

#150: Fuel for Action



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With Your Host

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I'm Melissa Shanahan, and this is the *Velocity Work* podcast, episode number 150. This podcast is for attorneys who are running their own firms. We explore tactics, tools, and stories related to pushing tasks and simply lawyering well and into building a successful firm. Working in your firm and working on your business are two very different things. This podcast focuses on the latter.

Hey everyone! Welcome to this week's episode. I am thrilled to be talking to you guys. I just got off of a long trip, went home to Indiana for a few days, took my son Lachlan with me for that trip, and then when we came home, I turned around and left for Austin for a mastermind meeting that I'm a part of. That was fantastic.

And then from there, flew to New York City where I met up with my new fractional COO. I will say more about that later, I'm going to have him on the podcast. He's been with us about six weeks. And he is part-time in New York City, he was there, he had us up for a retreat. It was me and one additional team member, plus him. His name is Luke.

So the three of us met and really got to work over the course of a couple days, and it was jam-packed. Very fulfilling. Got a lot of things sorted out that we needed sorted out, but we just needed the space to do so, we had the space to do so, ate some really good food, had really good conversation and I'm just so grateful. So now we're back. Back to it, back in Denver, and ready to roll with you guys here on the podcast.

Today we are talking about fuel for action. What is your fuel for action? I released some podcast episodes in February, I think, we will link to them in the show notes, about the results cycle. There's a high results cycle and there's a low results cycle, and how to control which results cycle you go into. As a quick recap, there are three things that you have absolutely 100 percent control over.

The first is what you're thinking. What is running through your mind, your opinion, your perspective, your attitude. Right? Like it's that, what's in your

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head. You do have control over that, although it doesn't always seem like it, you do.

The second thing you have control over is your feeling state. Your internal state. The way that you feel.

And the third thing is the actions that you take. Now, people typically try to take action from a place of brute force. Willpower. Go, go, go, go, go, just, like, close your eyes and do what you're supposed to be doing. That's how they think about action that they should be taking.

But when you really evaluate, when you have a look at the action that you take, at any given moment, if I picked a moment in the day and pointed to you and said, this right here, what you're doing, scrolling social media, for example, or on the flipside working on the business, like, doing the focused work that's on the business. No matter what I might point to in your day, I would say what's fueling this? The answer is a feeling.

Now, in the results cycle, I talk about what you're thinking actually will create a feeling state. Something outside of you doesn't create your feeling state; you create your feeling state with what you're thinking. Your perspective. Your attitude, how you're looking at something. But the feeling itself is the fuel for whatever action you take.

So you can imagine that the feeling that fueled the lawyer who is sunk into deep work was probably something like focused, productive, something along those lines. And if we know that the feeling is the fuel for any action that you take, we look at the lawyer who is scrolling social media when they're supposed to be doing something else. They should be doing something else, but they have a moment, and the feeling that they were having that produced the action, that fueled the action of scrolling social media instead, was probably something like unclear or unfocused or disenchanting or burnt.

Now, a lot of people think that your feeling state is just your feeling state and they're unsure how to change it. But the truth is you have to look at your mental state, at what you're thinking, what you're telling yourself,

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what's your perspective, what are the sentences running through your mind that are creating that feeling state.

And it's usually just an undercurrent. Oftentimes it's not, like, a very clear sentence in your mind. You have to kind of hunt for it. You have to sit with this for a minute. But once you can start to tune into that, tap into that, you figure out why you're feeling the way that you're feeling. You see and you take full responsibility for why you're feeling the way you're feeling, and then you find the thought that's creating that feeling state.

Now, knowing that your feelings are your fuel for actions, you have an opportunity to pick on purpose what feeling state you're going to feel. And I want you to think about feeling states as a menu. You have a menu of feeling states to choose from. What are you going to choose? What do you want to feel? What feeling states do you want to be operating from and what feeling states do you want to be fueling?

Now, why is this important? It seems like I always come back to this for you guys. Why do I keep doing that? Because the truth is you can take high-quality action, or you can take low-quality action. You can take action on purpose fueled from a feeling state that you chose, or you can take default action that you didn't choose the feeling state that you were going to use as fuel for the action, it's all just happening.

And taking responsibility for that, that pathway that you have the opportunity to seize, is very important. Ain't nobody got time to have low-quality action the majority of the time. We're all human. We're going to have it sometimes. Right? I teach this stuff, and even I have moments of low-quality action where I'm, like, wow, wow, wow, what am I doing?

But the more you understand this and really, really try to practice what I'm talking about, that is how you move more and more and more of your time into high-quality action versus low-quality action, because you have an awareness. You're awake to how you can actually take control. You're taking the reins wherever you can.

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So what fuel do you want to be running on in terms of your emotional life? What fuel do you want to be running on day to day? What internal state do you want to have specifically? These are questions that you want to answer. And you can answer these day to day. I usually have segments of the day where I re-check in with myself and I'm, like, "Okay. What feeling state do I feel, do I want to feel, for this next phase of work for this next kind of work that I'm entering into?" And you can use a bunch of tools to get yourself there.

I'm going to share with you a few key feeling states that I rely on pretty consistently so that I'm taking the right kind of action. One of them is desire. When you feel a sense of desire internally, it's strong. It is great. It's such a beautiful place to work from because there's a depth to it that really drives you forward. So when you think about what fuel do you want to be running on? I want to be running on this, the fuel of desire.

So the question becomes, are you asking your desire? Do you even know what you desire? Ultimately what's the bigger picture thing that's driving you in this bigger work that you're in right now? Be connected to that desire and feel the desire for the bigger picture and that's a really good fuel for great action.

Another one is determination. Determination is strong for me. But it's not always just easy to slip into determination. I think I'm good at it now because I've practiced so much with the feeling of being determined. Thinking back to as much training as I've done for half marathons, I've probably done a dozen half-marathons. I've done two full marathons, and there was a determination about finishing my training and really staying high-integrity with the training so I could have a great experience with the race, right, and proving to myself what was possible.

That was important to me at one point, and that required determination. I've had a lot of practice with that feeling state and generating that feeling state on purpose. Because trust me, as many of you know, you don't always feel like going out for your training runs. You don't always feel like doing what you're supposed to do in order to complete your training so that you can

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run that race. And yet, I do it. And it's not willpower, it's a sense of determination. It's different. So I have to really conjure that up so I really go out with determination, and then my action is on point.

So determination is one. Courage is another one. This has probably been the biggest deal for me starting Velocity Work. It's required a lot of courage for me over the years since I began. Even before I began, like, leaving the consulting firm I was at before required courage. And courage, I've talked about this on the podcast before, and I talk about it with my clients all the time, courage sucks to feel. It is not fun to feel, but I feel it on purpose because I need to generate the feeling of courage to go out and do what I need to do.

The things that could result in rejection, in failure of some form or another, and putting yourself in harm's way like that, over and over and over again, you have to experience courage to go do that. I say in harm's ways, it's not really in harm's way, right, but emotionally, it is in harm's way, which is why people play small and they play safe, and they keep it close in. So courage is very important. For me it's been a major building block.

A lot of things to see that you see today with Velocity Work would not exist had I not, on purpose, felt courage and gone out to do those things that needed to be done to build Velocity Work. Same for you I am sure, right?

Another one is grit. I feel grit on purpose. And it's kind of a combination of some of the things I've already shared, but for whatever reason, there are times where that word just feels more appropriate to generate on purpose. Angela Duckworth wrote the book on grit, literally a book called Grit, and she defines it as the passion and perseverance towards a long-term goal.

And the thing about that you have to know, this is kind of what we talked about before, is desire. You have to know what you actually desire. What is that long-term outcome that drives you, drives you. What do you get up for? Right, so it's this passion and perseverance towards a long-term goal. So sometimes the word "grit" for whatever reason just matches, like, internally

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what I know I need to be experiencing in terms of a feeling state to do what is required of me that day. So grit is another good one.

Now, I have two main tips for getting into these feeling states. One is non-negotiable. The other, if you want a sustained experience of the feeling state, that's what I'm talking about, I'm not talking about fleeting where for a second you get a whiff of it and then it goes away. I'm talking about a sustained desire state for your feeling state.

There is one non-negotiable, and then there is one supplemental that is fun and helps me a lot. So when I am thinking through desire, if desire is what I want to be feeling inside, then I'll think about, "What do I want?" And this kind of goes with Angela Duckworth, and what she was talking about the long-term outcome that you have passion and perseverance for, like, what is that?

And knowing what that is, and don't be stressed out if you don't have this perfect vision for exactly what you're working for, but certainly, there's something that represents success to you in the long-term that matters deeply. Like, what is that thing? What represents that? Imagine that. Visualize that. And when you can picture that and you know what you want, even if it's not the full picture, it just represents that you would have reached what you want, that's good enough.

So you identify what that is. Maybe it's paying for your kids' college. Maybe it is a new car or the right home that fits your life and your family. Maybe it is moving to a new city. Like, what is it that you want? Have that thing in your mind, and as you hold that thing in your mind, imagine, what I do is instead of saying, "I want to build X, Y and Z," saying, "I'm going to build X, Y and Z." And I just think that over and over to myself.

One, for me, I've been thinking about really hard which I alluded to a little bit in the beginning and I'm going to share more about as time goes on, my desire to build a dream team inside of Velocity Work. So when I think about that, when I visualize that team and how we work and collaborate together and the vibe of the team and what it's doing for our clients, et cetera, I think

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in my head, if I want to conjure up this feeling of desire in a very strong way, I think, “I’m going to build a dream team.”

“I’m going to build a dream team. I am going to build a dream team. We are going to build a dream team. My team is going to help me build a dream team.” And I just get into that and I feel this desire for that dream team and I feel the desire for that outcome, that long-term outcome, and I just conjure it up, and conjure it up, and conjure it up. And I’ll just think about it in my head over and over.

Listen you guys, I use my in-between moments for this. So if I’m driving to work, I know what’s on my plate for that day. If what I want to feel, what I’m choosing to generate is desire based on what’s on my plate that day, then this is something I would tell myself: “I am going to build that dream team. We are building the dream team.” I just keep saying it because we are. But if I don’t plug into that reminder, if I don’t plug into that truth, then I won’t feel very much desire. I’ll just go to work and do my things.

But if I do plug into that truth, then it plugs me into the desire. And it’s a whole new level of work that I bring. It’s a whole new energy of work that I bring to the work when I get there that day and I show up for the things that I’m supposed to be doing. So if desire is the thing, I name what I am desiring in a way that’s like, “I am doing it. I am building it. We are building it.” That’s the kind of thing. So that’s desire. Connects me to that desire. I feel the desire because of what I’m reminding myself.

Another feeling state that I often identify with that happens when I’m kind of in that mode of, like, connecting to the desire is a dedication. Right? So it’s like, I’m dedicated. This kind of goes along with grit, but I’m just telling you, there’s different flavors of how I want to feel. So if I want to feel desire, I have to connect to the desire. And then by connecting to it, I feel the sense of desire and dedication to the desire. And it’s all just good. It puts me in a good place, and I show up. I really show up for the work.

Now, with determination, it’s a little bit different. Determination means, essentially, I’m going to keep getting back, I am determined to do what I

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said I was going to do, no matter what. So one thought that serves me extremely well is, "I'm going to figure this out. I'm getting back up, and I'm going to figure this out." Sometimes I don't need to say I'm going to get back up, I'm not down, but if I am, if I've, like, fallen or something didn't work that I thought was going to work, all right, get back up, girl, I'm going to figure this out. Let's go.

So those sentences help me experience, internally, the feeling of determination. And that's really important.

There's another thought that I use often that helps in deep moments, like, I really need to conjure up some heat. Like, I need to get amped, I need to do a good job I need to be very on, very alert, let's go kind of thing. And I do say let's go. "Let's go!" To myself, I'll say that sometimes.

But I'll remind myself, "You were made for this. You were built for this. Let's go." That helps me. It centers me, it creates a calm confidence to walk in, like, "I am built for this. Let's go." And that puts me in a really good, strong feeling state to go in and deliver whatever I'm supposed to deliver to display the behavior that's going to matter the most. To take the right kind of action.

So this is the non-negotiable part of today's episode that I was going to talk about when it comes to fueling your action. And, on purpose. Like, conjuring up the right feeling state so that it is the right fuel for the action that you want to take. This is the non-negotiable. Otherwise, it's unintentional and it's on default. And that won't lead to the best, the highest quality action. So this is the nonnegotiable part.

Now, the optional part that helps me is music. I'm not a big music buff, but I love jazz and hip hop. When they're fused together, it's like my heaven. But I choose songs, and I have a curated play list on Spotify for me, for certain feeling states that I want to generate on purpose. My favorite one is when I want to feel focused, like, head down, let's go, let's go, let's go, like, very focused is the energy.

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Productive is another word that I identify with that. Then, yeah, I've got to, like, tell myself the right things, and then I turn on Jay-Z's "Onto the Next One." I love that song for getting focused. It just takes the feeling state that I generated with what I'm telling myself to the next level. I feel it deeper; I feel it harder; it just sets the tone at an even greater level. And that's a fun one.

So many of you definitely have songs that put you in a mode or a mood. Mood. Think about mood. Mood is the way you feel. So generate the mood that you want. Use music to help you. It can be an adjunctive aide in getting you to the feeling state you want to be feeling. So those are my tips. Those are my tips.

The whole point of this podcast is, what is fueling your action? Know it, be familiar with it, generate it on purpose so that you fuel high-quality action, and so that you are very intentional with your action. And so that you are not running on default, because if you're listening to this podcast, you have built something. You owe it to yourself to be running on the fuel of your choice, and you owe it to your firm to be a good steward of your firm. Show up intentionally.

All right, everyone. Have a wonderful week. I'll see you here next Tuesday.

Hey, you may not know this, but there's a free guide for a process that I teach called Monday Map, Friday Wrap. If you go to velocitywork.com, it's all yours. It's about how to plan your time and honor your plans, so that week over week, more work that moves the needle is getting done in less time. Go to velocitywork.com to get your free copy.