

Three Moves to Start Next Year Strong: Episode 296

Elena: If you are starting to think about next year and wondering how to set your team up for a strong start, then this episode is for you. Hello friends and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each podcast episode, you will learn how you can lead conversations that build connection and spark change.

Okay, before we jump in, I wanna say this. If you listened to last week's episode, you know that I encouraged you not to rush into planning. And that message still holds. You don't need to jump into calendars or PD outlines right now. You might still be reflecting or wrapping up or just completely out of steam, and that's okay.

This episode isn't about pushing you into action. It's here for when you are ready. Whether that's now or next week or sometime in July when your energy returns and your brain starts to wonder, okay, where do I start? Then come back here, because today I'm sharing three simple but powerful leadership moves that you can make to start next year with clarity, confidence, and care.

So let's get into it. First, let me tell you about something that happened to me some years back. Before I had frameworks or protocols or fancy agendas, I was starting a new role leading a team of instructional coaches, and I wanted to impress them. So I built this elaborate launch plan. I had slides. Data and color coded goals and snacks and the meeting flopped.

People were quiet, they were disengaged. The energy just felt off. And later in a one-on-one, one of the coaches said to me, I didn't really know where I fit into all of that. It felt like a lot of structure and not much connection, and that moment and those comments stayed with me because I realized I had focused on the what, but I had overlooked the who and the why.

So since then I've learned that there are three key moves that matter most in the early stages of team development, and I'm gonna share those three moves with you. So the first one is prioritize relationships before you focus on systems strategies or outcomes. Build relationships because teams are made of people and people need to feel seen.

Heard and safe before they can do hard things together. So this doesn't mean that you need to all become best friends, but it does mean you need to invest in knowing your people, knowing what they care about, how they work best, what support looks like for them. A few ways that you can do this are you can start meetings with check-ins that go deeper than, how's it going?

You can hold one-on-ones at the start of the year, and you can ask what helps you feel supported, or, what's one thing you need from me this year? You can also model vulnerability. Be willing to share something real about who you are and how you lead. Okay, move number two is anchor in purpose. Don't just jump into tasks.

Start with the why. Ask your team, why do we exist? What's the unique work that we are here to do? If you already have a team purpose statement, then great, revisit it, and if you don't, then co-create one. Because even a 30 minute conversation can build alignment and motivation that lasts the whole year.

Now in our Team's Learning Library, we've got a tool called the Purpose Mapping Protocol, and it is one of my favorite tools to use at the start of the year. And you will find a link in the show notes to that because when people understand the why. They engage more deeply in the how. Okay move. Number three is clarify roles and norms.

So this is the move that prevents a lot of frustration down the road. Ask who's doing what and how are we going to work together? Even simple norms like we assume good intentions. Or we use our full meeting time can set powerful expectations for how your team operates. And clarity around roles, especially on cross-functional or blended teams, can eliminate confusion and resentment before it takes root.

If you are not sure where to start, then we've got a tool in the learning library called the Teams Agreement Builder, and it's a great starting point. So let me be clear. You don't have to implement all three moves perfectly on day one. Just start with one. Maybe this summer you reach out to a few team members and ask them what they would love to see more of next year.

Or maybe you jot down a few reflection notes, what worked last year? Where did things fall apart? You don't need to create a master plan. You just need to lead with intention. And when you build from relationships, purpose and clarity, your team feels it. And if you're someone who likes a step-by-step plan and knowing that you have thought of everything.

Make sure to check out the show notes because you will love the Team's Learning Library and PLC. It maps out everything you need to know and do by month of the year. Okay, here's your challenge for this week. Pick one of these three moves. Prioritize relationships, anchor in purpose, or clarify roles and norms.

Make a note. Block out time or have a conversation about it and trust that even one thoughtful move now can shift what's possible in August. If you are looking for support to build a team culture where people thrive, not just complete tasks, then join us in the Art of Coaching Teams workshop. Or subscribe to our Team's Learning Library and PLC.

You will get tools and examples and realtime support for every stage of the team development cycle. And you'll find links to both of those in the show notes. And you will also find a link to our upcoming free community webinars. All right, friends, thanks for being here with me today. And if this episode or this series supported you, then please share it with someone who would benefit from it.

And also leave us a five star rating and review on Apple Podcasts. And if you're watching on YouTube and this video sparked something for you, then give it a like and pass it along to a colleague. And if you're not watching on YouTube yet, then come and join us. There are links in the podcast show notes.

All right, LesLee Bickford is the podcast producer and Stacey Goodman does the sound engineering. Be well, everyone. I'll see you next time.