

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 103

Stacey Winter

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Don and Ebony: [00:00:00] Welcome to another exciting edition of the WCBA power of course, by Evergy. First, thank you for listening. Don't forget to like us, love us, share us. We truly appreciate you checking us out today. We're excited to have Empac in the house. You're going to tell us their small business story and also hit on an important topic.

E yes, I'm really excited to have the CEO in here of Ms. Stacey Winter. What's up, Stacey?

Stacey Winter: What's up with you. Yeah. Why not?

Don and Ebony: Okay.

How's it going?

Stacey Winter: Pretty good.

Don and Ebony: Thank you for being here today. Tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Stacey Winter: Wow. who I am. Hmm.

Don and Ebony: I know that's a deep question,

Stacey Winter: It is right. Where do you start? And please know, I'm a therapist. So I can go on, give me the sign, give me the sign. If it's going too long, I'll start off with, I'm a believer, I like to start off with that. I'm a mama of two teenage kids, a wife, a daughter a sister, hopefully a best friend to lots of people And, I would say a champion of. 11 year life and loving your work.

Don and Ebony: I love that. That was perfect.

Stacey Winter: Thank you. Off the cuff for sure. I was born and raised in a small town outside of Wichita called Clearwater,



Don and Ebony: Yes. Clearwater.

Stacey Winter: There's a lot of Clearwater connections. Yeah. Where have you been hearing about? Here and there Huh?

Don and Ebony: there between Clearwater and Heston.

Stacey Winter: It's been a theme lately. Huh? Been a theme. Yeah, lots of good things come out of Clearwater.

Don and Ebony: So you are the CEO.

Stacey Winter: I am.

Don and Ebony: For how long?

Stacey Winter: Oh Lord. Since, I believe January of 2018. And I will say the first female CEO of that organization.

Don and Ebony: Congratulations. That is huge. That's awesome. I love hearing that. So you went to Clearwater high school.

Stacey Winter: I did. Yes. Y'all are always interested in where people go to high school. I was ready for that. I was. Get crazy about it. She wasn't trying to ask questions or buck up against me. Like we might've competed at some point.

Don and Ebony: Not at all. It's always, it's Don. And because you are a therapist, I think we need to maybe spend some time around that, but we'll do it at another time.

So back to Empac.

Stacey Winter: Let's wrap up with, Thank you. Clearwater America for producing lots of good right?

Don and Ebony: Thank you.

Stacey Winter: I'm a graduate of the 1990 class of 1990. Shout out to all the Indians.

Don and Ebony: I love it. I love it. So what do you do? What does Empac do?

Stacey Winter: Wow. And this is where it gets kind of heavy, right?

Because we support over 250 businesses in our area. we are what's called an employee

assistance. program. So EAP for short a lot of people are not always aware of what that means. Things We do.

We support companies with training consultation, critical incident stress. debriefings, And most importantly, we support their employees through coaching, counseling and referrals for other services, with things that might be, really causing them some stress, both at work and at home.

Don and Ebony: That's awesome. You guys do quite a bit and to have this program is really important, right? It's the organization itself, the company has been around since the seventies.

Stacey Winter: Right. It's really a cool story. So in 1977, actually let me back up. And my staff are going to laugh when they listen to this because I'm kind of, I like history.

So EAPs and the development of EAPs started with one man, and he was a person living in Iowa who was a truck driver and who was [00:05:00] struggling with alcoholism. And the story is told that he was contemplating suicide. And for whatever reason, he chose not to pull the trigger. The day he was sitting in his bathtub, ready to hurt himself, ready to end his life. and I want to believe it's because God had other plans for him. And I'm sure that's what he believed too. He went on to be someone who entered politics.

And he was. governor of Iowa and then became a part of The Senate and created a funding stream to actually combat alcoholism. And when he brought together this symposium, of lots of different people, if you think in the early seventies, people really didn't understand alcoholism. And so the symposium was really taxed with how do we address it? How do we take care of this problem? That's impacting so many, including individuals of course. And they decided the workplace was the best place to do that because we see each other every day at the workplace. And while you're still employed and you still have some resources that might be the best place and the best time to try and catch that.

And so that was the precursor to employee assistance program. I can't find documentation that proves this, but I want to believe that the city of Wichita or the state of Kansas sent two representatives to that symposium because it's very shortly thereafter, where we have documentation, of the city of Wichita and three companies choosing to invest time and get gain other funds to start a local nonprofit employee assistance program.

Don and Ebony: That is huge.

Stacey Winter: Cool story.

Don and Ebony: You know, and future forward for those three companies. Right. And I know that they, the three companies are like a staples and Wichita. And could you remind us of where they

Stacey Winter: Sure. Learjet, Pizza Hut and

Don and Ebony: Was it Beech?

Stacey Winter: What is the third. Yes. Beech. I should probably clap there.

Don and Ebony: No, I love that. That's, that's huge for us to, you know, be thinking about that. Back back in my it's back in the day.

Stacey Winter: Right? What kind of pioneers like pioneers to say, we want to collect resources so that we can address people that work for us, make sure that they're the most happy the healthy, well balanced, focused people.

Cause we know if those people are good and their families are good, our company is going to be good. and then. our community will thrive and grow too. Right. I mean, the same, same point that we're focused on today.

Don and Ebony: Makes sense. And so you guys have, how many employees now?

over 20,

Don and Ebony: Over 20? Wow. That's that's

Stacey Winter: keep growing, we just keep growing.

Don and Ebony: That's good. And you there's 20 employees, but you support over 200 businesses.

Stacey Winter: I think we're up to over 250 at

Don and Ebony: Okay. Over 250.

Stacey Winter: Businesses, locations, different groups that we serve. And then usually somewhere above 40,000 employees And then, their families also receive the service too. So

Don and Ebony: do you guys have tele-health health?

Stacey Winter: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Don and Ebony: Is that recent or has that always been a part.

Stacey Winter: It is not, it has not always been a part because we're a local non-profit most people came to our office for services, but because of the pandemic, I will say one of the blessings, one of the silver linings that came from the pandemic, we were able to quickly pivot.

We did not skip a beat, did not miss providing services to anyone. And so we created a way to reach everyone. via a HIPAA compliant video platform.

Don and Ebony: Then it seems like the theme today with other businesses we've talked to, seemed like the COVID two year thing has helped people pivot. We've heard pivot two or three times. Yeah, but it made people really rethink their business situation and how they can course correct. And be better once they come out of it.

Do you agree with that?

Stacey Winter: Yeah, hopefully. I mean, I think some people got better. Some people didn't right. I feel like The pandemic she definitely was shining a light on maybe the things that you weren't doing well. So if you weren't doing well before unless you really gave it some intentional focus, it might've, you might not come out better.

Yeah. You might not have come.

Don and Ebony: That's fair. That's fair.

Stacey Winter: I will say for our business, very oddly and 2020, it was eerily quiet. So most people think, wow, the pandemic the racial battle that was happening in the world. all the political Tension. You guys must have just been really struggling focused on serving so many. and actually it was fairly quiet and. we had to create ways to reach people because We felt like people were hunkered down and not, [00:10:00] what people weren't going to the doctor that dentist. Right. and so we see ourself as a wellness benefit. and even though people were struggling, they weren't reaching out. So we created ways to remind people of the service, to bring people together in a video platform.

Examples of that would be our black community support group, which we just do virtually. We did one for the Asian community. When all of the hate crimes were really focused on, the Asian community. we did just general support sessions for anyone in the community that might be struggling because there was such isolation right during that period of time. I'll tell you 2021 I believe that it was as quiet, right? 2020 was fairly quiet. eerily, quiet.

2021 things really started to explode and then even more so in 2022, if you even some of the most put together people started really struggling, right. And I don't think people realized how much the pandemic, as I said the racial battle and injustices in the world and political tensions where I just don't think people recognize that. And then it plays out in the workplace sometimes.

Don and Ebony: Wow. Wow. Wow. That's good stuff. So. Your company helps employees of other companies. How did you create the culture of your 20 employees

Stacey Winter: Good question.

Don and Ebony: For the help

Stacey Winter: Yeah.

Don and Ebony: to 40,000

Stacey Winter: Right? Right. Cause we serve every day, every second of every day.

Don and Ebony: How did you do that?

Stacey Winter: Very intentionally. be like, if you're not intentionally focused on it, it will take hold and create itself.

Right. And I certainly don't want, to leave it up to chance. So it's always been something that's very important to me. as a leader and we start with corporate. So our core values, is where we start making sure everybody understands those core values understands our mission or vision. But most importantly, that it's how we behave. It's how we behave with one another. It's how we behave with all of those that we serve and that we have to understand.

We need to be as happy And as healthy and as well-balanced as we can be treat ourselves well so that we can start serve other people. Well, so we have a fun culture, but a pretty serious one and, and definitely a very dedicated one.

Don and Ebony: And your business organization, how do you define success?

Stacey Winter: How do we define. Well, the first thing that comes to mind is data because I love numbers. I know I'm a therapist but I do love numbers. And so, one of those guilty as charged guilty, I want to show impact, right? I want to show that we are for us. We are usually the front door to mental health services. for. People Because it is something that's offered for free by your company. So when a company contracts with us, they are giving their employees and their employees, families free coaching counseling, and other referral sources, because they're saying we care enough about you, that we want you to be well.

so that we can do good work. together. Right. So our reach, we want to be sure that we reach as many. people in Wichita as possible, and even surrounding areas we were developed here and how that same mission. So we just want to keep moving that forward. So number of companies served as a way we show success, but most importantly, it's really making sure that we continue, to have reach.

Stacey Winter: And for us, we want to get rid of the stigma that is still behind mental health, and just general. So hard to measure. but, Number of companies serve, we're always looking at number of employees serve. We're looking at annual revenue of our EAP agreements. We're always looking at it's really the little stories. that you hear, that, that make you remember your

why.

Right.

Don and Ebony: Wow. Nice. Thank you. I think that's important. And so, as you were talking about, you know, stats and numbers, and then you, you, you really kind of began to shift toward the stories, right. And so, and I think that's, that's key. And when I think of your service and I, I, I w this is me and what I personally. know, how do we help supervisors?

Right. And managers deal with employees who are going through, you know, some instabilities and that's when you come in.

Stacey Winter: Yeah, that's a big part of what we do. So we have consultation. People can call us at any point in time, free consultation within their, EAP package. So if [00:15:00] any supervisor, any leader is struggling, how to address and and many companies do have human resources department, but we Particularly serve small businesses.

Sometimes they do sometimes they don't. Right. And sometimes they're afraid to ask their human resources, contacts. So we, we do like to remind them of their human resources contact and work in concert with that. but, it's hard to have hard conversation, right? Lots of people shy away from that. and then in business.

You know, how much do you get involved in people's personal life?

Where is that line? So we always teach you, know, you know, each other. Well, right. You spend a lot of time together and we teach behavior. So we. You know, what is it that you're seeing? That's different than what you've seen in the past. And how can you just show care and compassion? I talking about the behavior, you're always like Carol in the lobby, right?

If you ever walked in and Carol didn't greet you, didn't give you eye contact, didn't smile, didn't make a joke. Like you would know something might not be right. And you might say, Carol, are you doing okay? Like, these are the things I'm seeing. You always do this, this and this, but I'm not seeing you do that.

I want to check in and make sure you're okay.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. I mean, I think that's, that's important, right? Because as managers and sometimes as own business owners, you know, you're so caught up in, well, we, we want to produce, we want to get to this goal. and just seeing those cues and how do you address them? You know, if sometimes, if someone's always tardy, you immediately, you go to the policy of, you know, you're supposed to be here, but why are you trying to, you know, those extra questions make a difference.

Stacey Winter: Right. Do you do this work? That's very insightful,

Don and Ebony: Not that I'm just, I'm good at most things.

Stacey Winter: Wow. I can see that. Maybe you should come hang out with us because attendance is one area, right? But there's lots of little areas. And so as a supervisor, you can say like, I really care about, you and I want you to feel good about work and and you don't need the whole story. but when you have impact services? You don't have to have a story.

Right? all, you have to say. is like, We care about you. And just remember we have this, for you It's paid for you. Don't have to worry about it.

Please go and do whatever you need to do to gain some clarity.

Don and Ebony: I like that. Thank you. Well, friends, it's time to hear a word from our sponsor, but we will be back to hear more from Stacey Winter.

Welcome back friends. We're here with Stacey Winter from Empac, and we are learning a little bit about how she and her organization is helping a number of small businesses in the greater Wichita area. Stacey, tell us what you're seeing current day. As far as culture goes within small businesses or in the.

Stacey Winter: Sure. Well, I will say first it starts with individuals as we know, individuals make up a culture, what we're seeing in the world. Right. And what we sometimes see in the workplace is some fatigue, really just people who this roller coaster of what's happened in this, particularly around the pandemic. Feeling like there's hope not hope.

That's been a struggle also loss. a lot of loss, a lot of grief. And because we have recognized over the last maybe couple of years that we're not really in control as much as we think we are a lot of anxiety, depression, and then even some aggressive. I've been very surprised at the level of just aggression that sometimes comes out if people aren't taking very good care of themselves. And so cultures, you know, hopefully people are intentionally adapting and talking about what's happening in the world and how that's impacting their people and then what they want their experience to be. at work.

cause if that's not being handled well, I will tell you then things will just [00:20:00] create in its own way. And it's usually not the way you would want it to be. and then that impacts how your employees, treat your customers, treat your products. And so managing your culture well, which we have, you know,

Stacey Winter: Many of many companies we serve. talk to us about that. Ask us for help around that with training, and how to have conversations with their employees about. But If they're not, then I'm scared for them, honestly, because it will develop in a way that you don't want it to.

Don and Ebony: To help me and the listeners understand you're you're a non-profit right. So it's completely different than how the larger for-profit, EAPs would operate. Maybe you guys do a lot of it yourself versus only brokering.

Stacey Winter: Right? Great question. So large for-profit EAPs usually work in like a managed care setting.

And so they will then broker, for in a managed care way, addressing things in the, with the least amount of costs right. And making sure then that they broker out services that they can in whatever community those employees are at so different for us because we live and work in the same community as the people that we serve, we provide the services ourselves directly.

Now we do have to use subcontractors and have had to do that in 2021 2022 because we weren't really sure how the pandemic was going to play out in the business world.

I was really scared of the economy and how things would change and maybe losing companies because maybe financially they weren't able to invest in EAP service. So it was a scary time for us, but we've definitely seen a lot of growth in 2021 and 2022, not just current companies using more service, but new companies.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. I was about to say, I would imagine now that, people see that there is a need more now than ever, for these type of services, because it does impact business and how we operate. Right. so. This month is mental health awareness month, month of may. Can you give us some tips on some things that we should be doing as employers on how we can engage employees and or help de-stigmatize, you know, the things around behavioral health and emotional health?

Stacey Winter: Sure. Well, I automatically, think if you don't have an EAP, now's the time to think about it. Now's the time to talk about it and your leadership team's plan for it. Because having that available for staff is a great start, right? To say, we believe that your health and wellness in particular, your mental health is very important, And it's a very important part of you being in our culture and producing and thriving in your work and at home.

so having an EAP is very important and it also then encourages more conversation, right? Because, we can come in and do trainings. We can come in when you're having your wellness fair or at your open enrollment, and really start to talk to your employees about what it's about. And then when people start to use the Then word of mouth, right, Then they're able to talk about and we have some culture some companies that we serve that are it's beautiful, the way they, they leave, they'll put it on their calendars, publicly for everyone to see.

Stacey Winter: I'm going to impact. This is what I do for myself. And then they're encouraging their coworkers. to do it too. So it's happening where companies are really taking care of that and not working. You know, talking about, it's not a dirty word. It's nothing to be ashamed of.

That's lovely to see. And I think there's going to be more of that in the future.

Don and Ebony: Thank you for sharing that now it's Don's turn. I think he has some things that we're going to talk about before we wrap up and then, then we're going to do something super fun.

Stacey Winter: Are we going to sing? I know what's up. Listen, I won my bracket, today. I know is March, but I won the bracket at work, And so the, my walk-in song was MC hammer

Don and Ebony: Can't touch this dumb, dumb

Stacey Winter: all day.

Don and Ebony: we've lost control.

Stacey Winter: sorry, bringing it back. And my great, my great friend, Jolynn Bright. She always says that I'm back bringing it back.

Don and Ebony: I'm back. That's okay. After the pandemic seemed like you just said that people are okay to talk about mental health and things. What's the next five years looking like for your organization?

Stacey Winter: Hmm. Well, it's funny, you asked because we're in the middle of our strategic. planning.

Don and Ebony: It's always fun.

Stacey Winter: It is always fun, but there's so much information out there now about not looking towards five years, but only looking to a year, right. Or even less than a year because we recognize it sometimes [00:25:00] hard to think that far in advance, Right. Or There's so many unknowns. but it's still good to dream. right? It's still really. good to dream for us, we just want to be known as the premier employer. We want to be? you know, treat our people. Well, We we actually have not had a hard time finding people to come work for us. and we believe it's because of our culture and our connection and our mission. So we we want to just keep growing so we can serve our people well, so, we can serve other people well, and. want to become very well known and well known as the best quality EAP service for the lowest price.

We do have, you know, large for-profit companies to compete with. And I understand we're not the best for everyone, but we're definitely best for the small business. So to continue right here in the place that we were founded, to continue to impact this community because we want Wichita to be healthy in lots of different ways and even impact. you know, rate of depression, rate of suicide. We, we want to impact those rights.

Don and Ebony: Wow. Excellent. I can't find a better way to end that. That was, that was wonderful. That's what she wants. I think knowing her for 30 minutes, I think that's, what's going to happen. Probably. I

Stacey Winter: I hope do I look like a person filled with tenacity or what? Yeah, a winner for sure. I like to win. I like to be a winner and I picked good teams, always.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. Excellent. Do you golf?

I do golf although I was a softball player when I was younger. And So it's hard sometimes to remember I'm not. holding a

Don and Ebony: Oh, okay. You, you do a D a Charles Barkley. Is that what I'm

Stacey Winter: That would be, I love Charles Barkley and all his commercials make me laugh.

Don and Ebony: Oh yeah.

Stacey Winter: I love that dude so much.

Don and Ebony: Hilarious. But if you've seen him golf and I haven't seen him in person, but the TV it shows,

Stacey Winter: I be me. Yeah. I sometimes struggling much better now, but I sometimes struggle with my emotional management. And so I might be thrown a club screaming.

Don and Ebony: I'm still missing my nine iron.

Stacey Winter: Oh, wow. And my husband, I always go my husband and he's always picking up my stuff for me as super sweet. And we, I love to golf with Cherry Oaks in Cheney. I don't know if you've ever golf there. It's one of my favorite courses, but there's like little kids close by. so he's always like,

Don and Ebony: Oh, that's too funny. Well, you dealt with Ebony long enough, so it's time.

Stacey Winter: Are we doing this fun? I don't even get to be a part of that.

Don and Ebony: Word association.

Stacey Winter: Oh,

Don and Ebony: Like that at all, as a therapist, you probably

Stacey Winter: I'm not scared of

Don and Ebony: I'm not taking notes.

Stacey Winter: I'm not scared.

Don and Ebony: give you one word to give me one word back. It's not wrong because it's your word, right? Okay. Here we go

Leader.

Stacey Winter: Wow. It has to be one word.

Don and Ebony: Oh, we prefer

Stacey Winter: Yeah, it can be. Wow. Because it's one of the most underrated things and in our world I think providing good leaders.

Don and Ebony: College.

Stacey Winter: Tess, my daughter, who's getting ready to leave to go to college.

Don and Ebony: Like Tess, T E S

Stacey Winter: That's her name? Yes, not Tessa

Don and Ebony: I didn't know what

Stacey Winter: and not test like taking an exam, but my daughter's name T E S S.

Don and Ebony: Entrepreneur.

H M M

M.

Stacey Winter: know right. I would say, well, the first thing that came to my mind, is brother, 'cause my, I see my brother in that way, Yeah.

Don and Ebony: This is your word. Hero.

Stacey Winter: Hmm. probably my grandma. Yeah. Millie.

That's that's the name that comes. Yeah. We call her Milly Vanilli. She was straight white, but she didn't know what we were talking about. Oh, the word is fun right now. This place Ebony and

Don and Ebony: oh my

Stacey Winter: two words

Don and Ebony: Don't need this extra. Family.

Stacey Winter: Blessed.

Don and Ebony: The Chamber.

Stacey Winter: My neighbor.

Don and Ebony: Neighbor got a name.

Stacey Winter: No. you are my neighbor. Meaning like I've lived next door to you. I work.

Don and Ebony: Okay. My bad .

Stacey Winter: No like you, the chamber is my neighbor. Yeah, your neighborhood.

Don and Ebony: I see you. Okay, Wichita.

Stacey Winter: Hmm,

Home, [00:30:00] home is the first word that comes to mind and I love that the center of the flag is the native. American expression of home because I am Cherokee.

So that brings it home for me.

Don and Ebony: Beautiful. Cool. Vacation.

Stacey Winter: May.

Turks and Caicos baby, because I'm turning 50, 25th wedding anniversary. My daughter's graduating. She turned 18. It's lots going

Don and Ebony: You need to get out about it

Stacey Winter: here

Don and Ebony: Failure.

Stacey Winter: Learning.

Don and Ebony: And last but not least. And I am sure looking forward to hearing this. Beverage. You got to tell the truth.

Stacey Winter: Straight water. Seriously. Hydration is one of the most important things you can do for your wellness. It's boring. Answer I know you wanted me to say vodka.

because of your previous guests. Not bringing you any, sorry. H2O.

Well, somebody smell what's in your bottles, right?

Don and Ebony: Thank you. It's a pleasure meeting you.

Stacey Winter: Yeah. you. too. Oh my gosh.

Don and Ebony: Fun,

Stacey Winter: It has been, you guys are my like favorite podcasts. This is seriously Like a dream come true. And as they were playing MC hammer and I was walking in, Chelsea was on the phone like, Hey, Stacey. Everything about my whole day. has just been exactly what God wanted to have happen. It was awesome.

Don and Ebony: I love it. Well, friends, this is the end of our segment. If you would please like us share it, make sure you share the segment with all of your friends, our businesses who may find value in this.

Let us know who you want to hear from next. Till next time.