

GMCP Ep. 071 - Lessons on Vulnerability and Trust

[INTRO MUSIC]

This is the Grow My Clinic Podcast by Clinic Mastery where we help you deliver amazing client experiences to grow your clinic.

JACK: Well, welcome back to another episode of the [Grow My Clinic](#) Podcast. My name is Jack O'Brien. Thank you again for sharing your earbuds, earpods, and speakers with us. We're really excited. I've got Ben Lynch on the line with me today. Benjamin, how are you?

BEN: I am doing super well, Jack. It's awesome to be back, pitching and catching together.

JACK: Fun times! If only people could see the video as we have this conversation. Maybe that's a vlog for another day. But let's dive straight into it, Ben. This episode is all around our recent **Clinic Mastery Team Retreat**. Once every so often, we aim for four times a year, we get together as some or all of the Clinic Mastery team.

And this particular example in October 2018, we gathered our whole team together: Clinic Mastery directors, Business Academy mentors, Admin Mastery mentors, the whole gang, ten of us into one place at one time. And we want to talk specifically about one of the exercises that we did. Can you lean into that, fill us in on the backstory there?

BEN: Certainly. Well, we wanted to make sure that it was a productive event and retreat. We have a number of discussions that we needed to have where we needed to peel back the layers, look at it honestly, and go where we were falling short. What are the challenges right now? Let's not sugarcoat it.

So I guess, Jack, what we were looking to doing was led by you, which was awesome, was to create a safe space. And starting by using a **vulnerability exercise**, where at the very beginning on the Wednesday night, which was the first night, where we could set the tone that this was a retreat, whereby we all needed to contribute our real feedback to be honest and upfront with one another.

And that needed to be set at the very start, or else I could guarantee that we wouldn't have had the fruitful discussions that we did in the days following if the tone wasn't set right from the beginning.

JACK: Yeah, agreed. And I think, one of the real lessons here is that there are certain elements to any team retreat, whether that's offsite for a couple of days, or a quarter huddle, quarter catch-up, quarterly development day. Whatever you'd like to call it, there are certain rocks or foundations that are elements of this.

And an exercise around vulnerability is really important. For example, we've done an exercise called "Hero Hardship Highlight." Those who are a part of the Clinic Mastery Business Academy would be familiar with that, and that's a podcast episode for another day.

The reason we started with vulnerability is, one of my grand mentors, [Pat Lencioni](#), wrote a brilliant book called "[The Advantage](#)," said that, "The foundational function of a team is trust. If you don't have vulnerability-based trust, it is impossible to have healthy discussions and robust conflicts that result in commitments to outcomes." And one of our values is to bring the energy and be outcome-focused, therefore we start with vulnerability.

So, here is how it went. I was leading this particular discussion, and we sat around the room. We had some fun that day. We had some dinner, couple of drinks. We sat around the room, and what I asked everyone to do, was to pull out their phone or a writing device of some description, and write down the name of everyone in the room, and what they would say is the single biggest strength of each person that they bring to the team.

What is the single biggest strength that each individual brings to the team? And you do this privately, without anyone else knowing, without any intention of sharing. Just write it down, in your phone. You would then create that same list for the rest of the people in the room, and write down what you would say is their single biggest weakness that they bring to the team.

And we're talking here about their skills, not so much about their personality traits or characteristics. So, single biggest strength and weakness that they bring to the team. Ben, how did you find doing that for the other nine people in the room? You had to fill this in. How did it go for you?

BEN: Awesome, and people did that for me as well. I loved it. And just to clarify there, Jack. Going through this, you were the only person that knew how this was going to play out because you were leading the session—.

JACK: That is right.

BEN: I had no idea what we are getting ourselves into. What I loved about it was that you only revealed parts as we progressed through it. So I started writing very candid notes about everyone in the room, and so did everyone else about me and you. And I loved the fact that it was quite brief as well.

You were sort of prompting us to move along in the team and not fluff around on certain things. I know you built on this, that it was quite short. We're writing in our phone, maybe a couple of words or a sentence. Maybe some fast typers did a paragraph. But it was straight to the point. And I didn't know I was going to then share that with the group, which I'll throw back over to you.

JACK: Yeah. So that's the next element. Once everyone had written their biggest strength and their biggest weakness in everyone else in the team, then and only then did I reveal that we'll be going to share this publicly in the group. And so, Ben would be in the hot seat, if you will. And the rest of us took a turn around the circle to look Ben in the eye and say what we think is his biggest strength is, and not able to give context to that.

BEN: That was a big one Jack, actually. That was huge! Whatever you had written, you have to say it verbatim, and you weren't able to give context in that particular moment. So you have to look someone in the eye, and just tell them straight what you've typed into your phone, which was quite blunt for me and for some other people in the room. But that's what I loved about this exercise. I had to point that out because that was gold. I really enjoyed that.

JACK: Yes, so the giver could give no context, and the receiver could make no comment, other than "Thank you." As an example, Ben was in the hot seat. Everyone went around the room. Ben's biggest strength—really encouraging, uplifting, pumps his tires, and a lot of common themes.

And then, we go around the room, and share what we think is his biggest weakness. And, when people had written this down, they didn't realize that we're going to share it and actually tell that person. So likewise, brief and succinct, look the person

in the eye, and constructively and objectively identify what you think is their biggest weakness.

And the receiver again, to say, "Thank you." And we went around the room and completed this exercise for ten people. It took us about two hours. It does take a bit of time to write this down and then share. Again, Ben, how did it feel to—and we did this, not just you in the hot seat. Everyone had a chance in the hot seat. How did you feel receiving the weaknesses?

BEN: Yeah, it was really interesting. As you've touched on before, there were common themes throughout, in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Personally, I loved growth. I love being able to get feedback, take that onboard, and then go be better at it. I really thrive on that.

It's true, some of them were like, "Oh, yeah. I know that." Or some of the feedback was like, "Okay, I didn't realize that was a weakness for you." You know, from their perspective. So, I really took it onboard. But I could see as well Jack, how some people, who aren't as open to receiving that negative feedback could feel a little bit threatened in that environment.

And perhaps, at the end, what we were able to do after had all been given was actually provide some further context, but also ask for further clarification from someone if you've felt that, "Hey, I didn't feel that was right. Can you give me more context?" We were able to do that. So, that was only done at the very end, which I liked because we kind of cut out all the fluff and just got straight to the point.

JACK: Yeah, absolutely. You know, exercises like this was really important for our team, because we are rapidly growing and expanding team, helping hundreds of clinic owners. There's been some OG's, as they've affectionately referred to, the original gang of Ben, Shane, and Daniel. And recently added in people like Beck and Bid. And so this team has evolved and added people in, and it is really important that the recent additions are able to share and experience that vulnerability to build a healthy foundation of trust. It wasn't the most fun exercise, but it was rewarding, and gave important distinction for our team.

And if you'd like to know more about that, you can link back to the show notes. We're going to have links out to Pat Lencioni's books and some resources around how-to-do-this type of an exercise. You'll find those show notes over at www.clinicmastery.com/podcast. But there's so many different exercises like

that.

BEN: I know that our listeners are probably thinking, “Well, tell us what happened to you? What was the feedback on the other end?” I am happy to share Jack, if you want.

JACK: Yeah, likewise.

BEN: The strengths that came out for me that was a bit of a theme across the board were that the energy, content and structure that I bring to the group are really good in terms of leading forward and providing value to the community. So, that is good and that’s in the moment. That has been a strength recently.

And then, on the other side, my weakness has been attention to detail, because I tend to be a bit more of a bigger picture thinker. Sometimes, the detail I struggle with avoid or just haven’t come to the party. And my feedback to the group was that I have such great trust and faith in the skill set of the collective that we’re really able to call on other team members to provide the value where we may be somewhat deficient.

So for mine, I know that over the next ninety days, I’ve got a real focus on improving some of the details. And that can be as simple as spelling, which has been a bit of a gag in the group. Some of my spelling has been pretty bad. Press F7 there for spell check. Jack, I thought I’d share that there was a lot more shared, but I want to keep some of that privacy and also, I guess, the magic of the group to us. But that is on a high level, some of the feedback that I received and I think maybe useful for some of the listeners.

JACK: I love it. Thank you for sharing that. I appreciate your vulnerability there, on the spot. That’s what comes out of an event like this. Some things that you are consciously aware of, are the things that you might be unconsciously unaware of in your own persona and psyche. I really enjoyed it.

My takeaways, my biggest strength and weakness that I’ve observed, that people mentioned, was my ability to innovate and stand on top of technology. Always being on the cutting edge is a real strength of mine and I loved that. I lean into that personally.

What I found most interesting was, what was described as my weakness, is sometimes I impose my superhuman-ness on others. I admit I got a pretty strong personality type. I'm an ISTJ, or melancholic personality and that can be a little bit uncomfortable for others, which I was unaware of. I thought everyone wanted to be like me, Ben.

BEN: You are a Trojan. You are a workhorse. And I think that's the beautiful thing in working with such a dynamic team is being able to play off one another's strengths and have that honesty to be able to say, "Hey, you could pick up your game here or be aware of this in your interactions with others." So, we've each got something to work on and I love the distinctions that you made.

JACK: I love it. And I love that we're a team that is happy to admit that we are not perfect, but we're going to get better and stay outcomes-focused, and have fun in bringing energy.

So, there you go. Listeners, if you're looking for those show notes and resources, like we said, go to clinicmastery.com/podcast for all of the episodes and show notes.

We really appreciate your reviews and ratings and the engagement that is coming off the back of these episodes. If you think this is something that you could use in your team, we'd love to hear from you. Comment on one of our social media posts. Send me an email at jack@clinicmastery.com. You can catch us on all of the socials. Thank you for sharing your earbuds with us. Ben, thank you for joining us.

BEN: Thank you! It has been a ball!

JACK: And listeners, we look forward to bringing you another episode, really soon.

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