

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's [YouTube](#) channel, follow him on [Twitter](#), or visit him on [Facebook](#).

Jacob: Hello everyone, welcome to another episode of The Future of Work Podcast, my guest today is Jim Kavanaugh, the CEO and Co Founder of World Wide Technology. Jim, thanks for joining me.

Jim: My pleasure, Jacob. It's great to be here.

Jacob: Fun fact for people that are listening to the podcast. World Wide Technology was also one of the companies that scored highest in my Employee Experience Index, where I looked at culture, technology, physical space, [00:00:30] and I looked at 252 companies and only a handful of them, around a dozen, scored at the very top of that index. Including companies like LinkedIn and Facebook, and you guys were up there too, so clearly, you guys must have something figured out, Jim.

Jim: Wow. Well, first of all, I was not aware of that, that you had an index, or somewhat of an evaluation or assessment process. [00:01:00] I'd be interested to hear, how do you do that? What did you think you learned about the company? Because I'm happy to hear that. We'd just like to maybe understand a little bit what were you looking for? And what kind of insights did you have on World Wide?

Jacob: Sure. Well, I guess this is good insight for people listening to the podcast too. I looked at, I believe it was 17 criteria, 10 [00:01:30] things for culture, 4 things for physical space, and 3 things for technology. I looked at everything from diversity and inclusion, to having managers that act like coaches and mentors, to making sure employees have the right tools to do their jobs, to a sense of purpose, all of that sort of stuff. Basically, what I did was I hired a team of five researchers and two data scientists, and we combed through lots of publicly available information about the company. We did google searches, we looked at Glassdoor [00:02:00] data, we looked at everything that we could find, and these five researchers that I hired, independently gave their assessment and their perspective, and answered a series of 17 questions about World Wide Technology and 251 other companies. That's where the scoring came from and you guys were at the very, very top of that.

Jim: Wow. Wow. That's awesome. I'm excited to hear that, that's fantastic.

Jacob: Yeah, I realize when we spoke last time, I never told you that. Surprise.

Jim: [00:02:30] No, no. Well, that's a good surprise. Not all surprises are always good, but that's a great surprise. That's something that we do strive to achieve, creating what I would consider is a great place to work. And it touches on a lot of those points that I would say your assessment criteria that you guys looked at and a number [00:03:00] of the different companies. Yeah, I'm really pleased to hear that the results came back the way that you see them.

Jacob: Yeah. We'll definitely talk about some of the stuff that you guys are doing internally, but why don't we start with you. I'd love to learn a little bit more about you, what's your background? How did you get to be the CEO of World Wide Technology and help start the company?

Jim: Yes. It was a number of years ago, but I grew [00:03:30] up in I would say a very middle class family, my dad was a brick layer and fortunately, I'd played some soccer growing up. And just getting through it quickly, I got a scholarship to go to St. Louis University and play soccer. If it wasn't the case for soccer, I'd probably be in construction somewhere, whether doing construction or managing construction of some sorts, but I'm not sure I would've gone to college if I didn't get a soccer scholarship. [00:04:00] From there quickly, I played soccer in college, I played for the '83 Pan Am team, '84 Olympic team, and played a couple years of professional soccer a number of years ago, graduated from college 1986, then played a couple years of professional soccer. Which, in the US anyway, it wasn't a very lucrative sport but I love the game and I love playing, but I played it for a couple years and from there, team I was on went bankrupt.

I decided it was probably time to go [00:04:30] find a real job. At that point, I worked for two years on electronic components distribution company, a privately owned company called Future Electronics out of Montreal, and learned about board level components, chips, and DRAMs, and just all different kinds of diodes, and all kinds of different components. It would go on any type of manufacturing [00:05:00] board or a silicon that would go on different boards. Anyway, from that perspective, I would say one thing just insightful for even young people coming out of school. One of the decisions I probably made that was right, was that I wanted to be in a growth industry. I'm not necessarily a technologist by trade, I graduated with a business degree but I wanted to be in an environment that had [00:05:30] a lot of growth upside.

I really wanted to get into the system side and software in computers. That's where, from this other company Future Electronics, I was there for about two years, was talking with another individual and I looked at and wanted to create my own company and wasn't really sure what that company should look like, but back then, even now it was more like a valued reseller systems integrator of some sort. That's [00:06:00] what we did. In 1990, we founded what is called today World Wide Technology, and got into the business of really reselling systems. Back then it would've been IBM, and HP, and even had AST, if you remember AST computers and laptops, and Dell, and Everex, and all kinds of them. And the evolution of the whole networking space when Cisco [00:06:30] came into existence, and Cabletron, and Wellfleet, and all of those networking companies and whole evolution of the technology market, and the internet, and the .com space.

That was really the founding of the business back then, and moving from what was really about a 2,000 square foot little space in an office building [00:07:00] that we had, that's only a couple blocks from our corporate headquarters now. Now, we have quickly well over almost 27, 28 years now, have grown into a 10 and a half billion dollar company that does a lot more than just, I would say resell technology equipment. That is a little bit of my background and [00:07:30] I'm sure we'll talk about a number of different things, but that just gives you an idea of the founding and the starting up of the business.

Jacob: Yeah, I love that story. And how big is the company now? And what does World Wide Technology do today?

Jim: Today, as I mentioned, last year we closed out just under \$10.5 billion dollars in top line revenue. We have [00:08:00] today, a little over 5,000 employees, probably another 1,000 contractors, we have offices all over the United States, and offices around the world in London, and Amsterdam, Mexico, Canada, Singapore, China, Brazil, Japan, just to name a few, and as we continue to build out our global footprint. So, a little over 5,000 thousand employees, \$10.5 billion dollars [00:08:30] in revenue, building out a global platform to really support the big multinationals and global customers that we support. Then, we've really evolved from being what I would call a systems intergrat- ... or I'm sorry, valued reseller of technology products, to really a valued reseller, a systems integrator, and an organization that's more of an innovator [00:09:00] that's evolved into providing both products, products and services, and then building out integrated architectural solutions for customers, and now with the evolution and integration of a whole software development arm that we have. So, we have approximately 500 agile application developers that work with our hardware engineers, that we are now working with customers, not only building out their IT infrastructure.

[00:09:30] That would involve complex data center design and build, cloud platforms, enterprise networks that would include local area networks, wide area networks, WiFi infrastructure, and security, which is proliferated through an entire enterprise in cloud platform. Those are things that we do, but also the integration of application development that [00:10:00] enables and allows us to go in and help customers drive what we consider our digital business solutions. These things could help them design and implement their data center and network infrastructure, but then working not only with the CIO or CTO, but also working with the Chief Marketing Officer, and at times it could be the entire executive team [00:10:30] or CEO, around driving business outcomes and changing their digital strategy that would involve building applications that change a patient experience, or change a retail customer experience. We see the convergence of what we would call traditional IT infrastructure, and the convergence with technology and software becoming [00:11:00] more mainstream in the business environment. That's not something I would say all companies and organizations are comfortable with how that is coming together, especially at the rate that it's coming together.

Jacob: Well, it sounds like you guys get to do some pretty fun and interesting stuff there. Can you walk us through what a day looks like for you? Starting from when you wake up in the morning, what is a typical day like in the life of Jim?

Jim: [00:11:30] Wow, that's interesting. It can change quite a bit because I travel quite a bit, I try to manage. I think that's an important thing for anyone, but I would say for a CEO or an executive, you have to be careful that the business in your life doesn't manage you. That you step back at times and make sure you're managing your life, [00:12:00] and you're managing your business because I think it's easy to get on the treadmill, or the gerbil wheel and you just are constantly responding to emails, and text messaging, and just your daily grind and you're not stepping back and really thinking about what is most important to you, and what's most important to the organization to make sure you're focused on those right things. So [00:12:30] daily, my day may be waking up here in St. Louis where our corporate headquarters are, it could be waking up somewhere in the United States or around the world.

That being said, from a business perspective, I'm always making sure that I'm focusing on what I think is most important, and I'll talk a little bit about that, relative to the business and our mission and vision. But part of it is, [00:13:00] I would say individually, not becoming a slave to the digital world that we live in. I will have to admit that I pretty quickly look at my mobile phone, looking at text messaging or emails that are coming out to stay as current as possible on what's going on. But [00:13:30] my day is, I get up early, I'm up normally 5:00, 5:30 in the morning and I'm into work quite early most of the days. A lot of it is, I would say just at a very high level at World Wide, typical day is spending time with really, I would say the main customers, partners that we have, and employees. That's what [00:14:00] I'd say a typical day, obviously things can change when I'm looking at things that are very strategic, or I've got board meetings or I'm looking at more strategic planning things.

All of that, like I mentioned before, is very important that there are certain things that you do on a day-to-day basis, like executive briefings and things, but you gotta make sure that you're stepping back and you're managing [00:14:30] your time and you're managing your calendar to make sure that you personally are getting out of the day what you want to, and planning your time accordingly. And also, as an executive, that you're focusing on the things that are most important to the company, to your employees.

Jacob: Couldn't agree more and I think that makes a lot of sense. I love that you have this balance between work, and it sounds like life as well, [00:15:00] which a lot of people struggle with. Even I find that to be challenging sometimes. So, it's definitely not easy. Now, what do you do as CEO? And actually, let me rephrase that. What do you think the role of a CEO or even a leader inside of an organization should be?

Jim: Yeah, I think [00:15:30] there's a number of different approaches and ways to manage and lead, and manage and lead different organizations, so I don't think it's a one size that fits all, but if I'm giving you my perspective on just some things that I'll talk about relative to leadership. First of all, I think a leader ... and I don't believe this is all that common, it seems very basic to [00:16:00] me, but when I assess different situations and people, I guess it's more difficult than I view. But I would look at it, so my point is, as a leader, CEO or leader of an organization, you need to be able to step up and look at things from a 30,000 foot view. You're someone sitting up there on top of the mountain, or you're an eagle looking out over things and [00:16:30] surveying what's going on, you

got a good view of what's happening. Also, understanding what are the most important things relative to your organization? What are you trying to accomplish? How do you want people to behave? What do you want to deliver? And how do you make an impact?

I would say from a performance perspective, emotional connections, or community involvement. What are those things that 30,000 [00:17:00] foot view? At the same time ... and again, my perspective is that executive and CEO needs to be able to paint that vision, see the vision and see how things look from that high level perspective. But they also need to be able to drop down into the bowels of the company and get into the details of certain things. Now, their goal is not to get [00:17:30] into the details and stay in the details, their goal is, "Maybe there's a new initiative." Or call it a new value proposition that you're creating and strategizing on about the company, and that is in the startup phase of a new value proposition or strategy for the company.

Well, that may require you to be down in the details working with other team members, not that the intent is for you to stay in the details, [00:18:00] but until that is designed and built and put into a mode that it is starting to really work with success and scale, it may require your attention. But your goal is to get that going and delegate that off and empower the management and leadership to go make those things happen. So, that would be something strategic that may require some of your involvement [00:18:30] from a more deeper perspective. I would also say that there's the times that problems arise, could be personnel issues, could be problems on performance in a specific area that require you to get into the detail of the business. And sometimes you have to get into that detail and you need to understand those issues and how to resolve them and help the team. But again, the intent [00:19:00] is not to get into them and stay in them, it's just to understand what you need to do and your willingness.

Because I think also as a leader, people want to know that you understand the business, that you understand the culture, and you're willing as a leader, to go do whatever anybody else is being asked to do. But at the same time, that's not your job to do that on a daily basis. You've gotta be able to make sure [00:19:30] that, that tactical stuff that may be required at different times, connects to the strategic vision that you have at 30,000 foot view. That ability to see the high level, see the vision, paint the vision, and make sure that, that's communicated out, but then also to make sure that you've got a good connection to the day-to-day things that are going on. And how the [00:20:00] business and the culture really operates.

Jacob: Let's say that you were not the CEO of World Wide Technology, you were maybe an entry or mid level employee. Maybe you were a manager, you were at the company for, I don't know, two to three years and you are really interesting in becoming a leader at World Wide Technology. You wanted to grow your career, you wanted to get more responsibility, you wanted to grow in your role. What are some things that you would do [00:20:30] inside of World Wide Technology to become that leader? And I ask this because a lot of the times, I get this question from employees who say, "You know what, I really want to grow inside of my company but I don't know what to do. I don't know where to start. How do I get the attention, that visibility?" I'm really curious what

you would do, what advice would you have for people that want to grow and become leaders, how could they go about doing that? What would you do each day?

Jim: Yeah. I'll say maybe a few things relative to [00:21:00] any company, then I'd give some specifics in regards to World Wide. My view for any company that you're in, is as a manager and a leader and wanting to aspire to become ... call it you're an individual contributor that wants to be a manager and a leader, or you're already a manager and you want to progress and continue to grow to be a more impactful manager and leader within the organization. First thing is, I think [00:21:30] one, understanding what is important to that business and what the things that you are doing today, how do you make sure you understand what's important to the business, and what defines success. And to make sure that you are delivering as a manager and leader on the business objectives and goals that have been identified.

[00:22:00] Do whatever you can to not only make sure you're delivering, but you're over achieving on those objectives. The other thing concurrently I would look at, is just understanding what are the important, call it, values and behaviors that drive that organization and to make sure that you understand the important values and behaviors that are expected, and how they map to the culture. [00:22:30] And to make sure that you align and that one, it fits your DNA and this is the company you want to be a part of, and to make sure that you are a good cultural fit for that organization and that you live and breathe the behaviors and the values that they expect. If you're doing that and you are also hitting your goals and business objectives and over achieving, [00:23:00] you are now setting yourself up for an opportunity to continue to take on more responsibility and to take the next generation of leadership.

I would say there's also things that you need to do personally to go make sure that you're challenging yourself. Where are your strengths as a leader? And where do you feel that you need to improve? So, [00:23:30] what do you constructively need to do better? And how do you need to improve as a manager, a better manager and leader, and take on those responsibilities to, again, do a self assessment of yourself, and if that means working with others and understanding how people also perceive you as a manager and leader, and make sure that you are continuing to challenge yourself to grow and develop as a [00:24:00] leader. I would say specifically within World wide, we have what we call as our integrative management and leadership curriculum, that it's basically a management and leadership curriculum in process with business concepts built in it. And it basically aligns our vision, our mission, our values, and what we call our eight key business concepts.

Which are, call it management and leadership [00:24:30] situations that we train our managers and leaders on, in regards to how to be the best manager and leader. It also fits into the culture and the behaviors at World Wide. Here at World Wide, I would expect and I would recommend that our employees, that they continue to be focused in training because we create situational awareness, situation scenarios. [00:25:00] And how we train and develop our managers and leaders in regards to business acumen, dealing with difficult situations, driving and aligning goals. Everything that we think is important for a manager and leader to know. So my advice internally is to get very good at really understanding what that curriculum means. Are you good in all the specific

areas that we've identified? And is that helping [00:25:30] you become a better manager and leader?

Jacob: Well, you talked about a couple different things actually. So, a few follow up questions for you. You mentioned this idea of overachieving and going beyond, but earlier you also talked about this importance of balance between work and life. I guess, how do you overachieve and do a really good job of meeting your goals but at the same [00:26:00] time not kill yourself and make sure that you don't let the business manage you? Because often times, I'm sure you've heard this, people feel like they just have too much to do. They can always answer emails, they can always work, they always feel like they're drowning in stuff. It becomes very hard to overachieve because you find you can't even keep up as it is. Is that more of, I don't know, an organizational problem? Is that an individual problem? How [00:26:30] do you balance that?

Jim: Yeah. Personally, I think it's a global problem. I'll give some perspective, just my perspective on some of this. One is, I think when you talk, there's obviously just an incredible amount of talk around work life balance. In some cases, [00:27:00] I think work life balance is getting more and more difficult today because you're always connected. That's not gonna slow down any, so I would give one perspective is, on a certain degree, always being connected is not a bad thing if you can manage it. I think part of work life balance is that work and life [00:27:30] is interconnected from my perspective, and you can't just get disconnect and say, "Well, this is my work over here and I only do this at this time. And here's my life after work over here."

These worlds are colliding quite a bit and I would say most occupations ... and I would say there's a mentality of understanding [00:28:00] that, "Don't completely fight that, but embrace it to a point." As long as you can manage it because if you enjoy your work and some of what you're doing and it is integrated into your life, that can be a good thing. But you still have to manage it because you want to do certain things that maybe again, with your family or your kids, and that becomes a time management piece. [00:28:30] I think first of all, just thinking you're gonna very, very distinctly separate, "That's my work, that's my life." I just don't think that's reality. I think just embracing it and saying that, "Yeah, sometimes there's gonna be overlap in some of that."

And oh by the way, a big goal is, have you found something in life and in work that you actually enjoy doing? And if you enjoy doing it, it's not like it's a drudgery [00:29:00] for you. It's something that you enjoy to do, but with that being said, you still need to prioritize and manage your time and how you react to different things. Or just the life of digital, social media, you could get in there and if you have a habitual personality, you may just sit there and respond and be going through Twitter, going through something and you just can't do that, it becomes unproductive. [00:29:30] You have to manage your life and your time. So, once you figure out, or you're in the right job, or you're doing the right thing, you actually enjoy it, understanding that there is a leading of back and forth of work and your life, and it's an integrated thing. But if you enjoy both, I think it can be a very positive thing.

Then it's managing to the point of what is important? [00:30:00] And there's things as a manager and leader that if you just say, "I'm gonna respond to every email that comes

in." As a manager and leader, as you take things on, you have to figure out things that you're gonna delegate off. You need to make that clear, "No, that needs to go to another level of manager. It needs to be segmented off to somebody else." You have to step back [00:30:30] and then assess what you do personally and from a business perspective, and decide what is important to you. And if that is to go to your kid's soccer game and spend time and see their recital and these different things, then you need to prioritize that and make sure that, that's gonna be fit into your work life balance.

If you find yourself and you step back and look at it and say, "You know, I'm really working [00:31:00] on a bunch of tactical things that just aren't that important and it's not getting to my goal on the business side of things." You need to figure out how do you get your life back and your business, because at the end of the day, you're probably not doing the things that are allowing you to be most productive for yourself and for the business. That's where I think sometimes, again, people get on their gerbil wheel [00:31:30] and they just come in and it's just automatically look at your phone, look at email, look at text, and just respond. I think you need to get into the habit of stepping back, assessing what you're doing. Are you happy with it? Are you satisfied? Do you feel fulfilled? Are you in the right spot?

Then making sure that you are doing the things from a personal perspective that you find that are fulfilling, and you're doing things from a business perspective [00:32:00] that you're finding are fulfilling and most productive, and also understanding this is not a perfect science. You're still gonna have tough days and things that don't go exactly according to plan, as we all know.

Jacob: If people are listening to this and maybe they're in a situation at work where they don't like their jobs, do you think they should quit? Or I mean, even in World Wide Technology, let's say you had an employee that came up to you and they were just brutally honest with you and they said, "You know what, Jim, [00:32:30] I've been working at World Wide Technology for a while, I don't like my job." Would you advise them to quit and just say, "I'm sorry, things didn't work out. Go look elsewhere."? Or what would be your advice for people that are in jobs that they don't like at the moment?

Jim: Yeah. I mean, great question. My view on it would be you don't just wake up someday and find [00:33:00] out, "God, I hate my job." You probably have known that this is building up, so it's kinda like kids coming out of school and I talked about getting on a treadmill or you're just drifting down the river, or you may be on the boat just drifting down the river, you've got to make decisions on behalf of your life and your job. Or you just say, "Okay, I really don't like my job." Now it's 10 years later and you're in the same job. Well one, I [00:33:30] think part of just management and leadership and just your own personal management, is you gotta be willing to step back and say, "Am I happy?" And are you willing to make that difficult decision to change what you're doing?

Long answer to your question Jacob, was my view is, I wouldn't react. Just say, "okay, I'm coming in today and saying I quit." But my view is, "okay, did you take the time to understand why [00:34:00] don't you like your job? What don't you like about it? Is it just something that you've never liked to do?" Then at the same time, before you just

react, make sure, is it because you have a bad manager? Is it because you don't like the company? Is it you just don't like what you're doing, you're in sales and you want to be a developer, you're in sales or you're in a different industry. "I want to do social work because it's more gratifying." As long as whatever those things are, [00:34:30] my recommendation is don't just react, you want to step back and say, "Okay.", make a decision because you've actually thought through the decision, it's not just you had a bad day and, "I'm just gonna quit. I have no idea what I'm gonna do and then I'm gonna wake up the next day and figure it out."

Some people may do that, I don't recommend that. I recommend at least think through what are the reasons why you don't like your job, what do [00:35:00] you think you would like, and how do you put yourself in a position that you're doing something that you like and that you're energized for? And then what is that gonna mean? What do you need to do that? You're like, "Well, I want to go do something in this other, call it industry." Well, that may require you to go take some more schooling or training of some sort. When on one side I'm saying be pragmatic, also [00:35:30] make sure that you self assess why, but at the same time I'd say you don't want to spend your entire life self assessing. It may sound like I'm contradicting myself but I'm saying take what I would say as a reasonable amount of time to assess, but don't put yourself in a state of paralysis because you just keep evaluating, evaluating, you never do anything. And now it's 10 years later, you're doing [00:36:00] the same job and you're not happy.

I think some people do find themselves in a position where you gotta have the backbone to make a decision, when you know you are not happy and it requires a move. Unfortunately, there's a lot of people that don't ever make that decision, they just drift down the river.

Jacob: Yeah. That's probably the worst thing you can do, is do nothing. I remember, [00:36:30] or I saw on YouTube actually, you were doing an interview and you said something which I found was fascinating. You said, "80 cents of every dollar spent goes into employees." I wasn't sure if this was a World Wide Technology stat or if this was just a global stat, but was this a specific statistic to your company, or was this just a global average that you found?

Jim: It's specific to World Wide, but [00:37:00] I would bet that a lot of companies out there have the same, it would be very similar and some of them will be at even more extreme than we are. If you just looked at, say for example, law firms, accounting firms, consulting firms, any services related firms, they would be at least 80% if not more because that's [00:37:30] what you're investing in. If you look at World Wide, as I mentioned, even we look at and we invest quite a bit in technology and our innovation labs, new buildings, new corporate headquarters, growing our platform, our software platform, but you take all that into consideration when I go back and literally pull the numbers. When you look at between salaries, bonuses, health benefits that we have today, [00:38:00] 80 cents of every dollar, somewhere between 78% and 80% of every dollar will go to employees.

It's just so simple and so clear but this isn't the way I believe companies view this. If you think about, "Where are you putting all your money?" Okay well, you identify it and it's

like all of those ... "So, that's where you're putting all your money and that's your most [00:38:30] valuable and most significant investment. And do you feel that you're getting the most out of that investment?" My view is, then people make those investments but they don't, I would say, give the care and feeding to their employees to make sure that they are as happy, aligned, and productive as possible to literally drive the best results and performance [00:39:00] for the company.

That's where I spend a ton of time on our culture, our employees, trying to figure out how do we get as much real time information as we can? What's the best source of information to make sure I have a pulse on, "Are they happy?" Because I believe that the happier your employees are and the more engaged they are, the [00:39:30] more productive they are. So no, I think that's a reasonably universal, I would say percentage, and I know for World Wide, it clearly is. That is the number.

Jacob: Well, I'd love to talk a little bit about some of the programs that you have going on at World Wide Technology, because clearly you consistently as a CEO, get ranked as one of the top CEOs according to Glassdoor. The company keeps getting rated [00:40:00] as a great place to work, you scored high on my Employee Experience Index. I mean, you gotta be doing something there that is unique that other companies can learn from. I don't know if you know exactly what it is that you guys have that's so unique, but what do you think is going on inside of World Wide Technology that is creating this environment where you're getting all these accolades, and awards, and recognition? I mean, why do people love the company so much?

Jim: [00:40:30] Well, I think there's a couple of things. I'll jump right in, at the highest level ... I'll give you this. First of all, I think you just have to care about your employees and your employees, they're very smart. And if you don't care and you think you're gonna give lip service and you're just gonna say one thing and do something else, that just doesn't work. I think if employees really believe that you [00:41:00] care, and the executive management team cares about their well being and you really want them to be successful, they see it and they feel it. I think that's just a critically important piece. But you can also be in an organization that to say that you actually care, but you're very disorganized, you don't have a clear plan, you don't know how to run the business. That's gonna create a level of dysfunction and people are not gonna be happy because you're not gonna [00:41:30] be productive and successful as a business.

At a very high level, I think it's critically important that you do the right things from a cultural perspective, that you actually care about your employees for the right reason, not because you think they can just provide ... the more you care about them, the more they produce. I think that can be fine, but I think if you actually sincerely care about their development and [00:42:00] their families and them being happy and productive, that can be a very contagious thing. And I'll come back to that, but you also need to be smart. You need to be healthy from a cultural perspective and just the behaviors and the values of the organization, but you also need to be a smart organization. You need to make sure that you have the ability to set a vision of where the company's going, [00:42:30] and then build an organization with a level of clarity and alignment and the right leadership that can drive the productivity of the business, that allows you to reinvest back into business and your employees.

To stitch it up, creating a healthy culture and a healthy organization based on values that are important to the business, but also making sure you've got smart, innovative, insightful leaders that can [00:43:00] build the structure of the organization that can continue to grow, that aligns to the values. In our case, we have a mission that really is a mission that people understand, it's very simple, and it means a lot to the business. Our mission is to be a profitable, growth company that's also a great place to work. So you can go back and say, "Wow, that's pretty simple and there's not much to that." [00:43:30] But there is quite a bit to it. When I looked at it, I think very long and hard about these things, and our mission's been around for probably 15 years now, and when I look at it, there's three legs of the stool to our mission.

One is, as I said, to be a profitable. So when you look at you're a privately held company and we're even younger, people are like, "Well, why are you always holding people accountable to hitting a number and driving the profitability of the business?" I'm like, "This is not a greed thing [00:44:00] as we continue to grow." But if there's not a level of accountability to the organization on your performance and you're not measuring yourself to deliver that and executing against that, you're not generating the profit to reinvest back into your business. Into innovative things, into new technology, into new buildings, and most importantly into the salaries and the benefits for your employees. [00:44:30] Profitability is a key piece of that.

Then when you look at growth. Growth is important because if you're trying to hire people that are the best people in the industry and that want to over achieve, and really take great pride in performing and doing great things, you're not gonna find and attract those people if you're not growing. So, also [00:45:00] growth creates opportunity for people internally to continue to grow and develop as individuals. Growth is a very important thing, not just for the sake of growth but understanding how it fits into your strategy and your vision and mission. Then last but definitely not least important, probably most important but it's really integrated into those three legs of the stool as we look at it, is creating a great place to work.

That's where I was really [00:45:30] glad to hear when we started the podcast here today, was I didn't even know that you did an assessment on World Wide, so I'm really glad to hear that because I'm always looking for different sources of input, good, bad, and different in regards to World Wide. And a big part of it is to make sure that we are a great place to work. When I say that we're a great place to work, it's not just to go out and get [00:46:00] Glassdoor, or to get great places to work, or Fortune Magazine or someone to write on us. The biggest and most important thing to me, is when I can sense and feel that we're a great place to work because when I go talk to somebody in logistics, or shipping, or distribution, or an entry level software developer, or just had a number of interns. I did a town hall yesterday with part of our IT group, some with the engineering group the day before, [00:46:30] and about a week or two weeks ago I sat down with ... we have about 120 or 130 interns.

I was amazed at the feedback of some of the interns of why they ... there's a couple interns that had offers from Google, Facebook, and some pretty impressive companies out on the west coast and had come to intern with World Wide. And a big part of that was the culture and [00:47:00] literally walking into the building when they were

interviewing and seeing and just sensing the energy and the engagement of our employees. As they read up on things through Glassdoor and other sources, culture is very important to them. So I think if you do the right thing for the right reasons and you've got to have a structure in it that scales, [00:47:30] that it can be incredibly impactful. And that's where I said to be a profitable growth company, it's a great place to work. And when you look at growing the organization to make sure that you're feeding the health of your organization and culture, while also being ... you've got to be intelligent and productive. If you blend those two worlds together, I think you create something that's very, very special and very differentiating in the marketplace.

Jacob: [00:48:00] I know we only have a couple minutes left here. People that listen to the podcast, always love stories and examples, anecdotes, anything like that from organizations. I thought maybe it would be a good opportunity to share maybe some of the things that you do at World Wide Technology. For example, you mentioned that for leaders and managers, you do this scenario training. It would be really interesting, for example, to hear maybe what one of those scenarios look like and any other programs [00:48:30] that you have going on inside of World Wide Technology to make some of these concepts real. Like, how do you make culture real? How do you show that you care about people? Any examples or things that you can share to help make these more real would be great, because my hope is that people will listen to this and then maybe take some of these concepts and ideas and actually make them work inside of their company. Do you have anything that we can maybe try to implement inside of other organizations?

Jim: [00:49:00] Yeah. I guess if I would give any advice and any examples would be, you need to ... my view is the managers and leaders of organizations, this is not something leadership, and management, and culture is something that you outsource. You don't just bring in a consultant of the day and say, "Hey, I want to build. I want to get our company and get it named in Great Places to Work, [00:49:30] and want to be" ... well, but there's some organizations that can actually game the system that literally may get recognized in a certain area but then when you go back and you peel back the onion to get into the organization, you see it's very dysfunctional, employees don't really like it.

Jacob: I've heard of stories like this with some people that somehow are able to game and get these awards, but the employees ... I mean, I don't know the inside of how you can game it but I've heard many stories of people that say that their company does [00:50:00] this, they maybe give them free food, they do an employee appreciation day on the same day that they're doing these assessments and surveys. So, their scores are artificially inflated, but the employees actually hate working there and that amazes me how that ... it's just nutty, that people do this.

Jim: It is. Sometimes it can be where they may survey a specific area or a specific group and it's not something that's broad based, where what I think is part of the beauty of [00:50:30] anonymous global platforms like the Glassdoor or others, there's no gaming a lot of those. You're gonna get very direct feedback and it's gonna be very candid. And at the end of the day, that's what I think from a leadership team, you want, if you really want to improve your organization. Some leaders don't want, they want to bury that and they don't want that and they definitely don't want to get exposed to anybody

[00:51:00] externally. My view is, then you're not really that concerned with making your organization a great place to work and really resolving issues.

I would even go back to we do a leadership conference that we have, and our leadership conference we had up in Chicago this year with about 950 or 1,000 people of our managers and leaders. That entire conference is about two and a half to three day [00:51:30] conference that we have, and 99% of the conference is all custom built by World Wide. Most of the time when we have our leadership conferences, we never bring in an outside ... we'd bring in no outside consultants. We may bring in an outside speaker but it's only if somebody is completely aligned to what we're doing. My point I guess, would be one of the words of advice just from my perspective is, management, leadership, and your [00:52:00] curriculum, and your values, and what you do, that can't be outsourced. That has to be something that your leadership team lives, and breathes, and embraces.

Here at World Wide, we take that level of emotional connection and then we have built this curriculum over the last 15 years, and ... if I go back and give you an example, 15 years ago, I built what I would say is the foundation [00:52:30] of our integrated management leadership curriculum. I was the one where a much smaller organization was giving the presentation, walking through, "Here are the case studies and the examples." Well, then I said, "What the heck, this isn't gonna work." I said, "I'm the only one doing it and really understand this." Well then I said, to our next set of leaders I said, "Next two or three guys, you guys need to give this." Well, you know what, when they actually had to give it and present it, they had to step back when they saw me do it, they were like, "Oh, it makes sense." But then they had to do it in their terms, and as it cascaded down, this is how [00:53:00] it really applies in use cases and scenarios that are for people in their group. Well, think about that.

Then we went and we magically ... now we got three people that can go out and train and develop on this. I'm like, "That doesn't work." From there, if you look to where we are today, we had 950 managers that were specifically training and ideating, having multiple breakout sessions of ... take that 950 people and break it out into [00:53:30] 10 and 15 person groups that were creating use case scenarios about, "How do they deal with problems and issues, leadership and management issues and opportunities to improve the company? And to make sure that everybody in the entire company, from a management/leadership perspective is on the same page and we're developing the same competency, whether someone is in Singapore, they're in London, they're in St. [00:54:00] Louis, New York, LA, et cetera? And we're all speaking from the same common language." And again, you may have something of a little bit of a use case when you're in logistics versus software development or IT, but everybody understands that.

That's one that I was actually incredibly impressed and taken back, and our team did a great job when I was closing out the last [00:54:30] day of our conference, and seeing how engaged and how just insightful the questions and the things that our managers and leaders were talking about from executives to first level managers, about understanding, embracing, and engaging around our integrated management and leadership curriculum, and how that aligns to our culture and our values. It was pretty

powerful. [00:55:00] From there, we don't want to just leave the conference. It's like, okay, when you leave the conference, now we have a cascading level of accountability that those managers and leaders need to present that to all of their employees. They need to create use cases and scenarios about how that leadership curriculum applies, not just to our managers, but to all of our employees.

There I could go into more [00:55:30] detail, but it's pretty powerful when I go into a facility or do a small town hall or I'm talking to somebody in a remote location and they specifically use the same curriculum of how to deal with a difficult conversation, and how we train our managers on not avoiding difficult conversations. In the process, to go through to do that, to coach people up, or coach them out of the organization, [00:56:00] but do it in a very professional, caring, responsible way.

Jacob: Well, I know we're approaching the hour. I still have a million questions for you, so maybe one day we're gonna have to get you back as a repeat podcast guest because I love your insights on how to get people to care, on how to do all of these different types of things that you guys are doing. But since we're near the end, I thought I would ask you just a couple fun questions.

Jim: Sure.

Jacob: [00:56:30] Well actually, let me ask you, somebody from LinkedIn really wanted me to ask you this, so maybe I'll ask you this question then we'll do those fun ones. Camillo asked, "How does employee growth and development, what does it look like at World Wide Technology? How do you know if someone is the right person to hire? And if there was one mindset that you would want to foster at World Wide Technology, what would that mindset be?" This person cheated and threw in three questions into one, but you can just answer it in, I don't [00:57:00] know, 20-30 seconds. Then I'll do these rapid fire questions and we'll wrap up.

Jim: Okay, I'll try to answer that one quickly. That our view at just hiring people, we've gotten so much better than years and years ago of interviewing people concurrently or even first around our values. We need to understand if they're a value fit to World Wide, and we walk through what those values are of being a team player and how [00:57:30] they interact and a level of respect they have for people. And if the number one focus is themselves and everything else, as long as you're hitting your goals, is important. Just bringing people on and doing it in a way that has driven, I would say, just such a much higher percentage of the right people and the right place, is mapping not only to what that individuals job is, but as importantly or more importantly, do they fit the culture and the values of the business.

[00:58:00] Specifically to the one value, boy that's such a tough one because there's so many things, but I would just say just having somebody with just a high level of integrity. It seems foundational but it's just so important that you have people that really understand what that means.

Jacob: Yeah, integrity. Simple, something that's been [00:58:30] around for a while. Okay, a couple of rapid fire questions for you, starting off with, what's the most embarrassing moment you had at work?

Jim: I don't know, there's all kinds of them. But I would say embarrassing and fun at the same time was shaving my head. I actually was challenged by John Chambers, this was a number of years ago. He came and he was a speaker at one of our management or leadership off sites, and he was making a donation, [00:59:00] said, "I'll make this donation to this charitable organization that we were supporting, if Jim shaves his head." I'm like, "Oh, that's beautiful." I actually, the next company event that we had, I shaved my head in front of all of our employees.

Jacob: Oh man, that's great. I love that. If you were a superhero, who would you be?

Jim: Superman.

Jacob: What's a book that you recommend? Business or non business [00:59:30] book.

Jim: Wow, I've read so many. I'm actually reading one right now, Culture is the name of it. It, I thought, was very good. But I've looked at a few of yours Jacob, so I'm gonna be checking those out. So I'll give you some feedback on that too.

Jacob: Okay, very cool. If you were doing a different career, what do you think you would've ended up doing? I'm guessing I know the answer to this.

Jim: [01:00:00] If I could've played forever, I would love it if I was good enough and it doesn't work like this, but be a professional soccer player. If you could play soccer as long as you could play golf and actually do that successfully, that would have been pretty awesome.

Jacob: That's what I was gonna say. My dad is almost 70 and he still plays soccer, even though I try to tell him to stop.

Jim: Wow.

Jacob: Yeah.

Jim: Wow, that's impressive.

Jacob: He's playing with the 30 to 40 year olds out there.

Jim: [01:00:30] Holy cow, that's great. Good for him.

Jacob: Yeah. If you could have dinner with anybody, alive or dead, who would it be?

Jim: Right now, the pope and the Dali Lama.

Jacob: All right, and last couple for you. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

Jim: Wow, I don't know. Pebble Beach.

Jacob: Hey, there we go. Well hey, [01:01:00] you're in St. Louis, which is the Chess capital of the world and I actually saw you on YouTube with Maurice Ashley, I think it was in 2017. I'm a huge chess nut, I actually went to the St. Louis Chess Club when I was there. You're in a pretty good town.

Jim: Yes, yes.

Jacob: Last two questions for you, if you could get rid of one workplace practice, what would you get rid of?

Jim: One workplace practice. [01:01:30] Boy, I don't know, that's a tough question. I don't know, start and end time of the work day. I don't know. I don't have a good answer for that, sorry.

Jacob: No, no. That's a good one. If you could implement one workplace practice, what would you implement tomorrow?

Jim: [01:02:00] I'd say building cost effectively, just integrated into every business or place, and I know we don't have it perfectly here, is just how to stay healthy. How do you stay healthy, do it cost effectively, food, fitness, and you could scale that into all businesses, I think it could have an [01:02:30] incredible impact on just the life of people all over the world.

Jacob: Perfect, I love it. Well, that's a great way to wrap up. Well Jim, where can people go to learn more about you or World Wide Technology? I know you guys are hiring a lot, so maybe you can mention your careers page, in case people want to apply there. But anything you want to mention, please feel free to do so.

Jim: Yes. Anybody interested in World Wide, we have a careers website out there at [01:03:00] worldwidetechnology.com, please feel free to go out and check that out. We're looking for different people all over the world in different technology areas, sales, business development. Please feel free to do that. I don't have anything specific on myself out there, but I just want to say Jacob, to you and your audience, thanks for having me today. I really enjoyed the conversations, it causes me to think about different things that we can do and need to do even better than [01:03:30] what we're doing today. And again, thanks for the assessment on World Wide, if there's ever anything that you do from an assessment perspective, and I mean constructively, please send it my way because I'm always looking for real, honest, frank input on the business and how we're performing.

Jacob: Yeah, sounds good. Well hey, the next book is on the future of leadership, so I'm gonna be creating some assessments there for future fit leaders. So, I'll be in touch, I might

take [01:04:00] you up on that offer. But I know you're super busy, so thank you very much for taking time out of your day.

Jim: Thank you, I really enjoyed it.

Jacob: Yeah, likewise.

Jim: Nice talking.

Jacob: Thanks everyone for tuning into this week's episode of the podcast. My guest, again, has been Jeff ... Jeff. Jim Kavanaugh, the Co Founder and CEO of World Wide Technologies, I'll see all of you guys next week. And thanks again, Jim.

Jim: You're very welcome, my pleasure.