

## 96. Knowing Your Value with Domonique Townsend – Episode Transcript

**Leah:** Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories of influential trailblazers and business leaders who have defined and pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and your own journey a little more.

I'm Leah Glover Hayes, CEO and podcast host of Her Story of Success, and in today's episode, I'm excited to be interviewing my friend, Domonique Townsend. Domonique is the founder of We Optimize Work, a company that creates strategies and systems to help working moms and CEOs. Domonique is an operations coach and workflow expert who's passionate about helping moms manage their work, raise a family, without compromising their sanity or goals

**Domonique:** When you are at that point, making a decision of, should I take the leap? Should I leave a job? Should I go to something else? Look at it and say, "What is the next step for me? And how can I make that happen for me in this current environment? And how can I work on it as I go to the next one?"

**Leah:** She is going to share her inspiring story of taking a leap to start her own business, and she'll talk about her journey of being a working mom who's helping other working moms

**Domonique:** It was all about me being okay enough to look for advice and look for insight and be that person that can show up.

**Leah:** I'm excited to share Domonique's story with you today. And I also want to encourage you to share this episode with a friend who might need a little bit more inspiration this week, whether she's struggling with challenges of being a working mom or just looking for some motivation while she is building her career. Welcome Domonique to Her Story of Success!

**Domonique:** Hey Leah, I'm super excited to be here with you.

**Leah:** I feel like this interview is a little bit overdue, but I am also a believer in timing is everything. So I'm glad we're finally sitting down.

**Domonique:** Yes, me too.

**Leah:** Yes. I think we met a few years ago at the Entrepreneur Center, and I just remember, like, you have always been so bubbly and happy, and if people didn't

know you, they'd think that you were just like have the easiest life, no kids and just get to drink lattes all day. And when people get to know you we're like, "Oh my God, how are you not going crazy?" Cause you have so much going on. And you had all these spreadsheets open and you were just trying to explain this to me. And I have, I know I had a glazed over look and I'm like, "I understand why you are so important. You help people like me put a plan in place to get things done." So I want for you to tell us a little bit about We Optimize Work. Like, what is it that you do and what are you helping companies achieve?

**Domonique:** You introduced the so lovely. Thank you so much for that. So We Optimize Work, we provide strategies and systems to better position working moms and moms CEOs.

So we do this in the matter of three key service offerings. So we provide the webinars to help provide strategies for a group of working moms within the employee resource network. We also introduce our framework via those webinars. We do Mom CEO VIP days, where I personally work with the mom CEO for five hours, and we just create a framework that works through clarifying processes, streamlining systems and getting things in order to help them run their business like a CEO and get out of the weeds as much as they normally are, which is key. The other service that we provide is a cohort. It's a membership cohort that is nine weeks and it's specifically for working moms who are leaders, working moms who are aspiring leaders and moms CEOs. We walked through a in-depth framework of just getting them from point A to point B and a strategy that helps them better navigate those challenges.

So often we're going to be challenged, there are going to be things that just get in our way. How do you pivot, how do you pivot easily? How do you understand what's value added and understanding what's in alignment that helps you to create boundaries, put systems in place, but also get more clarity on where you seek to go without overwhelm or beating yourself up and your path, especially now with working from home? And most of us are working from home and schooling, managing schooling for our children and trying to run a business or even leading a business, it's a lot. So this cohort provides that on-demand support, where you literally do not have to set an appointment to get access to a strategy coach, a productivity coach, mental health specialists and work-life strategists that I partner with that you have access to, to get anything. So I'm super excited about what we offer and how we help the working mom and mom CEO demographics.

**Leah:** Yeah. And when you work within an organization with like the ERG Group, I'm assuming, but I want you to answer, are you helping that woman look at like her

whole life or more, are you just focused on the career part, like where you are at work? Or are you looking at like meal planning and what does it look like at home with your kids? Like, tell us just a little bit more about what that looks like. I'm not a mom yet. And my sister has three children, her and her husband both work and I'm like, "I can barely take care of me. I do not understand how working moms do it." So I'd love a little bit, like for those working moms on the call, like, what does that look like for you to help them?

**Domonique:** Yeah. So we look at three areas. How are you finding time for yourself? How are you taking care of others, and how are you meeting business needs? So within those three components, we provide the same framework. So during this webinar, we provide a framework. What are the impacts that people are experiencing? So other peers get to see what their peers are feeling like. Yes, you're not alone in this journey. What is the framework to best go about it? So I don't teach you the details of, like the meal planning, I teach you the framework when you can make the time for that or create strategies to understand what's best for you. How much time is that taking you? Is that something you can outsource? Is there a day that you can do this, that reduces the amount of time that you spend on it? For me, for instance, laundry is a trigger. And what I found is that doing laundry, I start looking at the house and I want to clean the house. And then I'm feeling unaccomplished at the end of the day. Is that something that I can prevent? And if so, I'll walk through a series of questions with myself of what, what is the best option for me that works for me? So it's getting people to be more confident in applying a framework that works for them and not comparing it to others or what it looks like for others. And then also getting clarity.

And so the ERGs, they have like a group of participants it's up to about 100 to 200 on average in attendance in the webinar and we, I provide the framework and show them, what are the strategies of how to apply it? What are the different scenarios and bringing on some of their peers to where I do live coaching sessions, and we've walked through that same framework and they express, like, what key challenge they're facing. And then we walk through that of how, what's the best way to go about it? How can you be successful in this journey that you define as success, not what others defining success? But also showing leaders, how do you best support and provide that space for your work and parent demographic for your caregiver, demographic? And it encompasses all, so it's working moms, caregivers, parents, and even attendees that are like, "Okay, my schedule is busy. So if you can help a working mom, surely you could help me."

**Leah:** So that's exactly what I was thinking. I'm like, okay, if you can have a working mom that has three kids, I bet I can learn something too. Oh, I love that. What I'm hearing is whether you work for yourself or someone else, you can learn from the strategies that you're teaching. And what I really, I'd love for you to share, you are practicing what you preach because you have a few children. So what is your home environment? So you work from home, like share with us a little about what your life looks like that gives you the experience to be able to teach this.

**Domonique:** Yeah. So my background, I have four children, ages 11 and under, so eleven, nine, seven, and two, the oldest three are in virtual schooling and one attends Rose Park and the other two attend Purpose Prep Academy. And the day to day, it varies depending on if they're in school or not. But for the most part, what I do is kind of lay out, what are the things that I need to do that I know are like, there's a constraint. So we know that constraints are things you can't move or they're not flexible. I know the time of the schooling needs for the children. So do I need to schedule flex time or be flexible in how I schedule meetings around those times where they may need me for troubleshooting needs are a teacher may need me to answer a question, which they don't typically every day, but like time to time, make sure someone's doing their homework. And doing those different things, I don't schedule meetings around that time because I know this is a time where if I did schedule something that was along with this constraint, that can't move, it will lead me to be more stressed out. So the way I look at my schedule day to day is by seeing what are the things that I can do? Is this necessary? Is there a way that I can do this differently, and understanding my capacity, like for work hours, people think that I work around the clock. I really don't. I provide services within a 24-hour timeframe. So for the entire week, there's 24 hours where I'm actively providing services. Outside of that, now there are peak seasons, right now I'm in a peak season where I stay up late or get up super early to get things done. But there's a certain time block that I prefer to do services because I know I'm the least interrupted during this amount of time, during this timeframe. I know that this time the kids are, by the time they get started good with school, they're good for the majority of the day, and getting things done on their own without needing me. It's the startup of getting them in school that's the crazy part. And then, yeah, so it was like, even with the two year old, I know like his daycare is open, which is a really nice family-owned daycare. And from time to time, he goes to that daycare. But I do it during a certain time because I know after a certain time block, it's really chaotic or my, my day feels thrown off. So I'm like, what can I do to best prepare myself? So I start with me and start with my capacity. And then I look at, okay, what are the constraints that are involved, a part of me that I can't move, that I need to help manage?

So my background, I'm an engineer by trade, industrial engineer, and I'm a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt. So I love processes. I love complex problems and solving them and figuring out strategies to get that from point A to point B, which led into like my approach and how I look at the week and how I look at my day and then encouraged, like teach other people and walk them through their businesses, down into depth of like, what are you doing day to day? Like, let's look at how we arrange that. And now in the details of how they go about it, they have the tools and a framework. So I give myself the tools and the framework, and how I go about that varies from day to day. But at least I have that same approach and how I go about it. And it works for me.

**Leah:** I love you and your story on multiple levels, but one of the things I'm curious about, so you've been an engineer and then I saw that you went back to school and you actually worked for Lean Six Sigma. And so I'm interested in where you went from, I'm helping this company cause Lean Six Sigma helps many people. I want to talk a little bit about like, what that transition from you going, "Okay. I'm process-driven, I help companies succeed in this way." Why start your own business and why focus on what you're doing now? Like where did that shift kind of happen?

**Domonique:** Yeah, the shift happened through a layoff. I was laid off from a company who, the value that I had to offer, they didn't know how to utilize it, the shift of their culture and what was needed to improve, I was ahead of the curve of that.

**Leah:** I want to pause on that though. I've known you for years. The work that you do is amazing. You've just won awards. Actually. I want you to share a little bit about what you received, the grant you were chosen out of what thousands of applicants? It's a big deal. I think the important thing that I want, whoever is listening to hear: You had a layoff, which could crush your confidence. Like you could have allowed that to send you into a spiral and crush your confidence, right? When that happened, what was that process that Domonique, what did you do internally to like, decide to move forward, instead of like, you, might've had a moment of downward spiral, let us know if you did, but like what did that look like, that process of coming out of that so strong and you're so much just joy? I like, I just love you. You make me happy being around you, but just a little bit about that.

**Domonique:** Yeah. So what happened, it was kind of this series of me telling people I was ready to take the leap. I wanted to be a consultant full time. I felt like that was something bigger on my life from when I entered the workplace. So this was a decade-long battle with just telling people, "I know what I want to do, but by societal rules, I need to wait this many years before I can come out and say, I'm a consultant."

So when the layoff occurred, it was two days before the layoff. And I saw this big vision when I was, I went to sleep, and this big vivid dream of me sitting across the table from HR and from the plant manager at that location, they were laying me off. They had the envelope, I was sitting across the table. It was clear.

**Leah:** You had that vision before it happened, it happened. Wow.

**Domonique:** And that was Monday, Tuesday. I went into the office and I cleaned out my desk. I cleaned out everything and I was still pumping at the time. So I had to go to the mother's room, made sure that all bottles, whatever I had left in there, whatever supplies I had, I packed it up and I cleaned out everything. Nothing that belonged to me was in that building on Tuesday afternoon, I started telling people goodbye. I was like, "Hey, I know I'm leaving. And they were like, "What? You're a safe position. Like no one, like who will lay you off, and plus, it wouldn't even make sense for a company to lay you off."

A little backstory is, I was in the office environment, I was the only black female professional in the office environment out of 1100 employees. So let's put that in context of why I said this, this was a divine decision that was made, that happened. So it was a safe position, like who can bring what you bring to the table, but also who you are, is so different and unique. Along with being, like, smart, you know, like all of the things. So it's like, what, what will happen? And it was like me owning that, but that's, that goes into the story of the layoff. So the layoff on Wednesday, the day of the layoff, I went to people and just started telling them goodbye, capturing their numbers in the notebook. Cause I was like, "Hey, I'll keep in touch with you." They're like, "What are you doing? Why, why are you telling people goodbye?" I said, "There's a layoff happening today. I'm on the list. I know it doesn't make sense, but I saw it. My desk is cleared. Everything is gone." A couple of hours goes by and I'm like, "Oh, okay. It's still like almost, you know, a couple hours gone by nothing's happened. Okay. Let me just sit in this cubicle with nothing, no laptop, nothing like sitting there looking at the phone, like just staring at the phone." And, um, so I didn't have keys. I took it off the key ring and put it in my bra. Then I had my phone in my bra. And so I, when I walked in, it was free handed. So I literally looked like I had nothing. So I've got the phone call and it was 10 o'clock and it was 10:06 that I walked out the door. They gave me the announcement and told me what was happening. And all I could do was feel so grateful because I can't imagine emotionally what I would have said in that room had I not been so calm and had I not been so sure that answer, but I walked out the door and like had a complete breakdown, but it was outside of the door, walked into the car. And then I realized like, "Thank you God, for not giving me any other, I didn't have an excuse. And I could use that as my reason for taking the leap."

So that confidence, that part that I felt, "Oh, gosh, I can't, I don't want to tell people I take the leap, you know?" And then now if people questioned me like, "Oh, why would you take the leap? You have four children, they with all of your benefits and blah, blah, blah. And it was safe, job, retirement." I can say, "Well I was laid off," and shut them up and keep going.

But that was like that little part that I needed to have that, that was that I needed that. And, and I, there was a grieving period. I took it personal. Why would you let go of an employee who pushed and really, really wanted to see things win, who presented projects that could have potentially saved them millions of dollars? All of that was ignored down to the point that the interim CEO at the time said, I don't think the company is ready for what you can do. I would let you go free in leading this project, but I don't think the team is ready for you.

**Leah:** Then you're like, hold on. What does that mean? What do you mean by that?

**Domonique:** Yeah. And I think it was because it required people to shift out of their comfort zone and just checking off the box. Now, everybody wasn't like this, but there were some key people that were in play that were holding the people that could do that, that liked changed and were adaptable. Like they were the ones that were slowing it down. And those people were like long tenured and they just were not willing to let those people go. So for me, it was like, "Okay, I get it." But I've found myself still beating myself up, because I was reaching out to people after the layoff. And then I was like, "Oh, I'm still acting as if I'm begging people to value me, begging people to utilize me." And throughout my career, I basically had to fight to be valued. 80% of the time, of the projects that I have accomplished and the things that I've done it was because I did it without permission. And I started getting with other leaders who supported me and that helped, but it didn't start by approval from my boss. Like, it didn't happen, 20% of the time maybe. And then after that it started getting credibility, then they will say, "Oh yeah, I need you to do this." And it became adaptable, but I've learned to be comfortable in a story that this is my truth. Like I used to try to shield the experience and shield what was happening. And so like now it's like, "No, the value that I had to offer. They just did not know how to package that and utilize that."

**Leah:** Why do you think that is? So you said that, you know, you've always kind of had to fight for people to like acknowledge you or see the value. Why do you think that is that people didn't see your value?

**Domonique:** I would say there's a plethora of things, but I will start with, I didn't look like the engineers that they were used to. Black, female, loud, happy, happy all the

time. And even my personality outside of color, my personality was too much for a lot of people. So I'm like, "Do I shut it down? Do I limit it? Or like, what do I do?" And I tried to cater it and put in these boxes. And then I feel like I felt I could not shine the way I wanted to. And then I started having these people that would come into play to help me from an emotional standpoint, "Like no show up. This is how you can do this. This is the best way," but I had to beg for that and being Black, a Black female engineer, you go through a lot. Firstly, you often don't have someone who looks like you, that you can go have that conversation with because the things that you're going through are totally different than what other people are going through. Like being a female engineer, you go through challenges. I mean, you go through challenges period. And because you're often the only one, but when you're a black female engineer, there's an extra set of things you go through. And I experienced that because of that. And then being a working mom on top, I've been a mom, my entire career in a corporate office. So being a mom, there was a lot of things that happened or people's assumptions of what I could, what I could handle, what success look like. If I wasn't able to show up to work at eight o'clock instead of 8:05, those things were factored in my performance versus the actual work I brought to the table. And I think it's because companies, now that I look back it's like companies are still stuck on what performance looks like and what value is and what they have done in the traditional setting and the traditional management and leadership roles has worked for so long. Why make it inconvenient for them to be the leading edge of that change?

**Leah:** So that's a good point. And one of the things that I'm kind of just like visualizing as you're talking is that for so long, you had to either dim your light or dim who you were, or, you know, bring that down to fit in. I mean, sure. You wouldn't have a company if this weren't true because you have to have a revenue model that works, but right now, do you find that it's easy to see a company and say, "You are a fit for what I do, because you're already looking for it."

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**Leah:** One of the things I talk about with women who, anyone that starts a company or has a business, or even if you're in sales or anything that you do, there has to be a product market fit. There has to be someone wanting what you do. And so often it's easy to see, "Oh my gosh, this company needs this training or needs to learn this." But to your point, if they don't want to, if they're not willing to get uncomfortable to grow, if they're not willing to say, "Hey, we need to make a change, then there's no sense in going after them because it's going to be resistance the whole time." So I want to talk about like, how do you find the companies and the people that are already looking for you so that when you share what you do, they're like, "Oh my God, this is what we need."

**Domonique:** We have qualifying factors. So I don't work with companies who don't align with our values and our qualifying factors and what our values include, like collaboration, communication, trust, integrity. And what about that? Does this company represent that we are looking to work with and then have events, but qualifying factors, are they actively supporting their working mom demographic, are they actively having solutions that are not simply on the brochure, "Here's a nice picture of a working mom. And so we offer counseling for working parents," and then when you try to do it, you only get two hours of credit, of support, like we want to do beyond the surface type of support, what are they currently doing? Are they actively doing it? Do they have an employee resource groups now? Companies that have like, they're known for more traditional structures, I'm not equipped right now to work with those companies are trying to help them do that shift that's needed for them. They need to already here, they have census, so they can be a traditional work environment. But if there's not a consensus that there is support needed or an allocated budget, that is needed to support the working moms, not just for me, but for other solutions and resources that support that demographic, we don't work with them. We have some companies that we worked with. They loved everything and they're a leading company. They're a huge company. If I say their name and you're like, "Oh my gosh, you know, they're a huge company," but not have a budget for their women initiative. They did not have a budget for many things. So they wanted to propose that I lead it. And people can be interested in it, and then they say, well, there'll be interested in, then we can call you back. And I was like, "That sounds like

me in the corporate industry, while I would continue to dig and present this project or do this, and they'd say, 'Oh yeah, next time Domonique.' I even drafted whole job descriptions for leadership roles that I could grow into. And they literally told me I wasn't qualified for those positions and hired someone else into those roles, which is another reason why I say the leap transition is God-led.

**Leah:** You're like, "I literally wrote the job description because I could do it, and then you hired someone else."

How long did it take you to get over being pissed that that happened to accepting like, "Oh, I'm not supposed to be here." Cause I have some friends and some family that are kind of in that situation that it's, I'm all about getting comfortable being uncomfortable, right? Like there's always going to be growth. You're going to get stretched when you're doing what you're supposed to be doing, but there is a massive difference, and maybe you can talk about this for just a second. There's a massive difference between being in a toxic environment where people are not going to appreciate you, and being stretched. So can you talk about that just a little bit? Just the difference in like, not that everything's supposed to be sunshine and rainbows and easy. I mean, like, we both are very passionate about the companies that we're creating and what we're doing, but we still have hard days where we're getting stretched. So can you share a little bit just about like for the person listening, that's like, "Yeah, my thing's hard." Cause I want her to hear like, Sometimes you have to get out of this situation so that you can get planted in fertile dirt where you can grow.

**Domonique:** I've had, I consider them my mentor as they didn't know that they were mentors for me throughout my career, particularly one at one company where they were there, making sure like from an emotional intelligence side, that I separated the emotion from what I was experiencing, so I can really see what is actually happening. Is it truly being undervalued? So we're knowing we're not being valued. We know every overlook, but I have to separate the emotion part to say does that the frustration stem from not being able to show up authentically in this environment? Or is it because I don't like these people? What I found, it wasn't that I didn't like the people, there were some awesome people throughout all jobs. But what I've noticed is that the emotional side of being frustrated to not be myself, hindered me to really see just how much I wasn't valued and how much I was wasting my time. I had to remove that veil to realize like, "Oh my gosh, what am I doing? Like clearly, no one's losing sleep at night because Domonique is not getting valued, but I am, and I have to own that." And is it because am I coming to this from an emotional standpoint where I can't really see what's happening or am I coming from this to see what my

life journey and what I see for myself? What do I see for myself? And am I able to do that by staying here? In this thing, is there a potential? And so you have to really look at that and removing that emotional side, and not being responsible for like I would go in and it could be anxiety to the fullest, heavy balls in the throat heading into work, just cause you know, you're not being utilized to your capacity or it's a lot. And you know, not being able to shine or be yourself or code switching. I had that and once it was five mentors within my career that I called mentors, one was like, "Don't be so busy trying to be right. You're trying to be right all the time, instead of just saying, here's what I have," and I fought so much to be right and to show them, instead of just saying, "Allow my work to trademark itself, let me do this. Let me show up this way. If I think of something good, let me just build my portfolio." So yes, they are not actively giving me permission, but I'm going to take this on top of what I'm currently doing, so I can build my portfolio. So on my journey of where I seek to go, I have this. So that helped me, that allowed me to stretch myself, even though it was in an environment that could not fulfill what I needed in my path. I utilized it to say, "Well, what can I do for me? That can help me. And then when I'm ready to transition," like when I was ready to transition, it was clear. I didn't have the emotion in it.

So when you are at that point of making a decision of, "should I take the leave? Should I leave a job? Should I go to something else?" Look at it and say, "what is the next step for me? And how can I make that happen for me in this current environment? And how can I work on it as I go to the next one?" Because what I found was like the same type of things were happening to me at each job. Same thing, a job, a leadership role, or opportunity to grow. Was there that it was obvious that I qualified for, and it was, I was getting told and I qualified for this and that, or just, "Hey, here's the project. This is what I'm looking at," or being called out in meetings, or so-called called out and having to copy things and, and have a photo worth of work to support me to be my own support system, you know, in a room because I knew someone who's going to call me out or blame me or something or something like that in an occasional meeting. So what I've learned is that, "Oh, I know how to gather the data to prove what I can do. Well, why not build my portfolio and not be so busy trying to prove everybody that I was right in a situation?" So I channeled that energy differently and it allowed me to be more clear about what my next steps were and not be as afraid to make it.

**Leah:** I want the person listening to just like really ingest that for a second. I mean, I wrote that down, like stop trying or fighting to be right, and build your portfolio for yourself. And what you said too, was understanding what you need for the next step and your current situation, like where you are now. Like what's the next step you do need right now, and the step that you need to get to the next place, right? Like, so if

you're in a job and you know that there is an expiration date that you are going to leave, so what is it that you do need to learn or experience or figure out in this situation that's going to help you take the step? I think that that is really huge. Earlier, you said you didn't have the mentor that really looked a lot like African-American female engineer, yet you found mentors. And one of the things I really want to focus on is what did that mentorship look like for you? Was it all a person that was sitting down with you? Was it passive mentorship where you just learned from others by watching, like, really what did that mentorship along the way look like for you?

**Domonique:** So I've reached out to people where they look like me, but we didn't have the same background or the skillset. And the people that didn't look like me, it's the same of, so like engineers, like direct mentors, it was more like friends that I knew I could trust. And in ways I consider them mentors because these are people who were more seasoned in their career to where they learned the lessons and they knew those things and they helped me. Tremendously. I would say Carolyn Carter, Kim McCleskey, Karen Nash, Nicole Robinson-Hamilton, those are four people that they probably don't even know I call them mentors now, but they helped me so much in my career path because I got to be more open with them. So the way that started was just opening up to people that I knew I could trust with what I was experiencing, whether it was at the job that I was at or another job. You know, just being able to reach out to them and allowing them to tell their truth and share what their thoughts are and insight was, because they were more experienced in their career path than I was. And I've learned tremendously from them because they were doing that. And from a professional mentor standpoint, like an engineering mentor, I would look at Ursula Burns, she's an engineer. She was the CEO of Xerox and people know like she was like the first Black CEO, she was an engineer, so I just followed her path. And in a way she was my virtual mentor. So not necessarily having direct contact with her, I don't even know her till this day in person, but you couldn't tell me that she's not my virtual friend, like Beyonce, you know, like I was following her and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, she's so dope." And the things she was saying, like her quotes, I will act like she told me that like, so just looking at the advice that other people will say and take that to heart is if they're telling you that directly, because they really are.

**Leah:** I love that Domonique, because truly it's the whole purpose of this podcast. My goal and my mission is to introduce people listening to so many different voices that they hear the person that speaks to them, because that's what I needed. Those are the, I mean, Oprah has been my mentor for my entire life. Right? Like she has talked to me about pursuing my dreams. She has talked to me about believing in yourself and betting on yourself, and she's talked to me about doing things that help other people. And so I love that you really looked at someone that inspired you, and you

say, "That is my mentor." That's an important piece because to your point, like when you don't have someone that looks like you, that's in your skillset that you can talk to and learn from, when you can't have that traditional mentorship, you can find it in other ways, you can find it by the people that you follow and that you choose to like take their quotes, their lessons onto yourself. So I think that that's beautiful.

**Domonique:** And it well-rounded me in different areas because they were working in different roles in the different areas in ways helped me with just them having the expertise that they had. And then led into me, like even like taking the leap into entrepreneurship. My first mentor is still, my mentor is Sharon Reynolds, and she's a pure badass, you know, like I love her and she's awesome. But she was that mentor that, you know, like taking the leap, gave me no excuse, but it was like, I still would try to find ways to like go back into that comfort zone. She was the one that said, "Okay well what is holding you back?" And the one thing that I told her was holding me back, she like eliminated it in a matter of five minutes. So it was like, "Okay, well, wow, I have no choice, but to go for it because I know I'm not alone." So even like peer to peer, like your friends that, that pour into your life, that you can pour into their life, like those are what I consider mentors, the people that you can reach out to the people that have been there, done that. And they're like, "Hey, I see where you are." It's okay to like, trust them with your vulnerability. Cause that's another way too, like you can't like having a mentor and taking advantage of those relationships or even looking at virtual mentors like me.

Working with Sharon Reynolds and her just pouring into my life and just telling me these things by me being vulnerable enough and sharing, "Okay, this is where I'm at. Oh, I don't know this part. Or I'm having problems in this part, or I don't get this, or what is the best decision to make?" Or like, those things helped along the way, but it was all about me being okay enough to look for advice and look for insight and, and be that person that can show up like, Ashley Northington, when I say even today in the messaging that I say today and the confidence that I have today and how I speak about working moms comes from Ashley Northington. I give her a credit in that and that's because she saw the vision before I was not afraid to talk in that realm. It was like, "Okay, I get the message. I'm gonna speak on it." And she was like, "I see this is where you are." And I'm like, "Oh no, I can't see it." So you got to get those people, and years later it's been five years full circle moment, like, with the pivot of my business and focusing solely on working moms and see moms CEOs, it was just like, oh gosh, you need those people in your life that could see it because now I can follow that blueprint that she already laid out that she already talked about, but then you can also become full, and like with Sharon and her mentorship, just being more open to other opportunities and putting your name in a hat like culture shift, like help with

that. Put your name in the hat. I mean, what's the worst that can happen. And I started putting my name and I had started pitching and started doing this and started doing that and things have been overflowing. So I'm throwing these names out and it's plenty more people. It's a tribe. So anytime you see me post something, there's a tribal people that helped me be confident in or position, myself, the way I am today. It's because of those people and because of mentors, whether they knew they were a mentor or not. And the virtual mentors and, and people that saw that vision, that they're just in their zone of genius, like with branding and the messaging and how you communicate like zone of geniuses from other people that pour into you, being okay to be vulnerable enough to accept it and then say, "I need this. This helps me." And then also I know people have had scary mentor relationships. I do want to put the disclaimer out there. I haven't had a scary mentor. Thank God. You know, but if you do reach that point, you can ask yourself, can I be vulnerable with this person, but is what they're providing to me, will it help me? And that goes back to that. What's the journey?

**Leah:** Absolutely. And I think that so often we put so much pressure on ourselves in every aspect, and it's like, we're so focused on like find a mentor and it's like, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. There's going to be so many mentors for the different aspects that like, like, I mean, you just mentioned so many different people, and every person is maybe for a different thing, right? Like the people that you look to for mentorship being a working mom might be totally different from any other mentor. Like I just look at my group of girlfriends. I have like girlfriends, I like go to church with them. All of them, except for one are, stay at home moms, and that's beautiful and wonderful. But do you think that I'm talking to them about my business? No, probably cause they don't actually care, and I'm not saying they don't care because they love, but like they don't have that same, like "Tell me all about it. I'm so excited. Let me help you grow." But then I have my girlfriends that are like super in business and maybe don't get the part of me trying to become a mom. So it's like, you always have different things for different people. Like my two best friends, we do our like dream sessions where we talk about goals and what we're trying to achieve, but we're all in such different industries that like, I can't help my girlfriend in real estate get better at her job. My girlfriend that's a singer songwriter. Like I offer no help, but that's more of a, like, we are the ones that speak truth into the other person, like, I can see you doing this, but it comes from a place of just love and friendship versus I know your industry enough to give you guidance or advice. And then I have an entrepreneurial friends.

**Domonique:** Yeah. It goes into that different levels of mentorship, friendships, and advisers through the EC and Nicole Privenci was like, one of my first advisors that got me from the beginning to the end. And it was just like, "Oh, wow. So there's someone

that's in this field that has a segment or a service that focuses on working mom executives, or just executives and, and, you know, just gaining insight from them." But it was like utilizing that. So I always say it's like different pieces of the recipe. Mignon Francois is my secret ingredient, you know, like, so it's like all these people, like all of them go into this bowl. Bill McCleskey, Shani Dowell, all of them come to mind. If something they said or something they've done, I put it in my brain and I'm like here. And then times where I'm not confident enough in a situation, I put Brittany Cole, how she shows up, I put her in my pocket if I'm showing up for facilitation that I wasn't, that I was hesitant on. I think that it just allowing people to inspire you, but in ways, mentor you in levels, that's not what people traditionally think of mentorship. It's like, I look at people and I'm like, "Oh, this is good. Okay. I got this. I can do this. Cause I know so-and-so will say this to me because they're living it every day." So I think that, and then you have your direct mentors, where you schedule meetings with them, you have your advisors, you know, that you schedule meetings with. So it's those different levels, but allowing yourself to be that sponge for the right people that are in alignment with where you seek to go and garner that relationship people you can trust people you can talk with. And yeah, I know that, it's just names for me that I like to say, because I want people to know that there is a village behind the people. And if you are at a decision where you're like, "What is my next best step?" You have to go back into, how do you offer value? How can you do that now? And then say, "Is this from an emotional standpoint, am I getting in my way, by having assumptions about what other people think or how other people feel and, you know, like, am I limited myself because I'm taking things personally?" So like the other job, I took things personally. Yes. I was upset. I had that period where I was, I didn't give myself time to grieve, I went straight into starting a business. I went straight into, I was operating as if I was working for a corporate industry in begging clients to value me. From a pricing standpoint and by value me as what I brought to the table. And so it was like, "Oh, I'm still doing the same thing. What is it about me that I need to shift?" And I started owning who I was, I wasn't in my value, but that came through, seeing other people being okay with that and me saying, "You know what? I do bring something to the table." It was the reason why I said I was bigger than this company. It was the reason why even executives will tell me this company doesn't deserve you. Like who says that? I just have to believe that for myself. And to do that, the people you need, people, you can't do it by yourself because it takes you so much longer, but then you feel like you have to struggle or do that by yourself. Like just share your journey. And then like, I shared my journey, but it's to help me, you know, there are some times I'm like I'm sharing a lesson, it's the help me. And in turn. That allows someone else to be free. And then also I'll meet somebody that's speaks something into my life and I'm like, "Oh, that was nice. I need to apply that." So I think that that's something that we

all need to do in our journey is like, what matters to me most, but your values, what are your values?

**Leah:** Your values are the most important. Yeah. And that's how you build the base of your company. I think when I first started, I tried to like make the core values, like this aspirational thing, and then I had to really come back. Like, no, no, no, no. My company values are going to be my values, because the people that want to work here are going to be in line with those values and I, you know what I mean? And so I think that's really important. To the woman listening that is a working mom, I want to give her some tactical things. If you could like give some freebies away of like, what are some things that you teach in your sessions? Maybe just a couple things that we can say, "Okay. If I'm a little bit overwhelmed and my kids, I'm trying to like do the virtual school and I'm trying to work and I'm trying to like, help them eat healthy and stay healthy myself. What's a baseline that you can give some women about, like, here's some things you need to look at in your life, or like how you're scheduling your day or your week or your strategies?"

**Domonique:** Yeah. I would say, start with clarifying what the problem is. I think that's the biggest thing, is we can get frustrated, but if we don't clarify what we're frustrated about, then we tend to add on more things on our list and more things from an emotional standpoint than we need to. Like it's already challenging enough, it's very challenging being a parent, you get judged by society, let alone managing schooling for your children on top of that, making sure that they meet their expectations. If you work, meeting your business needs. If you have a business, managing your business needs. Finding time for yourself. If you have a spouse, taking care of them, like you have a list it's already full. So define those problems. Be very clear in what that is. What is the problem in that? And then what are the things that I feel can help me best solve the solution that is not influenced by another person? This is something that I feel that works for me. So then you start there and then after you do that, then you can look at, "Okay. Now I see where I'm clear at these are some things." Choose two things. And then start with one, and then iterate, keep improving, but start on that one problem at a time. And then you move along that framework. But if you don't start with defining one problem, like there's a lot of lists. So you write down your list of problems and say, "Which one is sticking me in my side right now? That's really hurting me right now. That's impacting everything else." And you circle that and you say, "Okay, how am I seeking to solve this?" And give yourself a timeline of when you seek to do that at your own pace, but actively work on that and see how you can improve it. Then reevaluate what didn't work. It's okay to be frustrated if it didn't work. "Okay. What can I do differently?" We wrote a list, the beginning of virtual schooling of expectations for the children, but then that list needs to be updated already, and

we're not even a week strong. And so I'm not beating myself up. Okay, perfect. Great. Yeah. So it was like, Oh, we got to go back because clearly I got to tell them to make sure they're logged in earlier. Oh, well so-and-so is not doing the homework because he gets done faster. So he waits and it's like, oh, let me go back. So it's, it's those things to just be okay to iterate, do another revision of how I'm going about this. But if the problem still sticks in your side, focus on that one problem and give yourself that timeline, then go back with grace and improving and finding different ways and not holding yourself accountable to the first way that you define to help you solve that problem. I think that we get, we think we're offending our own opinions of what we needed to do, or even if we share, like I've shared things like this is my path.

I don't feel like I need to hold myself accountable to what I shared with someone who's not vested in my business or our personal life or my wellbeing. You know, I looked at it as I shared it, but I'm iterating it. No, I don't have to make a public announcement about it, but I'm changing it for myself. And I think that we stopped doing that cause we're like, "Oh, I told everyone that I want to do this." No, if it didn't work, it's okay to change it. I think that's that baseline, you got to look at it. How does it relate to you? But go at it one at a time. Don't add to your list. Those other problems say, I'm going to think about those later. If it's not a high priority, critical someone lives or dies. You know, if I can communicate some things you can look at, these are problems and then communicate with the person that might have an impact if you don't solve that problem immediately and give yourself time to think about it. And then on the other problems that you're like, "I need to solve this right now, but these other two, I need to have a communication with." I had a problem related to, a problem, opportunity, learning lesson with business, but I had to let go of an employee, but that was, I had to go back to my values that I had to take the emotion out of it, of like, what is the assumption, how she's going to feel if I can let her go, what does that look like? Because I just hired her and you know, it had to go back, okay, what are the values? Where am I seeking to go? What is the problem? Oh, these things are not happening. All I have to go back, and that's not because I'm not equipped to give her the tools at this point with capacity, you know? So I need someone that's more apt in these areas or has more experience in these areas. And I'm okay with releasing that and not being beating myself up about it. It's a learning lesson. It is what it is. At least I know what to do the next time. At least I know what to do going forward, but it's one of those things that, that problem I tried to convenience for a couple of weeks, because I was still too tolerant on making that decision instead of just making a decision because clearly the values and the expectations that are needed were not met. And not in alignment of how the actions were being performed. So it's not on the person, it's on what my company has to find, what I have

to find for myself. So I think that that's the things we have to go back to. What do you define for yourself? Because we get so big on offending the other person or looking a certain type of way that we delay actions that can alleviate the main problem that we identified that's impacting our, like for me, impacted just like being frustrated with, if something's not getting done, according to how we're trying to do it as a representation of my company.

**Leah:** I feel like you're talking directly to me. I just, if there's no one that ever listens to this, this was for me today. So thank you. It's so important to look at, like I had a mentor of mine, say, you know, "Write down all the things that need to get done and then put your name beside the ones that only you can do." And to your point, you have to go at those one at a time. Like you have to do the one thing, the most important thing, get that done, figure out is that working, because when you try to do too many things or change too many things or fix too many things at one time, you're just opening yourself up to frustration, to disappointment, to, um, like going into a downward spiral. Like I suck at everything.

**Domonique:** So yeah, on the problem too, when you identify it, you can also see who else could be best fit to solve this problem. So you can hand that problem off and release that from yourself of trying to fix it and allow them to do it. Even if it's not the way you want it to be, give it to them and see how they handle it. And then you work on that other main problem. So I wanted to say that too, because we don't have to fix everything. My job is not to fix everything, solve everything and it's okay. You know, like it's okay. Like for me, like laundry everyone's like, but you have a lot, you have a washing machine downstairs. I know what happens with me. I know my triggers, I know this and that. Like, I'm okay with the house being junky, but the laundry that's the trigger, and what can I do to be my best self today without focusing on feeling less than or being shamed of getting my laundry done because someone the same, well, you could do that yourself, like "No, this is what works for me."

**Leah:** I'm so proud of you. I just want to validate you that I'm so proud of you. That's a piece of advice I got a long time ago from an entrepreneur that's built a business, she was a mom the entire time. She actually started her business when she had a baby and she was like, she's religious. She's like, "If it doesn't build your relationship with the Lord, if it doesn't build your relationship with your family, if it doesn't make you money or it doesn't bring you joy, then that's where you can learn how to outsource it." And she's like, I'm not saying you have to pay someone else. Like maybe there's somebody in your family, but she's like, "The thing that holds women back is because you think that you need to do all of the things. All those things need to get

done. That doesn't mean that you need to do them. And it doesn't mean that you fail as a wife or a mom or a business owner if you're not the ones doing them."

So I know we've got to wrap up. I'm like almost over on time for you, but, um, I wanted to ask, like, where can we find you? And then I wanted you to share, I want to give you a minute to think about it, how do you define success for yourself today?

**Domonique:** you can find me on Instagram at Domonique Townsend. I'm on LinkedIn, if you type in Domonique Townsend, I'm right there, I should pop up as one of the first people for that. You can also find me, I'm starting a We Optimize Work page on, we're doing that on Twitter and on Instagram. We're building that out now. So you can locate me there, but Instagram, I'm on there more heavily, just DM me anything, something that's stuck to you or something, a question that you have to ask that's the best platform or that I'm on now.

One sentence of what success means. I say that success for me is defining what that means for me without influence, what is typically defined by others? And for me, this is success. Is this influenced by someone, you know, or is it, is it alignment with my goals? Is that alignment with my values? Does this make me happy? Or Mignon says, "Does this bring me joy?" So I do look at that and say, "Oh, this brings me joy. If I can reach this, I can do this. No, it's not influenced, this is something I see for myself and believe for myself." So success is like, what do I believe for myself to be true without the impacts of others? Other people can like inspire you, but like the direct influence needs to be on you and only you, at your own pace and your own timeline and how you want to do it.

**Leah:** I love it. Well, I just appreciate who you are as a woman who you are as a mom, as a leader, as an entrepreneur, as a mentor, and as a friend, you are one of the women that I look up to that I look to for inspiration and motivation, because you are just a woman of integrity. You're a woman of integrity that truly cares about other people, you care about helping other people. I know you are going to be wildly successful, because your heart is to serve others and to help others succeed, and you do it with joy and light. And I'm just glad that I get to say that I know you, because when you're a big deal, one day on like Forbes and Entrepreneur Magazine, I'll be like, I interviewed her.

**Domonique:** Thank you so much.

**Leah:** Thank you for hanging out with us. We appreciate you, Domonique Townsend, have a great day.

**Domonique:** You have a great day, too.

**Leah:** Thanks for tuning in! At Her Story of Success, we are on a mission to help women-business owners, leaders and professionals build your tribe and reach your next level of success by connecting you to one another, equipping you with resources and empowering you along your journey. We would love for you to be a part of our tribe and further this mission by sharing this podcast with a friend or co-worker you want to help succeed. And you can stay up to date with all of our episodes, blogs and events by signing up for our newsletter at [Herstoryofsuccess.com](http://Herstoryofsuccess.com).

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