the level I think it should, or if there's negative feedback given.

W: Okay, so that brings up kind of a different point which is if people are continually not delivering why would you not let that person go or encourage them to jump to a new S curve? Because sometimes when people aren't delivering it's just...sometimes it's that they're not trying but sometimes it's just that they're on the wrong S curve; they're in the wrong role. Um, so I'm just wondering if maybe sometimes there's this aspect of people aren't meeting the expectations that you've set and maybe sometimes they're actually in the wrong role and it's important for you to kind of figure out how to help them move on to something else. I'm wondering, you know...what are your thoughts around that?

S: Yeah, I think that's the core of my...the majority of my frustration is I'm not in a position to move them.

W: Got it. Okay.

S: You know, I'm not the supervisor...

W: Okay,

S: ...so if they're on my team and we share a supervisor, I will very clearly and continually art...articulate my frustration, um, around that person not being in the right role and here's why, and then, you know, it's the environment that we have that just says, "well, you know, that's the team that we have and that's the person..."

W: Right.

S: ...they've been here a long time." We don't have, like if I was sort of king of the world here in the organization...

W: Yeah.

S: ...I would never tolerate that.

W: Okay.

S: So extremely frustrating for me to watch that be routinely tolerated.

W: Any thoughts on the step back thing about a willingness to sort of...you know, I thought it was interesting in the diagnostic where, um, you said there was never a role that you had taken where people thought you were a little bit crazy for taking it. Like, it sounds like you've had a pretty linear career path. Is that accurate? Um, did I read that accurately or understand that correctly?

S: Yeah, I mean, I've done things outside of work, like I've run for political office or I've taken an appointed position in a county government role, you know, just a side thing. I've applied for a couple of things over the years where I've thought this is a stretch and I'll never get it, but I wanted the opportunity to go through the process.

W: Yep.

S: But I don't think I've ever done something that I didn't think I could bring myself up to speed or do.

W: Okay, and that's actually...so that's actually kind of moving forward. I'm thinking, like, on this, taking a step back 'I'm going to go take a role or responsibility that looks like I'm stepping down the ladder to everybody else,' because you and your brain know that if you step down the ladder you're going to be able to get to where you actually want to go over five or 10 years.

S: Framed that way...I mean, it wasn't something that I was pleased about at the time but I guess about four years ago, we had a restructuring and there was the position that my current boss holds now that I really thought was mine and that I was qualified for and most of my colleagues thought I was qualified for and, you know, he's been here...we have a great relationship and he's wonderful and he's been here more than 3x as long as I have, so it was kind of a "we're putting him here and you have to wait your turn."

W: Yep.

S: And even though I intellectually understand that, I was really, um, you know, not pleased about it and I felt like I took that step down, like. And it was a humbling and a little bit frustrating because people around me knew that I should have been in that role. And at that point I really wrestled with 'do I leave because this isn't okay with me,' and then I decided, "You know what? I'm going to see what I can learn from him and I'm going to stay and at some point I'll either go to the next level or go to the next level somewhere else." But I tried to really say, "You know, he has been here 3x as long as me and there is institutional knowledge and other things to learn," even though I know I could have walked into that and knocked it out of the park, you know, I kind of had to swallow hard and say...

W: Yeah.

S: ...you know, "If this isn't ego, this is probably the right thing."

W: So let's put a pin in that and then talk for a minute about some of the accomplishments that you have that you're like really, really proud of in your life.

S: So, I would say, from the early stages, um, I took this role in 2006...I joined this organization to start a new service for severely mentally ill adults in the state I was living. It was a brand new service; it was somewhat...it was innovative—I didn't create the innovation but I led the innovation once it was handed to me around the model. Um, it was something that was unknown; there was a lot of legwork to be done around government community partners and building a team and hiring and everything from, you know, picking up the desks to hiring and getting the team started. And I loved that and I'm very proud of the fact that that grew, um, probably five-fold under my leadership and that many of the people we hired in 2006 are still there today. I'm really proud of the work they did clinically and I'm really proud of the team that was developed and the service has a really excellent reputation in the state. Um, and that's...so that's something that I look back on and I think that was a really good professional time but personal also.

W: So when you think about what you accomplished there, um, and you were so successful, have you, have you given any thought to, okay, what were the components, like, who did I go talk to? Who did I get buy-in from? How did I orchestrate this in order for this to be successful and are there any lessons learned that can be helpful in your current role, getting buy-in around this notion of amping up innovation inside...or amping up and/or just acknowledging the innovation that you're doing inside of your current organization?

S: Yeah, I did learn and I think I continue to draw on the fact that those relationships I've built with the line staff—those folks who do the day to day

work are the most critical. It's not the leadership of the organization that matters in that environment; it's having the trust and relationships with the team actually doing the day to day work. Like from the most direct care to the receptionist to the, you know, the fiscal people. You know, the people on your team are the team and they do the work. So if your CEO loves you but your team hates you...

W: Right.

S: ...or doesn't respect you, you're not going to get at...you're not going to get performance. So to me, really focusing my energies on building genuine relationships and showing appreciation, respect, and making sure they have the tools to feel really successful and that they can take risks and they know that they can come to you—that's I think what I've tried to build on in every project, is pay attention to the people who are going to be doing the day to day work. You know, I don't do the work; I set up programs. So I want to make sure the people who run those programs are as passionate about that work as I am. Because that's what your legacy is.

W: I think it's interesting and I want to raise this because I think it's important. So you mentioned to me that your youngest daughter—she was diagnosed with brain cancer at the age of four and she died just not long after that and I'm so sorry...

S: Yeah, thank you.

W: ...it's actually making me cry a little bit just thinking about it, and so I...

S: I have that effect. I have that effect on people.

W: ...I'm sorry, but I wonder, too, because that was such a...an experience that I...transformative, um, for you.

S: Yes.

W: To what extent do you think that your having that experience, um, informs where you are, what you're trying to get done now, both sort of the...on the positive side and on the negative side?

S: Sure. I do...and I try to draw as much good from that as one can draw. I mean, clearly, there's no good in the overall picture. But, um, that really highlighted my ability to compartmentalize and keep moving...

W: Yeah.

S: ...and by what I...what I...and I recognized that in a way I hadn't ever. I guess I've always had that to a degree. I used to work in crisis services and suicide prevention, work that was really, like, highly charged...

W: Yeah.

S: ...and a lot going on at once and you had a, you know, a very...you had to be calm and cool and move forward and I realized my past experience before that helped me and then that experience forward. So I have a really good ability to stay focused under pressure.

W: Okay.

S: So no matter what is going on around me—and I think people know that, professionally and personally—is, you know, I get the job done regardless of what's flying around in my head and I have ability to say, 'Okay, this is very emotional,' like, during that time, you know. Obviously as a mother and, you know, I have other children, family members, and you're watching your parents deal with this as a grandparent, and you're watching friends and....And there was so much emotion, but so much that had to be done in the day to day...

W: Right.

S: So I was really good at being able to say, "Okay, I'm going to feel emotional about this later. But right now I need to get these five things done." And then, you know, later on when you have the space and the moment you can, you know, break down in the shower or cry to a friend, or do what you had to do to get that out, but I was able to not let my emotions overtake what needed to happen.

W: Where's the weakness around that? Or where's the potential Achilles Heel around that particular strength that you've developed?

S: Sometimes I think I come across as too hard or too harsh or not emotive enough around other people's needs in a situation, because I can't deal with that. I can only deal with get, you know, get done mode. I can't sort of understand...I can't be...have empathy and, um, action at the same time.

W: Right. Cause you're...cause you're able to turn...

S: I tend to come across as bitchy. Right.

W: ...flip the switch, yep. Yeah, you're able to flip...you learned how to flip the switch because you had to...

S: Right.

W: ...but other people don't know how and so then that can put you in a tough situation sometimes. Let me start kind of throwing out some ideas and thoughts that I'm having and some suggestions for kind of direction you could go. At a very high level it seems to me that this is actually a really good job for you. Um, based on your Disruptive Strengths Indicator, your ability to harness disruption, your comfort with playing where no one else is playing, to take on risks; to sort of, in the face of the unknown, just, you know, plow ahead. And, um, these are all skills that you have, you've developed, you've honed them. And you've been in this role six months and so, in some ways you're at the low end of the S curve in this role and so when you reflect back on some of these successes that you've had in the past, um, you know, that's when the success was over and I wonder if you were to look back at where you were and how you felt and potentially the frustration and even the discouragement you felt at, you know, six months in or five months in, doesn't track with that. And I suspect that there's some element of that. So, so, again, at a high level I think that at the very least you want to play out this, this piece of taking on innovation and give it a couple—at least a year—but give it, ideally, a couple of years before you make a decision to try something else, um, elsewhere or even inside of your organization.

That's the first observation I have. The second is that, you know, it's good to play where no one else is playing; at the same time you do need constraints. And, and one of the best kind of constraints there is, is some way to measure how you're doing. And so...

S: Yep.

W: ...I would really encourage you—and you kind of already flagged this—but to go have a conversation with your bosses and say to them, “Okay, we all agreed that I was going to do this but we have no idea how we're going to actually measure it. Here are some thoughts, um, on how we can measure it and I wanted to get your thoughts on how to measure it as well.” Now, now, the measurement of this...I think it's important at least early on is to not focus so much on outcomes and focus as much as you can on process.

S: Okay.

W: So for example, we know that in order to try something new people need to understand it; they need to get comfortable with it. So I think one of the goals is I'm going to reach out to 10, 20, 30, 50, 100 people inside the organization over the next year and have this conversation. Um, and/or I'm going to work with...on one particular innovation, you know, maybe there's a single project that you think is important but needs buy in from a lot of different people—people on the frontline; that's not how you described it...

S: Right.

W: ...sort of the frontline service providers.

S: Right.

W: And working with them to do that and kind of coming up with a process for how you might push or move an innovation throughout the organization. Um, so I, at the very least, I would have that conversation with them; make some suggestions, some of which are just metrics that you can say, “Yep, I showed up; I did that,” and others of which...knowing that there are outcomes that will eventually; you know, if you do A—B will eventually happen. Um, but if you have something to measure, then it’s...I think it’s going to be more fun for you, because you’ve got something to shoot for.

The third thought that I’m having is that...as I look at some of your scores that were relatively low, and then also hearing the fact that you have consistently been a very high performer. You’ve learned how to sort of turn the switch on and off of feeling and executing, um, and you’ve been able sort of by dint of will to make things happen. I get the sense, from what you’ve said, that there may be a little bit of an Achilles Heel here in terms of your ability to work with people to get buy in and to have the patience needed to get buy in.

S: Yeah, yeah.

W: And so you’ve got these amazing things that you want to accomplish and when people aren’t ready to come along with you, you get frustrated. And, um, you’ve developed this kind of mechanism for managing—and that’s why I asked a little bit about your daughter is that, or you know, the death of your daughter, is that—is there a coping mechanism that served you supremely well and now it’s potentially getting in your way a little bit. Um, and so I would really think about this idea of, you know, stepping back to grow is sometimes taking a step back to get buy in, taking a step back to make sure the people you’re working with understand it, taking a step back and allowing them to be the author of a plan and getting credit for it. Because like you just said, you’re not going to make more money if this works; it sounds like you really are doing it because you just want it to work and so knowing that you just want it to work, by being willing to maybe take a step back, give other people credit. You know, do whatever you need to do in service of that...of reaching that goal. You can say—in parallel with this innovative work you’re trying to do—“Okay, I’m going to work on X” and then you’re going to go to your various stakeholders—the very same people from whom you need to get buy in—and say, “Okay, I’m going to work on this thing; I’m making it very public. Can I check back with you in a month and see how I’m doing?” So at the time that you’re asking them to be changing and to be buying into what you’re doing, you’re also walking your talk because you’re saying, “I’m going to change too.”

And so there's this, this symbiosis that can take place that will, I think, ease the way for you to accomplish some of what you deeply want to make happen.

I've thrown a lot at you; what are your thoughts as I've kind of thrown this at you?

S: I think it's really helpful to have a bouncing board off of this and someone who's not invested in the work. So I like that idea; I've never really had a conversation like this with someone who either wasn't related to me or working with me.

W: Uh huh.

S: So it's nice to have an objective...I had never really thought about the tie-in between, you know, like personal kind of challenges and professional until you asked me about that. So it actually kind of makes me feel, um...it's a strength that I feel good about because I think...I saw a lot of people do the opposite...

W: Yep.

S: ...and, um, you know, to this day I know a lot of people from that world, that were in the same situation—lost a child—and kind of have let their lives fall into complete, um...the opposite. It really....

W: They came undone.

S: ...debilitated them...

W: They just came undone.

S: ...and defined them. Came undone, right.

W: Yep.

S: So I love...I love the fact that you sort of tied this together cause it's not something I would have ever done. Um, and I love the...I love the feedback around kind of getting...stop trying to guess what success is to others and just ask them. And as simple as that sounds, I had never really thought to ask our CEO, you know, what...how will you know if this succeeds? Like, what's success to you in this initiative? And, you know, that sounds so simple but I really hadn't thought to do that.

And I do like the thinking around, you know, even though I can't change the personnel in certain roles, I can probably make suggestions around the whole are people playing in roles that play to their strengths? I mean...

W: Yep. Love it.

S: ...there's probably different tasks...so I think that I...instead of getting really, to be completely blunt, constantly pissed off about it...

W: Right.

S: ...maybe I can turn that into, like, how can I direct them to something that they'll be successful in and then that will selfishly make me happier because I won't be so frustrated. So...

W: Yep.

S: ...I'm going to think about that. That...that's a lot of food for thought for the next little bit.

W: Yeah. Definitely think about that. The one thing that I would be aware of on that, and, um, is that when you're making those statements you want to be super transparent because, because you'll run—if you're not—you'll run the risk of being manipulative. So...

S: Okay.

W: ...so what you'll want to do is say something like, um, something like, "As you know, I've been really frustrated that we haven't been able to move this forward. As I've been thinking about that, I've been wondering, you know, I've been thinking, 'Okay, what's happening?' I'm realizing I need to work on X. I'm also wondering...maybe the reason that it's not working is that with this reorg this person...you know, this person over here is actually really, really, really, really, really good at this and they don't get to do that every day at work. You know..."

S: Right.

W: ...doesn't it make any sense for them to try something else." So that upfront...

S: Right.

W: ...you are stating what your selfish motivation is so that it's on the table; they know what it is and then they can go, "Okay, I see where she's coming from, now I can hear what she's saying." If you're willing to state right up at the top, like, what skin do you have in this game and then talk about the other people, then people are going to trust what you're saying.

S: That makes sense. That's good advice.

Two months after my initial conversation with Stacy, we did a follow-up session. She'd implemented a lot of what we'd talked about and took some real risks. I don't know about you, but to me, it sounds like she's feeling a lot more enthusiastic about her work. You can almost hear it in her voice.

W: So, um, what I thought we would do today is just a quick follow-up, um, just a few, maybe—I don't know—10 minutes or so, just maybe, I don't know...

S: Sure.

W: Who knows, it might be longer. But just to kind of go through what your homework was, what you've done since we last spoke and, um, just have you kind of give me your report and see how I could be of help to you as you move forward.

S: So, um, you know, we had a lot of interesting things since right after we spoke. One of them was our CEO resigned to take a new position as CEO of another agency. Um, and so that was unexpected and, um, I had, you know, a good mentor and kind of good relationship with her and so the CFO is now the interim CEO but will likely, you know, be kind of long interview into the CEO position. And while we've worked together and, you know, we know each other's work and our relationship is fine it's not to the level where...of closeness which I was with the prior CEO. So, I used that as an opportunity to take, um...look at my notes from our last conversation and really kind of ruminate on the takeaways of what I need to work on, what I can implement right away, what's going to be challenging for me and to really look at my team and my role within the organization and what is my forward plan kind of based on some of the things that we uncovered with your help. So, um, that was very helpful, and I actually sat down with the new interim CEO and I went over some of that feedback with him. So I thought it was a good opportunity to get him to understand, um, a little bit about me, my personality, on a different level. I mean, we certainly have worked together for about seven years, but not, not really one on one or closely, so it...

W: Wow.

S: ...was really interesting to explain myself in third person in that way, you know, sitting with someone and being a little vulnerable to, you know, identifying the weaknesses, but really reframing them as opportunities for someone else to use their strengths, you know, to fill in that gap. Um, and it was great because he identified a lot of the same strengths and we have a lot of the same S curve patterns and he loved the three to four year job cycle conversation as I explained the concept of personal disruption and the S curve and all of those things he really got...you could see him light up and really got interested in that concept. So it was a really nice anchor point for us to have

this start of a new relationship and I think it really put, um, in his mind, I think, me in a good place to take it serious enough to really have a conversation with him, to get to know him and to identify those points. But it really also helped him use that to focus on my responsibilities within my department—and they'll be increased now as a result of his role expanding. So that's exciting. I just think it was a great platform for me to have that discussion. So I think that's my best takeaway.

W: Oh, I'm so happy for you. It sounds like it...I mean, it's always hard when someone leaves with whom you have a good relationship, but the fact that you...

S: Yep.

W: ...it sounds like you've really set the foundation for a very good, positive working relationship going forward.

S: It did. And really using the feedback you gave me around identifying what I need from him. You know, I used some of your direct language around, "Okay, how will I know that you are valuing my work and what does my success in this role look like to you, and, you know, how we identify what those benchmarks are, you know, so I can exceed them." Um, and you know, "here's what I need from you around communication and here's what you can expect from me," and it was a really nice way to have a discussion that took the emotion out of it, that took any frivolousness out of it and it was really concrete and strength-based. And he was very receptive to it and I'm really excited about our relationship and my, my expanded role and his expanded role. And I think it was, um, really useful to have that session with you prior to that conversation.

W: Oh, I'm so glad Stacy. That's really fantastic. As you're thinking about what are some next steps for you, are you going to check in with him periodically or what, what have you outlined at this point?

S: Yeah, I'm going to definitely check in with him periodically and I'm going to, um, really take some of those concepts and things that I've been working on out my head and put them on paper with some benchmarks. Um, I think that's going to help me, you know, structure and not get too big in my ambition, especially with our innovation because I'm now leading our M and A team and our innovation strategy and a lot of that lives in my head so...

W: Got it.

S: ...I think it'll be really helpful for me to really plot that out, so that was helpful. Um, the other thing is really I have more people under my supervision now, and some of them I struggle with. Um, I'm going to say, we don't share the

same, maybe, drive or, or level of work ethic and things like that. So I'm going to try to use some of those tools to help understand what their strengths are and maybe structure roles differently within my department to, you know, to your words, to kind of play on what those strengths are.

W: Okay, well this is fantastic. It's been so fun. And thank you, Stacy, for being my guinea pig, letting us...

S: Love it. I love it.

W: ...do this...do this live on air for lots of people to listen. I suspect that a lot of people are going to benefit from your willingness to be, to be kind of transparent and open in going through the process. So, thank you again for your willingness to do it.

S: Oh, my pleasure. I really enjoyed it.

Wasn't it fun to hear about the changes Stacy has made and the conversation that she had with her new boss? For me and for Stacy I think the experiment was a success. What do you think? Do you want more live coaching sessions? Reach out on Twitter at [@johnsonwhitney](https://twitter.com/johnsonwhitney) or on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/whitneyjohnson/) and let me know.

Now, to continue on with the experimentation theme—beginning on September 18, 2017, [I am launching an online course](#) on how to guide people through the inflection points in their careers. In this eight-week course you will become fluent in my seven point framework of personal disruption, have access to my disruption diagnostics, a private mastermind group and several live Q and A sessions. Now that I've coached hundreds of people through these career transitions I think I've cracked the code on how to do this and I am so looking forward to sharing this with you.

Because this is the first time I'm offering this program, and I'm beta testing, the cost for this first round is only \$399. Sign up information can be found at whitneyjohnson.com/coachingprogram. If you're listening to this podcast on the day that it airs—August 31, 2017—you are especially lucky. I hope you're always lucky. Anyway, if you go to whitneyjohnson.com/coachingprogram and sign up by midnight U.S. Pacific time on Saturday, September 2, the price will be \$299 and the first hundred of you to sign up will receive a complimentary copy of my book, [Disrupt Yourself](#).

Now, thank you again to Stacy Olsen DiStefano for conducting this experiment with me, to sound engineer and editor Kelsey Peters and editor Heather Hunt, show-notes contributor and editor, Macy Robison and art director Brandon Jameson. I'm Whitney Johnson and this is Disrupt Yourself.