Bring Your A Game: How Leaders Protect Their Judgment Under Pressure

Date: Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Host: Dr. Shari Simpson, Thought Leader, Paylocity

Guest: Jared Quoyeser, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, Louisiana Impact Fund

[00:00:00] **ANNOUNCER:** You're listening to The HR Mixtape, a podcast for leaders who wanna understand people, strengthen culture, and navigate change with clarity. Today's conversation starts now.

[00:00:16] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Joining me today is Jared Quoyeser, co-founder and managing partner of the Louisiana Impact Fund, chair of Louisiana's largest private employer, and author of The Flow Multiplier. After two decades running companies where bad calls cost real money, he argues that high performers don't fail from a lack of discipline, and today he lays out what actually erodes their judgment.

[00:00:50] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Jared, thank you so much for jumping on the podcast with me today.

[00:00:53] **JARED QUOYESER:** Great. Well, thank you for having me. I'm very much looking forward to the discussion and look forward to the production moving forward, so it'll be great.

[00:01:01] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Yeah. Before we get into your book, I'd love for our listeners to get a sense of your path. You spent more than 20 years at Intel, ran healthcare and partner strategy, chaired a hospital board, and now you're running a private equity fund in Louisiana. What's the thread that connected all of that?

[00:01:20] **JARED QUOYESER:** I would say the connection between all those is I'm a builder, I'm not a babysitter. If you're gonna ask me to come in and babysit something, it is not the sweet spot for me. You probably shouldn't be asking me to do that. It probably won't work out well. But if you're looking for someone to get in from the ground floor, from whiteboard to building the organization, building the structure, really take the organization to the next level, that's pretty much my sweet spot. And really what I find is that's where I do my best work, and I think that's what you want from individuals, is to find the sweet spot for them and for the company where they're doing their best work. Just amazing work. And so, Shari, that's been the big thing. I've always raised my hand. I've always stepped out of the box. I've always said I'm a builder, not a babysitter. If you're looking for someone to start something new and it's very strategic, that's where I do my best work, and that's what I deliver back to the organization. So going from healthcare to technology, being on the board for multiple organizations, and now what we're doing with Louisiana Impact Fund, I would say the key thread through that is that I'm a builder, and I'm really excited about the opportunities we have in front of us.

[00:02:51] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** I love that. I think so many HR professionals probably sit in that builder mentality as well. We love to ask questions. We love to solve problems. In your time in your career, and with the work that you've done with your book, you've developed this concept called the flow multiplier. And it focuses on high performers not falling short because they lack discipline, right? They fall short because the way that they work wears down their thinking. I'd love for you to dig into that for us. Help us understand that concept a little more.

[00:03:23] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah, definitely. Shari, I think it's the way that we work. I don't know if I'm an old sage. I'm maybe midpoint in my career, but when I look back at the past two decades of my career, I go, "Man, I wish I would've done it differently." How do I structure? Because I would say the grind, the work ethic, the hours was never a problem for me. I was always gonna be focused on figuring out how I can outwork someone. But what I found, going back to doing your best work and the most impactful work for your organization, your group, your team, your direct reports, I really had to step back and ask, when do I bring my A game to the table? Because Shari, you know this as an HR professional. People are usually probably the most expensive asset within the company. And you wanna be able to set up the environment, set up the structure where they're bringing their A game, their next level of talent, impact, and results to the table. So I had to step back from a reflective perspective and take on from

where I was as an athlete, where I was in my younger time rising within the organization, and ask what I needed to change so I could bring peak performance on a weekly basis, monthly basis, quarterly basis, on a yearly basis. And then also, Shari, it translated to my life at home with my family, because I wasn't completely burnt out and disengaged. Now I could balance it out, and I had a system in place where I was delivering peak performance at work. I was engaged, delivering peak performance in my family environment at home, which is a key thing for me.

[00:05:24] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** I'm always amazed at where we sit in our organization so many times around being organized, and I'm using air quotes on purpose, because I think we have this mentality of what being organized looks like, and I don't think it's the same for every person.

[00:05:42] **JARED QUOYESER:** No.

[00:05:42] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** And I guess my next question really lands on that. Because it's not the same for every person, tackling this, taking that first step back and going, "Okay, where do I need to start?" What's your advice there? Because for so many people, that starting point could look different.

[00:06:01] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah, definitely. So, Shari, in multiple conversations with direct reports, people that I'm working with, mentorships across the board, I always tell people that what I'm gonna communicate is really a structure and a framework that can be applied, but it needs to be applied so that you personally can do your best work. Think about how you structure it, how you customize it, and really put it in place. So Shari, let me give you an example. I'm an early morning person, so I am up at 4:00 a.m. That's where I get going. I'm super excited, and I do my best work in those morning hours, a little bit before, and then also I would say from that 7:00 a.m. to about 11:00 a.m. timeframe. That's where I feel that's my A game, doing my deepest work, making critical strategy decisions with clarity. I feel that that's my sweet spot. Now, Shari, you may say, "Hey, I am not an early morning person. I've gotta structure it in the afternoon. So how can I put that framework in place where I can deliver my best work in the afternoon, where I can do my deep work in the afternoon?" And Shari, there may be some people whose deep work is from 7:00 to 10:00 at night, 7:00 to 11:00 at night, and you just gotta figure out what works for you and also works for your daily flow, your office flow, your group flow, and also your family flow too. So it's not saying, "Hey, Jared gets up at 4:00 a.m., so I have to get up at 4:00 a.m., and this is what I need to do." No, it does not. Here's the fundamental framework of it, and apply it where you see that you can get the best out of it. And then also, Shari, you're not myopically N minus one, just individually. You're working within the team. How can you structure it within your team environment? How can you apply it within your group environment? And then also, have those discussions so you can communicate with other people in the organization, saying, "Hey, this is how I feel that I do my best work, and this is how I'm gonna structure it." Sometimes people go, "Hey, I couldn't get in touch with you during this time." But have those communications: I respond quick on text, later on email. What is the service level agreement of what my communication is? And really have that communication within your team. But going back to it, it's not a one-size-fits-all. Here's a framework, and it needs to be structured so that you can get the best out of it.

[00:08:48] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** When people are thinking through that framework, you know what? Let me back up. One thing that I did, and I probably did this now, I wanna say 18 months ago, I booked out no-meeting Fridays for myself, and it took months. I had to actually start it three months from where I was at so that my calendar actually had that time that I could use that way. But that was one thing that I figured out on how to start to give myself that space. What if you're in an environment... I'm lucky I have the support of my boss. She totally is behind that mentality and that space that I need to think through the week and catch up on stuff. Not everybody has that luxury, so how do they start to communicate, "Hey, it's good for us to slow down for a minute and spend some time on organization and thinking through leveraging our skill sets and our time and our productivity so that we can stay in the flow state for as long as we can, 'cause that's gonna get us the most work done"? How do we start to get other people to buy into that so that we have the time we need to do this work?

[00:09:55] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah, Shari. So I'm a big fan of what you talk about on the Friday. That was one of the first things that I implemented. I was not gonna schedule any meetings on Friday afternoon. And it was really an eye-opener for me, because I wasn't bringing my A game on that Friday afternoon. We're already 60, 70 hours into the week, travel across the board. And a lot of those times I

would have one-on-ones with individuals on my team, and they really wanted to get a lot out of those meetings. And Shari, I wasn't bringing what I should've to those meetings. I wasn't meeting the expectations of those individuals in those meetings because I was done at that point. I was focused on other things. I was 60, 70 hours into the week, and I wasn't there. So again, I'm a big fan of that Friday perspective, 'cause a lot of times you're not bringing your A game at that point. But going back to it, when you're making this shift, it's just open dialogue and discussion, and transparent discussion. Saying, "Hey, these are the group dynamics. This is what we need to work with, 'cause we have a team meeting on Monday. We have a group meeting on Wednesday. We have a customer meeting." And it's with your manager, and then also if you have direct reports, saying, "Hey, this is how I feel that I can bring peak performance to the group and to the team moving forward, and this is how I'm going to structure my day, my week, my month, and my quarter." And just have that open dialogue and discussion. Sometimes you may get some feedback from your boss saying, "Hey, this is great, but I need to make sure that you can be reached during this time," or making sure you do this. So it's all about that open dialogue and discussion. And what I love about it is to have that open dialogue and discussion, but then come back to the individuals who you've had that discussion with and say, "Hey, this is the qualitative and quantitative metrics and measures of what I saw that came from this shift." And once you show that you're measuring what you're doing and structuring and putting in place, I think people get behind it, and they really understand. And then also, Shari, they come back to you and go, "How'd you do that? How do you structure this? How do you make sure that you limit the notifications of Slack, IM, WhatsApp, email, texting, people coming across the board? How do you manage that?" And then all of a sudden it becomes a group dialogue.

[00:12:31] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Well, and that dialogue needs to happen, especially as I think about my HR friends who are like, "Yeah, but I get interrupted all day long, and I have to." You don't. We've created that environment for a good reason, right? We want a white glove approach. We wanna show up for people. It comes from a totally good place, but it does limit our ability to be strategic and stay in that flow state and really think about what we need to do. I wanna flip the perspective for a second and ask you this question. As an HR professional who understands this, I'm watching my leaders, and I start to see a degrading in their decision quality. What are some of the early signs, the ones that show up maybe months before burnout shows up, that we as professionals can use to help our leaders see something that they're not seeing and help them take the step back?

[00:13:23] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah, Shari. Just in my personal perspective, I wouldn't lead with something fuzzy and kinda warm, give me a hug, hey, it's all about wellness, wellbeing type of thing, 'cause you'll probably get a different response. I think if you lead from an HR perspective, it's, "Hey, we want to be able to structure our environment for peak performance, for bringing your A game," and you can position it as, "that really provides a competitive edge for your organization and company moving forward." Because Shari, at the end of the day, your C-suite, your executive team, is probably one of the most high-priced HR investments that you have. So you want to be able to structure that environment, structure how they're working, and provide the foundation so that they can deliver peak performance. They can deliver that competitive edge. I think that's how I would lead. I've seen executives go, "Oh, here's another wellness thing. I'm not going to meditation. I'm not doing yoga." But I would lead from the perspective of saying, "Hey, these are the pillars and foundational elements that we could work on together that could lead to a higher level of peak performance, where you're delivering a higher level back to the organization moving forward." And then you probably get a little bit more connection from the executive team.

[00:14:56] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Well, for sure. If you can anchor it in the what's-in-it-for-me from an ROI perspective, right? I mean, and that's the reality. Leaders are in a spot where they're either making money for their shareholders or for their organization or reinvesting that, even if you're in a nonprofit, right? There's a lot on their mind. And so many times I think not just execs, but leaders in general have this badge of honor, like, "Oh, my calendar is so busy, and I'm the first person in and the last person to leave." And it's like, cool, you're slammed, but like what impact is that actually having on the work? Could you be more productive if you were in six hours a day and taking the time to find peace elsewhere?

[00:15:43] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah, Shari, how I see this, there's gonna be a subset of leaders that are gonna be above-the-line leaders and below-the-line leaders moving forward. And I think that you

nailed it. I think a lot of people have that badge of honor. "I had 16 back-to-back 30-minute meetings for five days this week," and that's their badge of honor. That's what they did. They did 16 30-minute meetings for five days straight. But really, what did you do? What did you deliver for the organization? What did you deliver for your team? What did you deliver for your group? Sometimes individuals get wrapped up around an activity and busy work and not delivering really what you need to do. And I think there's been a lot of people who talk about signal and noise. What is signal? What are the true things that you need to pay attention to? And what are the areas of noise within your area of responsibility that are just noise and don't have a huge impact on what you're trying to achieve? But Shari, at the end of the day, I had to, from my personal perspective, N minus one, get very, very ruthless in regards to my priorities. And it wasn't just on a quarterly basis or yearly basis, but it was a daily basis, it was a weekly basis. I came to, what is my priority one A, one B, and one C that needs to get accomplished today that's gonna affect the organization with the greatest impact moving forward? So there's that ruthlessness and preparing with intent going into the day. What is one A? What is one B? What is one C that we need to get accomplished? And then also, Shari, I come from Intel, and one of the foremost respected managers in the world was Andy Grove, and he set up a high-performance management culture with Measure What Matters, objectives and key results, those things. If you're able to set up that infrastructure, then that one A, one B, and one C starts to become a little bit clearer. This is what we need to do and this is what we need to achieve as we accelerate the organization's strategy moving forward. So being very, very ruthless in regards to it. And Shari, at the end of the day, some days all hell breaks loose. Monday morning, you may have the most well-intentioned plan whatsoever, and next thing you know, you're spending three days on it 'cause we had a crisis, an issue, and we needed to address it. You just gotta take those days and move on. You had to address it, you had to focus on it, and it is what it is. I'm not saying every day is gonna be perfect and you'll always get to one A, one B, and one C. Those days do happen. But you have to have the flexibility for that moving forward.

[00:18:49] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Well, and especially if you have that mentality where you're thinking in high prioritization, you have to shift and prioritize whatever that crisis is, right? We all did that during COVID. We had to figure it out. But you've got a really good list, so you know once the crisis is over what you're going back to. Maybe I can't get to B and C today, but you know what? I can knock out half of one A, and that's really productive. I also love that you shared three things. I know that our brains work in a way where we're attracted to threes and fives. That's a really great way to tackle your day. What are the three things? And you tied it to business impact, because I think that goes back to some of the busy work that we end up doing, where we're like, "Oh yeah, I got this thing done, this activity. Check off the box." But it didn't impact the company at all. It was just this activity. And I feel like every conversation I'm having now on the podcast, I have to ask an AI question, 'cause I think it's permeating everything right now. How do you see that changing? I'll ask it twofold: for the good, in helping us be more focused, and for the bad, when I think of all the conversations we're having about work slop coming out of AI and the use of it.

[00:20:03] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah. So from my perspective on how AI is gonna impact this, there is gonna be a separation of individuals within the workforce. The individuals who embrace and set up a system with AI as a component of that system, where AI is doing the messy middle stuff. The really tactical types of things, the research, PowerPoint presentation development, those things. And what that does is free up individuals to think at a higher level, at the strategic, critical thinking level of, "I don't need to spend my time in here, and now I can devote my time to doing deeper work." Harnessing what the human brain can really do instead of the tedious stuff. That strategic critical thinking really goes up and to the right. So that's where I call individuals above-the-line individuals. They can think at that high level. They're gonna use the capabilities that AI is gonna deliver to them, so they don't have to spend time on busy work. Which has been really fantastic for our work in establishing a private equity fund, 'cause we're tech forward, and the organization design is different today than what it was five years ago, and it has really changed our workflows. But Shari, there is a reshaping of the organization. There's a reshaping of individuals now. There has been a subset of individuals that have built amazing careers on doing busy work and establishing the biggest sand pile in the sandbox. And all that stuff is gonna go away because there's gonna be process automation through AI, and those types of functions are gonna go away, and they're gonna be below-the-line leaders. There's gonna be a complete separation, with above-the-line leaders going up and to the right, and below-the-line leaders going down and to the right, I guess. But one's going up, and one's going down. So that's where I feel this is heading. There's gonna be a

separation of individuals: above-the-line business leaders, managers, even individuals who do not have direct reports but are leaders within their organization, who are taking advantage of that and can think at a higher level moving forward. When we look at the AI capabilities, I see it as human plus AI, and I know there's been a lot of discussion about what's happened these past weeks. But individuals who are able to establish a system where it's human and AI, where the individual can get the best of what the human brain is bringing to the table, and you're separating yourself up and to the right, those are the individuals who are really going to excel.

[00:23:04] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** With all of the teams that you've worked with, and you've managed hundreds of people, I think about this entry-level group that's coming in and has use of this AI technology, right? And I don't think it's a crutch. I really don't like that word. I think it's a tool that is amplifying what we can do. But you said it yourself. There's a set of people right now that have got the learned experiential knowledge, especially in HR, of cutting our teeth through some really hard things, so that we know when we're working with these tools, "Yeah, that's not quite right. That output wasn't quite right. I need to adjust that," or, "You pulled the wrong resource." How are we making sure that our entry-level employees can get the knowledge that we have from having lived without AI? And maybe this is like a boomer sentence. I'm not a boomer, I'm a Gen X, so maybe that's what I'm saying. How are we gonna make sure that we don't lose that?

[00:24:07] **JARED QUOYESER:** I think it's all part of the organization strategy, and I think that's where HR can really play a vital role. Individuals within an organization are looking at their business unit, their organization, their results. I think HR leaders have the purview of the whole organization and what's going on within the whole organization. So I think individuals and leaders within HR need to understand what's going on in the reshaping of the organization, the skill sets, and those types of things. But they have to be able to provide the connective tissue from the individuals that have the deep working knowledge to the newer generation moving forward. So I think that is an opportunity for HR leadership to say, "We absolutely know we need to reshape the organization, but how are we gonna provide that connective tissue between senior leaders, middle managers, and to entry-level people so they understand how the organization works and what is important to really have that human plus AI component?" So, Shari, I think this is an excellent opportunity for HR to lead in this space, because they have a purview of the whole organization and not just myopically within a group or a team.

[00:25:30] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Well, and that language, connective tissue, I think is such a good word for it and a good way to think about it so that you're not stepping on toes, right? You're really starting to build organically if you think about connective tissue.

[00:25:44] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah.

[00:25:44] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** As we wrap up our conversation, I'd love to hear from you. What's that one piece of advice that you hope leaders can walk away from our discussion with and really use to make an impact?

[00:25:55] **JARED QUOYESER:** I think it's an exciting opportunity moving forward. I know there's a ton of uncertainty out there. What is gonna be the impact of AI? How is it going to evolve within your individual workflow, your team workflows, and your organizational workflows? My guidance and coaching would be to embrace it. How can you be part of the driver of reshaping the workflow in the organization and how you work moving forward, instead of being reactive? So be on the cutting edge. What I tell people all the time is that moving forward, there's gonna be above-the-line individuals and below-the-line individuals. Individuals who are able to embrace it, set up a system, drive productivity, and harness everything that AI can deliver to the table, I think those are the individuals who are really gonna separate themselves moving forward. So from my perspective, just be a lifelong learner. Embrace it, continue that skill set evolution moving forward, because it's gonna continue to be there, and you've gotta figure out how you can have an impact in this world using those technologies.

[00:27:15] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Such great advice, Jared, and thanks for taking time today to sit and have this chat. It was really enlightening, and good to hear that my no-meeting Fridays are a good approach. I appreciate your time.

[00:27:26] **JARED QUOYESER:** Yeah, exactly. All right. Thank you, Shari. I appreciate it, and have a good one.

[00:27:43] **ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for tuning in to The HR Mixtape. Like, share, review, and subscribe to support the show and help more people discover these conversations. Until next time, keep the conversation going.