

LeaderImpact Podcast – Episode 32 - Tanya McReady - Building and Leading a Team in Challenging Times

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Episode Summary:

23 years ago Hank and Tanya quit their jobs and moved to Ontario's wilderness to build their dream of starting a business, a family, and creating a lifestyle around their beloved Siberian Huskies. Today we get to hear the story about Hank and Tanya, we will begin to understand the lessons and insights of teams working together and how the same principles that apply to their Huskies can apply to your team.

Hank and Tanya are the owners of Winterdance Dogsled Tours and also have a 2500-tree maple syrup farm and have co-written two books. They share their lives with four children, 150 huskies, and five cats. Today, Tanya McCreedy will share a leadership lesson focused on building and leading a great team through challenging times.

How to Contact Tanya:

- Their website: winterdance.com

Show Notes:

0:00 - Show introduction

0:42 - Tanya's introduction

2:25 - How Tanya got into sled dogs

- 2:47 - buying their first husky
- 3:05 - didn't love their jobs
- 3:47 - conversation with a friend about starting a sled dog business
- 4:07 - wrote a business plan and got rejected by many banks
- 4:27 - got a loan from a bank in Northern Ontario
- 4:37 - September 1999 made the move
- 5:17 - Arrived at their new place, no utilities were connected and all that was there were the holes for the foundation of the house and the kennel
- 5:54 - people thought they were crazy for leaving their careers, but it was not a life they loved
- 7:01 - lived with the dogs in the kennel the first winter so they could make money
- 7:55 - moved into their house a year after they moved

[Is your worst day here worse than your best day there?](#)

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8:20 - personal lessons Tanya has learned from their sled dogs

- 8:40 - how the dogs approach each day, always with joy in each moment

9:45 - how she responds to people who say It is just a dog

- 9:51 - they have never had a dog or trouble understanding trust and compassion
- 10:22 - some clients have a fear of dogs because of past experiences

[Having someone to re-enforce your dream when times are tough makes all the difference in the world.](#)

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10:48 - a failure or mistake they have learned from

- 11:13 - Iditarod - a 1000-mile dog sled race in Alaska, the biggest dog sled race in the world
- 11:48 - raced in 2010, but the dream ended when Hank had to withdraw from the race
- 14:20 - Hank's anger had turned into a depression
- 15:16 - Tanya suggested entering the Yukon Quest, which brought a spark back to Hank
- 16:07 - what they learned was how to get through tough times, setting new goals and dreams, and how to get unstuck from the fear that can set in

[The better you know your team, the better you can build your team.](#)

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17:05 - How teams and groups can support people going through tough times

- 17:49 - how showing vulnerability can help others bring out their vulnerabilities
- 18:59 - Hank shows his vulnerability in their second book and that story
- 19:11 - Hank's first Yukon Quest and his first 200-mile run with no support
- 19:33 - the second-guessing Hank was having
- 20:40 - the fear he had on that run, turned to anger, and then the feeling of being alone
- 20:59 - the dogs gave him the energy he needed to get going

[To have a great team you need to have love.](#)

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22:10 - Building a team and trust with a team of sled dogs

- 22:50 - how they build their team starting from a large pool of dogs and finding who they want and where they want them.
- 24:47 - how trust is built. Starts when they start building the team. Look for heart and passion to want to be on the team.
- 25:32 - learn each individual's strengths
- 25:45 - trust is built mile after mile. Never ask more of them than what they can give
- 26:06 - try and model what to expect during a race, for example, training in the wind, breaking new trails, etc. to help build their confidence
- 28:48 - when a well-run team has issues, it is often the mindset of the leader that is causing the problems

29:57 - Tanya's faith journey

- 30:23 - both Tanya and Hank grew up in families that went to church. When they started their careers they lost that side of themselves.
- 30:49 - Things changed again when they moved for their business.

36:57 - What Tanya wants her faith legacy to be

- 37:19 - Their business is part of their spiritual legacy
- 37:43 - Their stories and how they impact others

39:00 - What brings Tanya the greatest joy

- 39:05 - her family, her husband, their dogs
- 39:38 - giving joy to others who are going through tough times in their lives

41:01 - How to connect with Tanya

41:34 - Outro