# Three Ways to Leave the Day-to-Day Operations of Your Business

Are you bogged down in the daily operations of your business? There's a way out - three, in fact. VirtualDOO's Lloyd Thompson shares what they are.

**James Schramko and Lloyd Thompson**

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is Episode 987, I've brought along my special guest and friend, Lloyd Thompson. Welcome back.

**Lloyd:** Thanks for having me, James.

**James:** Big promise today, Lloyd, you're going to share with us three ways to leave your day-to-day operations. So I think, firstly, we should just frame this up. You're an expert at helping visionaries get their vision achieved, you do that primarily through organizing their people and their systems, and you've been doing that for lots of my clients. So I'm really happy with the help you've been providing them.

You've published a book by a similar name that people can grab from your website at VirtualDOO.com. That's virtual D-O-O .com. So if you're interested in this topic, you can go and check out Lloyd's website and have a look at his book. And it's free, I believe. And it's also on Amazon, if you want to buy it, go for it.

**Who is Lloyd's book for?**

But Lloyd, tell us, what does three ways to leave your day-to-day operations actually mean to you?

**Lloyd:** This is about the founder who's typically very busy, quite overwhelmed. They've been stuck in the daily operations, they've been running things, they can't find a way to extract themselves from their business. And as a result, they're time poor, they don't have time to work on strategy and relationships.
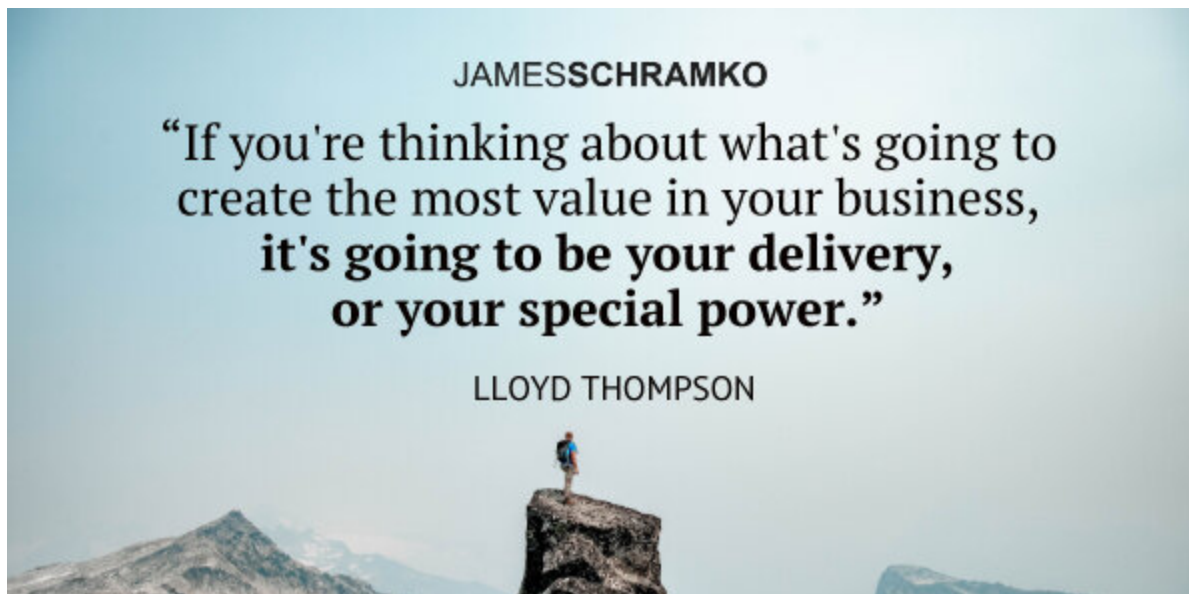
And they don't have a sellable business, because their business is them, you know, how will the business run without them? So this is about how to help them extract themselves from the day to day so they can do those things and work on their passions and relationships and shaking the tree.

**James:** Yeah, I had a huge reaction to a previous episode, 981, where I had Chris Evans talking about the dangers of scaling too much or too quickly. And then I've seen a few discussions from people who've listened to that episode happening on social media. And in one of the discussions, I think the main fulcrum point for a lot of people where scaling breaks things for them is that they just can't move past that being-small phase.

And if there was one thing that keeps coming up over and over, it's team. Most people can't get a team to help them get to the level that they need to be, and because most people aren't trained to be a leader. It's amazing how many confessions I get in my coaching.

People privately say to me, Look, I'm a terrible leader. I know I don't lead well, my team don't seem to have great direction, they leave fairly often. And most of them say, I don't really want to learn, I just need some kind of solution to this. This is quite common. Are you seeing that too?

**Lloyd:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the people I work with who have fantastic businesses aren't necessarily - as you say, you've been managing people in the past, they are fantastic creatives, they are people who have an idea, they're a brilliant marketer or salesperson.

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

"If you're thinking about what's going to create the most value in your business, it's going to be your delivery, or your special power."

LLOYD THOMPSON

But when it comes to focusing on how they organize the team into rhythms and processes, they probably could focus their attention, they probably could learn, it's just not their interest. And as a result of not being their interest, it's not their special power.

**James:** So there's no shame in if you're not a great leader, and you're actually aware of it. It could be an advantage in a way to say, Okay, good. I'm not trying to do something I'm really terrible at. There is a way forward.

Should we have a look at way one, what's way one in your three ways?

## First of all, you need a team

**Lloyd:** Way one is, typically, I find this is most applicable to the solopreneur. So the person who's, they've started a business and most of the delivery is them. But also, most of the admin is them. And if you're thinking about what's going to create the most value in your business, it's going to be your delivery, or your special power.

So when you're focusing on things like your admin, that's taking away from extra revenue or value that you could be generating. So the first thing I would do is get a VA. People think, well, what am I going to do with this person? And so probably the best way to give an example is what I did.

So my first hire, I got a virtual assistant, and I got them helping me out on my bookkeeping. I got them helping me with my invoice payable and invoice receivable. And in more recent times, I've been getting to help me with my snippets that I put out on social media, which are cut from fantastic podcasts episodes such as this.

**James:** I hope you get a few great snippets from this one, mate. By the way, I had the same question. What on earth would I have a VA do? And then 65 hires later, I realized I can't live without my VAs.

**Lloyd:** Absolutely. I mean I don't want to be spending my time on the invoice payable and receivable. And also, my team are better at those snippets than me, although I must admit, I do miss messing around with all those special effects on CapCut, which you said, Dial that down, Lloyd, that's crazy. Stop putting in the laser eyes.

**James:** Oh yeah, I don't miss your creative efforts. I've actually deleted some of my original experimental ones that I did while I was doing a video training course. My team are far and beyond significantly better than I am. And it's great. When they actually put together stuff and it gets a great result, I'm quick to credit them. But also, we all celebrate.

Isn't it great to be able to celebrate together that we created something special? By we, I mean they, but we get to share in it. And like, it's a team. I'm the one on the camera, they're the one making it get out there onto the internet and for people to discover us. And that's the magic of a team. It's such a lonely sport, this online entrepreneur thing.

**What a solopreneur should consider**

And when you say the word solopreneur, it reminds me of a guy I know has a podcast around this topic. And you know, he was couch surfing his way around the country. He's such a small business, he had no team. And I think solopreneur is really just sort of codename for, I've got a job, but it's with me as my own boss, and you still have to do everything.

And it's not a great position to do for a sustained period of time. Unless you have really humble needs, and you're particularly good at something, and you've got the perfect clients or a good business model, solopreneur is quite limiting.
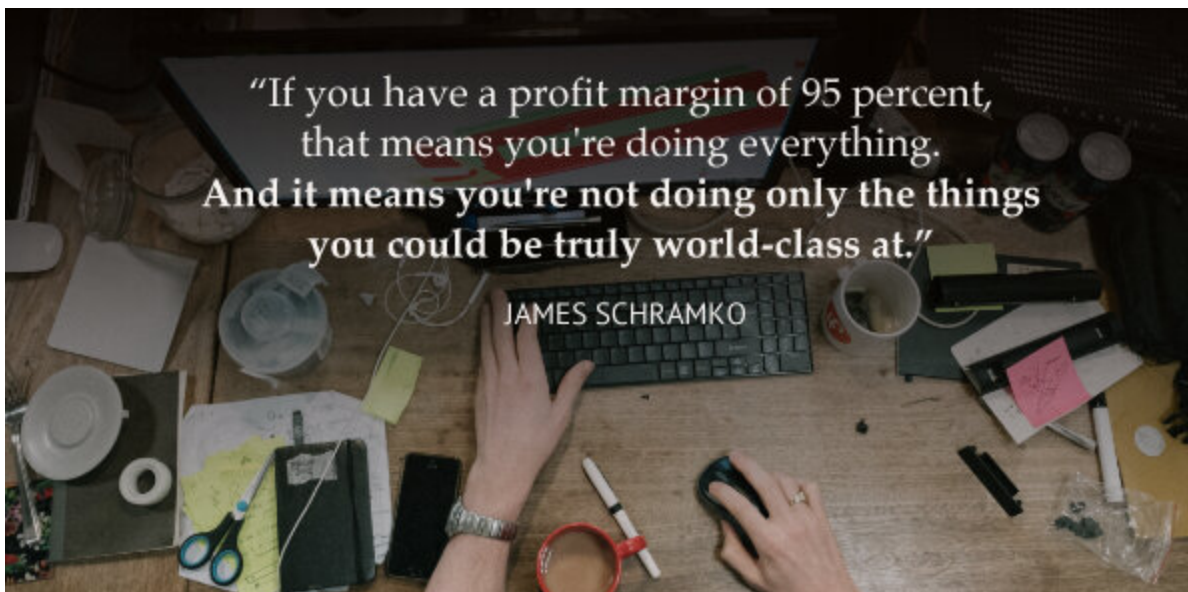


I'll say this is the counterintuitive tip I've got around this, most people are not spending enough to get to the revenue level where they could have a much easier life. So if you have a profit margin of 95 percent, that means you're doing everything. And it means you're not doing only the things you could be truly world class at.

**Lloyd:** And hiring a team like as I've done, signing with the folks in the Philippines is huge amount of value for money, like these folks, quite often, they're degree educated, they've got very good English, they've got a broad range of skills. My team are better video editors than I am for a start, and just contribute a huge amount of value.

And if you're trying to think, What am I going to do? Well, I mentioned a couple of things there, but I think you've mentioned in previous podcasts what you call the task audit. And for me, what I do there is I just look at, what are my weekly, daily, monthly tasks I'm regularly doing, and I look at those and I think, should I really be doing these? Is this the most high-value thing that I should be doing?

Or should I actually be using my team to get on new ways to market my business, whether it's podcasting and how I can support my team, because those are the really high-value items for me. But in other areas, I think perhaps this is an area where my team can help develop this. So doing the task audit helps me work out what are those items I can move off to the team.

**James:** It's nice, yeah, getting help from your team to identify those is good. But also being aware that you shouldn't be doing everything. That's step one. It's like, once you know the problem, it reminds me of that sign on the lunchroom at the Mercedes-Benz dealership that I worked at, at one point, it had a sign on the wall saying, Is what you're doing right now helping you sell a car?

It was a bit cheeky, because you know, I'd say eating something so that I can survive the rest of the day is probably going to help me sell another car. But I get your point, you know? If I'm sitting there reading the newspaper or magazine goofing off, then that wouldn't be helping me sell a car. So it was a strategically placed sign, but it made a point, to be aware of your activities and to see if they guide it in the right direction.

And for a while there, when I first had - I had two team members, I had a support person, and I had someone writing articles. And then when I took on my third one, it was like my first Philippines VA. And that was the one where I'm like, I don't even know what I'll have this person do. But I ended up making a post-it note on my computer, and it said, Would Richard Branson be doing this right now? And that was my way of thinking.

So hang on, if I'm doing my bookkeeping, or I'm writing out an article, or I'm posting something to my website, could I imagine Branson there on his little island, you know, cutting and pasting something onto a website? And I'm thinking, you know, I just can't see - I can't see that. I think he'd be playing tennis or kite surfing, or running a business meeting or something, but I just can't see him doing this menial stuff.

And that really, it reminded me, I quite often forgot that I actually had someone in my team to do these things. I had to remind myself, I had to retrain myself to not do it. And I came up with this idea of being one layer back. I wanted to be one layer back from my website, and one layer back from my email system, and one layer back from my support desk, one layer back from my bookkeeping thing, to the point where I don't log into them at all.

And if I wanted to log in these days, I usually have to find someone on Slack and say, Can you send me the logins for our email system or for our website thing? And they would immediately be thinking, Okay, do you need help with something? Right? Oh, yeah, actually, could you? But I'm pretty good at just putting things in scheduler for them to do.

Even if it means it won't be done in the next three minutes, it might be done in three hours. But I've learned to have the patience to not do it myself. And that is the threshold you have to cross over, right, between, Well, I might as well just do it myself, to, Well, if I do it myself, I'll be doing it forever.

**Lloyd:** Well, that's a great segue then into way to leave number two.

**James:** Wonderful. [laughs]

## The element that is meetings

**Lloyd:** So I think in your example now, you're talking about where you have developed a team. And when we get into that place, what I've then seen founders doing is then scatter gunning the team with tasks.

**James:** Oh yeah. [sounds]

**Lloyd:** They haven't had that discipline that you've had to step back, but they're like, they don't know any other way. But I'll just…

**James:** Fire hose. Just dump.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, fire hose. Here it is. And the next day, a new set of priorities that are coming to my mind [sounds], you know, straight out every time. And they just don't know any other way. And so, in order to get around this, you need rhythms. Now, the first thing I'll say about this, rhythm generally do need meetings, which is the last thing a lot of founders want to be spending their time doing.

But it doesn't have to be the founder doing these rhythms. They don't have to be the person running these things. It can be a Director of Operations. So again, another hire to help you scale. So let's talk about those rhythms. In fact, actually, before I do, I'll make a little disclaimer.

While it's important to have these rhythms in these meetings, it's also very important to just kill pointless meetings, because they will just suck time from the whole team that can be low value. And if there's a meeting that could just be done by sharing information via a Loom video, which they can consume in their own time, that is by far better than just wasting everyone's…

**James:** Loom is like the modern memo, isn't it?

**Lloyd:** Absolutely.

**James:** The old way was a memo. They type down a message and circulate it. And that's a very effective way to communicate on a mass scale without having everyone drop tools. Loom is another way to do that. The other thing to consider though, when you create a Loom, make it as short as possible. If someone sends you a 30-minute Loom, it commits you 30 minutes of your life, even at double speed, that's 15 minutes. You've got to keep that in mind. If something could be said in one minute or two minutes, do that.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, great tip. Yeah, Loom is amazing. I must admit, I can see most of them on two speed. I'm almost used to hearing people sound like chipmunks now.

**James:** I will look at the Loom and see how long it is to decide if I want to commit to it or not. If someone sends me a very long one, I'm going to chip away at it slowly. I'll also train them not to send me long Looms. So I have a supplier actually I work with who used to send long Looms. By long, I mean more than 10 minutes.

I've got it down to like one minute. And it's perfect. I always commit to a one-minute Loom. Even a prospect sending a one-minute Loom, it's acceptable that you might watch that, and they'll be notified that I've watched it, and then they could follow up if they're clever.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, Looms are amazing. And I use them very frequently. Well, if we are going to do a meeting, then they need to be purposeful. And I've got two ways that I really like. I took this out of the book, Meetings Suck, really like this method.

**James:** Cameron Herold?

**Lloyd:** I think so.

**James:** It is yeah, a previous guest. I've probably sent you the link. He's famous for it. He's the guy who actually trains number two's. Sounds funny, actually. But he's got a community of people who are a second in charge, and they're not going to be the leader or the guy running it, but they're going to be the person supporting the person running it. So meeting is obviously essential tool in the toolkit for that kind of role.

**Lloyd:** Great. Well, I mean, the two things that I took away from that were, firstly, the timekeeper, because we can just disappear down a rabbit hole and talk for ages. But if you've got a strict agenda of, here are the people talking, and they're going to be 10 minutes each, or we're going to cover sales and finance and then marketing, and so forth and the support team, and they're going to be 10 minutes each, the timekeeper is going to make sure, Hey, folks, you've got one minute left in your time slot, keep it on point. Just, it's an active role that person is going to have to make sure we stick to our allocated time slot and move on in an effective way. So that's the first one.

The second one I really like is the parking lot manager. And so what they're going to do is listen in to make sure if anything's going off topic. And if something's going off topic, and it's derailing the team from the focus of the objective of the meeting, they're going to say, Hey, that's a valuable piece of information, let's capture that for the parking lot.

They're going to capture it. And if it's that valuable, they will have it scheduled in at a later time. And so particularly, I must admit creative sorts, where we're getting into some regular systematic meeting, they might be tuning out. But give those people an active role and they're in it. And so those two things I found really, really helpful.

**James:** Nice, I like the idea of getting the team to take roles. And I often ask my team to run the meeting because they can, you know, build up some skills, get some more confidence, see the other side of the coin, like see what it's like to try and process information and to manage the information rather than just being a participant. It's really interesting to give them that perspective.

## The rhythms that keep things running

**Lloyd:** Well, talking about those meetings, and let's get into those five rhythms that I would like to suggest that we use to keep things running. So the first and most important one that we use is the prioritization meeting. So I see these overwhelmed busy business owners, they have a bazillion ideas all of the time, and they want to spin a thousand plates, but as a result, they struggle to get traction on anything.

And so in this prioritization meeting, this is a meeting between the business owner, a founder, visionary, and the Director of Operations. And in that meeting, is to work out what is really the priority, like what is going to move the needle the most, what are those three plates that we need to cook that's going to make a significant impact to your business?

And when we work that out, that Director of Operations is going to take that away out of that meeting, and make sure that happens, you know, get those items cooked and done, organize it with the team and see it through.

And so one of the benefits is not just prioritization, it's making sure that the founder and the Director of Operations are on the same page, and it allows that founder to have a proxy to the team so they don't need to be the person consuming all the time, talking to everybody, and making sure these things happen. So that's the prioritization meeting.

**James:** I like that one, because it's like the 64:4, it's like Essentialism, or The One Thing, all of these ideas are that if you can make a decision on the thing you should do, and decide not to do other things, then you've just eliminated hundreds of to-do items, because now you're only focused on what actually matters.

### Looking at the reds and greens

**Lloyd:** That's absolutely it. And that feeds well into the second item. So the second item is the team meeting. So the founder, hopefully, before the director of operations was running things, would have a regular pulse with their team. If not, they should definitely be having one, but this can be run by the Director of Operations.

Now, what's the focus of this meeting, because I've seen these things just be loosey goosey, all over the place, with no real purpose? For me, the purpose is, what support do people need to get their jobs done to make sure things are running well? And so the most efficient way to look at that is some kind of measurables from each area.

So I call these the reds and greens. So it might be okay, what is it, sales numbers? You know, is it below a certain number and it's red, and above a certain number, it's green? Have you got a warehouse? Is it from the point that someone ordered something until it got fulfilled and it's with the customer? Like, what's the timeframe turnaround? If it's below a certain number, it's red, if it's above a certain number, it's green. And then there could be financial measures.

So in this meeting, in that team meeting, we're looking at all of the different areas with the team members that are responsible for them, and assessing whether it's red or green. Now, when it's red, that helps to work out what the priority should be for the Director of Operations in that first meeting that we talked about, in that prioritization meeting.

So we're looking at those things, and the Director of Operations can then go to those people with their red, in a separate meeting, I'll call that the retros or improvement meeting, and work out, well, what do we need to make this red a green? Do we need more staff? Do we need more money? Does the process need to be improved? Or is it the right person running this area ultimately?

So that's the kind of thing we're doing. And that's a brief mention of the third item, which is again, the retros improvement meeting where we're looking at those reds and saying, Well, how can we make it a green? And what steps do we need to change to make that a green?

**James:** In my business, we have a daily dashboard. Someone in my team collates information, they screenshot it and share it to the whole team. So when we come to our weekly team meeting, everyone already knows the stats. They already know the lead metrics, the lag metrics that matter for our business. So most of our meeting is focused on what do we do with that information. Do you share the information in the meeting? Or do you like the dashboard idea, too?

## The numbers that inform planning

**Lloyd:** I love the dashboard idea. Yeah. And as long as the members that are consuming it, as long as it can be open, it's not sensitive, I absolutely am in favor of sharing it.

**James:** Well, most of ours are not financial numbers, which is interesting. Like, we can tell by the number of members we have in our membership levels, we can tell by the number of podcast downloads, the number of visitors to our website, the number of emails that we're sending, the total subscription size of our email database. They are the trends that guide, and they'll inform the revenue.

So it's not really that relevant for everyone, like, what's the actual revenue or the actual costs. Like it's up to me, the responsibility is for me to manage those costs, the team costs or advertising costs or attending a meeting or whatever, that's in my wheelhouse. But the team can definitely influence the quality of our reach, the way that the search engine optimization is helping visitors come to our site, the number of people that convert into an email list, you know, because of the lead magnets, etc., that's all within their sphere of influence.

So when we come to the meeting, there's no surprise, people aren't going to be feeling like they were, Surprise! You know, why are your numbers down or whatever? We do own this as a team too, because each of us, we do our own role within the business. I was pretty clear that I'm the face of the business, so no one really wants that role, except for me, in my team.

And then other people are really good at the emails, other people are good at the - so they all spread into their parts of the business. And everyone knows that that's their responsibility. And together, we do this sort of symphony of the end result, and it equals that. So the meeting for us is a great opportunity to then delve into, what activities are having an impact? What is our priority impact right now?

Something I'm super conscious of, and you alluded to this before, is I might know several moves coming down the track. So it's how do I meter that out in a way that won't overwhelm them, but also encourages them and informs them? So I usually do an overarching snapshot of the health of the business and the vision of the business, like, who are we? What are we doing? Why do we do it? Where have we been? What's happening now? Where are we going?

That sort of overarching beat of the drum, like Jack from General Electric used to do. And then we have a look at what activities have we been doing lately, and what decisions do we want to make around that? For example, for the whole of December, and the whole of January, we published one episode per week, instead of two for our podcast.

We've now got 60 days' worth of information to make choices as to the way forward. In that time, though, we also did massive experimentation with social media videos. And we've cracked the jackpot with that. We've figured out how to make that work. And so now, do we replace one with the other? Do we do both? etc. So we get to spend most of our time making decisions. And I think that's sort of around part three of your three ways. Right?

**Lloyd:** Yeah, that's coming up in a minute. I just want to wrap up. Thanks very much. And all of that, that you just talked about, was based on numbers. There was some aspect of measuring something in order to help you make decisions about how to improve. And so yeah, completely agree with it.

## Setting triggers for the future

**James:** Oh, I wanted to just extend on that one thing. In the last meeting we had, I told them something that I'm thinking about, but I haven't decided on yet. So it's in the back of my mind, and I'm letting time run through to make a decision on it. So I've set an indicator or a trigger in the future.

I've said in two months' time, let's have a look at this trigger, and see if we've activated it or not. If we activate this trigger, that will cause a reaction and we will change this thing. If we don't activate the trigger, there'll be no change. And so I've set them a timeline and a future thing. So they have an enormous amount of awareness of what's on my mind and of what the future will look.

This is all positive stuff, by the way, nothing negative, but it's around changing product mix slightly based on some of the internal key performance metrics that we would look at to make it worthwhile. And if we reach the target, then that activates a new stage. It's like a video game, if you can get to the end of the race before the time limit, you get an extended bonus round. So that's what we're shooting for.

But to my point, though, I'll give them enough information to be fully confident and comfortable in their role and to have enough ability to change the impact, the work they're doing. But I won't deluge them or overwhelm them with the other things on my mind that don't really have any consequence to them in the short term.

## Where some visionaries get it wrong

And so there's this big difference between what's on a visionary's mind versus what signals you put into the front line. I think you've got to be very careful about how you roll that through. I've seen visionaries unsettle their team with too much information and negative information, you know, like, Oh, we've just lost this client. And that means in a month from now, I might have to let some of you go. That's like, a bad thing to talk about at a meeting.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, and also, when they keep changing priorities, then it's context switching. And there's a huge cost of reprioritizing people. Sometimes the visionary thinks, Oh, that's all right, they will just put that down, or maybe they won't even put that down, they'll carry on, they'll do that in parallel, and they will immediately switch to the next thing.

But actually, you know, to wrap up what you were doing, and put that away, and then load up whatever tools you need, and get yourself in the mindset for the next thing, you lose so much time context switching. So that's why it's so important to have that priority. And as you said, like, to figure out how it's best to deliver to the team to change the priorities if that's what we're going to do.

**James:** It's like with a kid, switching between painting session and a swimming pool session. There's an enormous amount of logistics that go into that. Where did my day go? All I did was have a swim, do some painting and a bit of trampoline, and we ate some meals. Right? But I totally get it.

And having worked for bad bosses, I know what's going on in the mind of someone in that position. They're like, God, would this person make up their mind? I don't know what, like they tell me to do this, now they want me to do that. I don't know if they actually know what they're doing. I'm not even sure this company could survive. And like, don't they realize that I've still got these three things to do?

How am I going to get a sense of job satisfaction if they don't acknowledge even the things that I've already done that they now want to scrap away and give me three more things? I'm out of here. That's basically where they end up. They get completely bounced around to the point where they just can't take it anymore, you burn them out.

**Lloyd:** Some of these bad bosses just don't even know though. They don't even know that they're shouting down the hole.

**James:** Oblivious. Absolutely, like EQ zero. Zero out of zero. [laughs]

**Lloyd:** They just shout down the hole, Is it done yet? They don't understand, like, what's going on.

**James:** That's why I say, you know, these team members are human beings, they're not cogs in your car gearbox, right? Have some empathy for a fellow human, please.
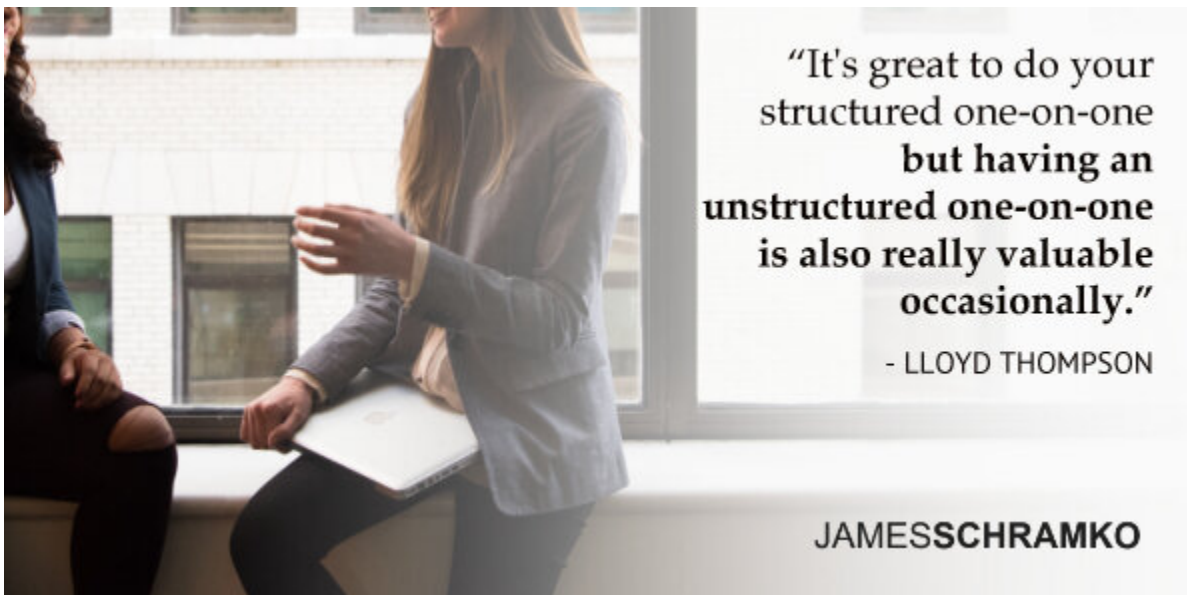
## Keeping a check on the pulse

**Lloyd:** I just want to wrap up then on way to leave number two, because that ties in nicely to what we've just talked about. Two of the things are huddles. Now this doesn't have to be an actual, in-person, live Zoom meeting. This can just be a pulse check that's run every day where people say what they're working on.

So other people go, Oh, hang on, I'm working on that too. Maybe we can collaborate. So just a little couple of bullet points, not an essay or anything like that. This is what I'm working on. And mostly important if they're blocked or need help, because sometimes someone think, Oh, I thought they were going to come back to me with that tomorrow, someone's already forgotten, right?

So just having that daily little huddle pulse check, can just be over Slack, or whatever your chat mechanism is where people just say, Yeah, this is what I'm working on. Oh, hang on. I'm currently waiting on for this or I'm blocked on that. So that's really important.

The other thing is the one-on-one. Now, I could go down a rabbit hole talking about good things you can put into a one-on-one, but I just want to talk about one thing, which is, even though you might have a structured one-on-one, and that's a good thing to do periodically, where you're going to talk about what goals or what things you're measuring, and so forth, it's also good to have an unstructured one-on-one every now and then, because while you might be covering 10 things in your structured one-on-one, that 11th thing, which is unstructured, where you're like, Hey, what's happening in your life, you know, is everything okay? Let's just have a catch up. Let's just have a virtual Zoom coffee, whatever that looks like, that thing can be really illuminating.



"It's great to do your structured one-on-one but having an unstructured one-on-one is also really valuable occasionally."

- LLOYD THOMPSON

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

And so what's happening in that person's mind, they might have just been ready to pull the parachute and get out of your business. And you've just had a chat with them and find out they only need one simple thing. And you can solve that right there and then. So just have a little pulse check, an actual Zoom, every now and then catch up. It's great to do your structured one-on-one but having an unstructured one-on-one is also really valuable occasionally.

## The power of unstructured meetings

**James:** That's huge. I'm a massive fan of unstructured. The last Maldives trip that I went on had the least structure of any trip that I've been on before. There was no structure. The structure involved me assembling the best possible people to be on the boat. And when we got on the boat, I did not run facilitated meetings, I didn't orchestrate a get-to-know-you dinner, you know, where everyone gets to introduce themselves. Zero.

And they had the most organic outcomes possible, because the right people in a contained environment will make magic happen. Same with the team, we call them temperature checks. To just check in on your team. It's like blokes should check in on other blokes, you know, when they're having a difficult time with the missus or in life, all the pressure that they're carrying around as a business owner and a family man and like, guys need to talk to other guys, right?

Any guy listening to this who's feeling down or pushed around at the moment, reach out to another bloke, and if there's no one around, then reach out to me or Lloyd, just check in, happy to chat to another bloke. Anyway, I just thought that's my sort of support message for the community.

Your team need that, too. Don't assume that everyone in your team is having a great time. They might be swimming gracefully on the surface, but they could be struggling underneath. And it could be anything. It could be their kids getting low grades at school, it could be a family illness, it could be that they're not sure about what they're supposed to actually be doing within your business.

They might have concerns that your business may not be around because of all this AI and all the rest of it. We're in a time where things seem to accelerate in intensity from doom and gloom economic reports to, you know, it's the first pandemic I've ever been through in my life, and I'm half a century old, right? So there's a lot of firsts for everybody.

So make sure you check in with your team, do your temperature check, have unstructured situation. Same when you do a team catch up. I just got back from my team meeting in person. And it's unstructured. The main thing is, get the team there, hire out a nice place, get meals, chat, talk, go to the beach, whatever you do, and let people just be human and understand and know them. And they'll really respond to that. As you know, it's a human way to do things.

Basically, people don't like being processed. That was always my objection to these, you know, 360 degree interviews and anonymous - anonymous surveys in corporate land are such bullsh*t anyway. What it means is you put in an anonymous complaint, and then we'll do whatever we can to track down. We'll look at the video camera to see who submitted that form at this time of the day, we will find out who it is and then we will ostracize you from the corporation. That's what it really means.

**Lloyd:** Normally enough info in there to work out what team or department it came from.

**James:** Basically, think about everything you hate about corporate and enterprise and do the opposite, and you'll have a wonderful business.

## Stop being the answer to every question

**Lloyd:** Yeah. Well, on that note, let's get into way to leave number three. So this one is another thing where the business owner is getting frustrated because they're being overwhelmed with questions and decisions that they need to make. And I get questions like, Oh, isn't this common sense? Why are they coming to me? Why can't they figure this out?

And the result of this, because they're making all the decisions, is that they are stuck in the daily operations, they are at the top of the tree, they are organizing pretty much everything that happens. And yeah, it's all of those impacts I mentioned earlier, they're stuck, they don't have a sellable business, they can't extract themselves out.

So here's the surprise that I deliver to many of them - you might be the problem. So when someone comes to them with a problem, they need to coach the solution out of them, or give them at least the expectation that if you're coming with a problem, I at least want you to have a crack at what the solution might be. And what does this look like?

Well, if you are so used to just solving things for people, then when someone comes to you with a problem, have a look at, what thinking process did you go through to come up with that solution? And you can ask them the questions again to sound out, well however you came up with your solution, whatever process, ask them those questions.

Now, here's the important thing. Don't be holding on to your solution, because by asking those questions, they might come up with a better answer or a better solution than you were going to come up with. So simply the art of coaching or asking questions can lead them there to a solution. And if you stick at doing that, then they're going to be able to think for themselves.

But this is a double-edged sword. So the second thing you need to do is if you are going to let them start making decisions and being autonomous, you also need to make it safe for them to fail, because if you give them a bit of autonomy and they make a mistake, and you immediately come in heavy with big consequences for them, then they're going to go back into their shell, they're going to go to their safe place, and they're just going to follow orders.

So you need to give them a little bit of a - make it safe for them. And you can start with small decisions and say, you know, What do you think about this? And zoom out more and more if you can see they're doing better and better at things, and so forth. So that's really the first thing, is around coaching.

**James:** I really like that. I had an example of that. When we switched to one podcast a week, I didn't give my team many instructions around that. I said, Let's record up until November. And then I'm going to have two months off podcasting. And then we'll resume in February. So I need enough episodes in the tank to get us through till next year. And we'll just do one a week. That's basically it.

What I discovered later is they were publishing the episodes on the best day of the week for our audience based on the activity levels, based on when we get the most support requests, based on the trends for social media consumption, based on our membership back end. So they picked the perfect time to publish all by themselves.

Now, if they'd picked a bad day, like if they'd pick Friday, which I wouldn't want them to pick, then I would come at it and say, I probably should have noticed this earlier, and I'll take responsibility for this. I should have had a discussion with you around which would be a good day of the week, you know, so I would still assume responsibility. I wouldn't blame them for it if they picked a different day, it just means that I haven't done my job to coach them properly yet. But as it turns out, they got it. They absolutely nailed it.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, I use coaching by values. So while you might have a value in there around taking initiative, I've got one in my team, which is grab it and run with it, which is, this is your thing. But we're here to support you, you know, you take something, own it, see it through, but involve us when you need help.

So when you see examples of them doing that, then I come back and say, Hey, that was a really good example of grab it and run with it, love what you did. And I call it out in the team. If it's not an example of that, it's like, Hey, you know, the behavior we were really looking for was more like this, or particularly point out where someone else in the team has done something good, and say, Hey, look, this is an example of what we really, really like.

So you can turn that as a positive mechanism by celebrating what other people have done by leading and following in that value. And then everyone else sees that. The flip side of that is true as well, which is if you have values and you're not living by them, then no one else is going to follow them. You've got to really lead by example, in those values. And I think we've talked about in another podcast where I had someone who had 10 core values in their business. If I asked that person what were all 10, they wouldn't be able to do that.

**James:** That was Episode 982, Teaching Your Team to Think.

**Lloyd:** Okay, wow, amazing.

**James:** Yeah, it's like, that is funny, it's really good. We have the same thing in our - we auction out new tasks when we want to learn something or when I find a new tool, we go on a trial. We see someone in the market doing something that I think we could do, like a carousel post or something, I'll just ask them if someone wants to have a go at this.
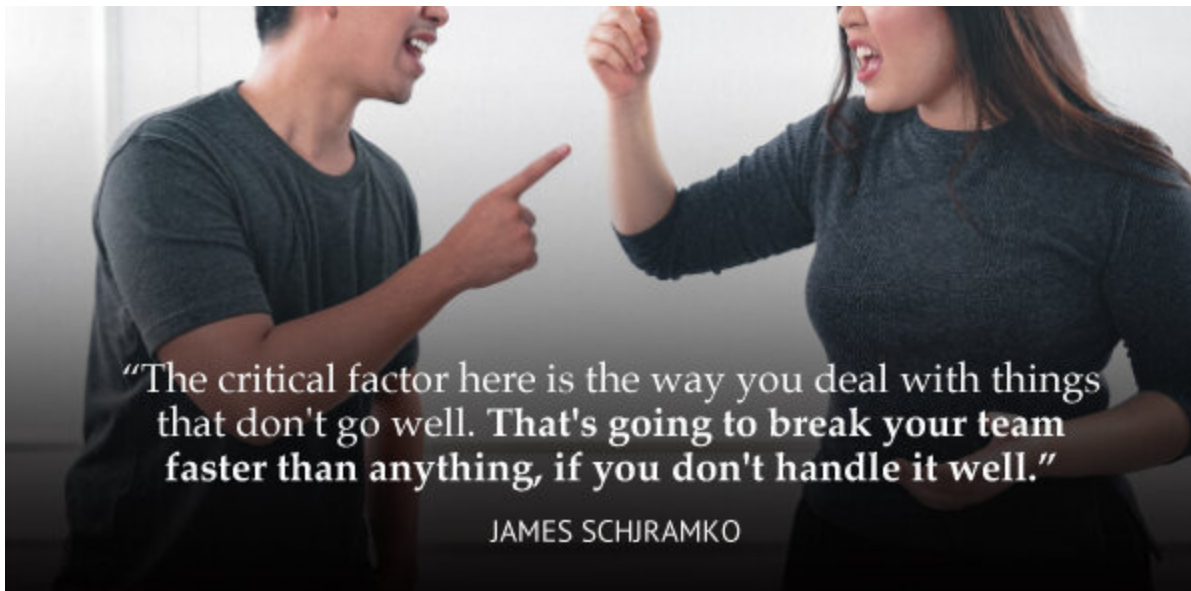


And they can't fail if they try. Even if we don't get the result we want, we've learned something and we feed it back. I think the critical factor here is the way you deal with things that don't go well. That's going to break your team faster than anything, if you don't handle it well. But if you encourage people and reward the good behavior and show examples of what's going well, then they will get excited about repeating that, because it's human nature.

## A model for group coaching

**Lloyd:** I just want to - for completeness here, we've talked a lot about individual coaching. I'd like to just mention what a group facilitation for group coaching can look like.

**James:** Speaking my language here. [laughs] Done it every week for the last 13 years straight.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, in this case, I'm talking about, let's say there's a problem, and we need a solution for it. And I don't want the solutions to come from me, or I don't want the founder to be coming up with a solution. How can we get the solution out of the team? So the example I've used before is, I use the framework GROW, which stands for Goal, Reality, Options and Wrap up.

And so I would run a meeting, whether it's virtual or in person, and I start by stating the goal. And so the server meltdown is a favorite for me because that was my past, you know, back in my technical beginnings, the server has melted down. And so what's the goal? The goal is to understand why, but also, what are we going to do to prevent this ever happening again? Like, what's the solution we need to put in place to completely remediate this? So that's the goal.

Then the next thing is the reality. So where are we now? So this is a key point where I'm going to try and suck in the others to get involved. So reality is, draw what the current state looks like. So for me, that's boxes and arrows, might be on my virtual whiteboard. And particularly with techies, they can't stand things being wrong.

So if it's not even perfect, and someone's like, Oh, that's not quite right, rather than try and correct it with your facilitating, get them in. Say, Oh please, take over. Yeah, yeah. And this is where you switch from being the person who was running things to the person who's now asking questions. And it's the key step, asking them questions that they're now facilitating.

And so through that, the next thing you move on to is the options. So going through all of these different options. And the next thing you want to do is ask the team question, you know, what is this? Is this the option you would go for? Option one, option two, option three, and so forth. And so when the team have come up with the options, effectively, because they come up with the solutions or the options, you've got their buy-in.

And so then the next step is just to wrap up. Say, Hey, we concluded the following, we're going to go with option one, and off we go. So that's what the team coaching looks like. And that's my little sneaky whiteboard trick. They seem to fall for it every time where you just draw the current state, maybe not too accurately. And that just gets them involved. So that's the team coaching.

And so I should say that, if you've done all of these things well, if you do all of these, you know, you're coaching, and you're delegating rather than deciding, and you're getting your team to run things for you, then this does allow you to step back. You've got your director of operations running your team meeting, you've got your administration taken care of, you can start stepping back.

On the flip side, if you are doing all of these things, if you are leading by example, and you're not getting results, then you probably need to take a hard look at all of your team members and make sure you have got the right people in the right seats, because you might not have.

But back to the positive. I mean, if you do, you know, if you have done this, then you now have a sellable business, you're not the person that's running all the day-to-day things, this allows you time to focus on relationships, passion, strategy, and you have a sellable business.


**Where to go if you need help**


**James:** Awesome. Now, you seem quite knowledgeable on all this stuff, Lloyd. Are you helping people do this?

**Lloyd:** Absolutely. Yeah, yeah, we are providing a director of operations service on a low fractional cost.

**James:** So fractional, that just means they're paying for the part they need of you instead of having to hire an entire director of operations.

**Lloyd:** Yeah, that's correct.

**James:** So instead of spending $150,000 or $200,000 a year and trying to get that one key hire and hope it all works, and that they don't come and kill their team or whatever, that they can just pay a retainer to have access to a team instead of just one individual.

**Lloyd:** Absolutely. So it's a month-to-month subscription. So they've got access to my team, headed by a director of operations, and that director of operations will quite often be running a couple of different businesses. And the benefit there is they've gone oh, I've seen this problem already, I've seen it over here, absolutely.

**James:** Oh, cross pollination. Yeah, they can see best practice. But they can also instantly spot gaps because oh, you know, they've been exposed to more information. And they're not - from what I gather, unlike an individual who's basically there to cover their ass and make sure they retain employment, you're in some cases helping people bridge the gap between where they're at now to getting to a run rate where they can make a decision if they are ready and able or scaled enough to hire someone or if they just want to continue that forever.

**Lloyd:** That's right, we're there to make ourselves redundant, which is probably a bit of a strong statement to make. But our ultimate goal is to make it a team-run business, make it as smooth as possible. And we can help them by hiring other folks in there who are, you know, there's a missing - Oh, you're missing HR or you're missing finance. We can do this, we can help them hire an operations and administrative assistant like the folks I've got in my team, to help things, get them run smoothly. And so that's our objective.

**James:** And where's your book available?

**Lloyd:** Oh, you can just - 9 Ways to Leave Your Day-to-Day Operations, just punch that into Amazon and you'll see this beautiful purple front cover. But you can also see it on my website, virtualdoo.com/book.

**James:** Love it. Thanks, Lloyd. Lloyd Thompson there, VirtualDOO.com. A good friend, a business partner. He's been the secret weapon to some of my highest-level clients, just getting in there, sorting out some messy situations from time to time, making my job easier. It's much easier for me to help a business scale when their team and their operations are getting proper care and attendance. And Lloyd's team can attend your meetings if you don't want to. So, thanks so much, Lloyd.

**Lloyd:** Thanks for having me, James.

**James:** There we go. This is episode 987. We'll put up some show notes at JamesSchramko.com if you want a summary of the three ways. And my team will carefully pull out and extract the very best elements of this episode and make it a PDF document for you, available from the website. If you enjoyed this episode, be sure to tell your friends, share it with someone who you know needs a bit of help with their people and their systems. And check out Lloyd's website, VirtualDOO.com . Join him on social. He's an all-around fun guy and a ridiculously good surfer as well.

JAMES**SCHRAMKO**

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