

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.

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**0:00:02 Jacob:** Hello, everyone, and welcome to another episode of The Future of Work podcast I have a very special guest today. She is a best-selling author, speaker, futurist. Her brand new book is called The Customer of the Future: Ten Guiding Principles for Winning Tomorrow's Business. And by the way, she's also my wife. And I know on the show, even though I talk a lot about the future of work, employee experience, and leadership, a lot of the listeners are also very interested in the customer experience side of things because there's a lot of connection and overlap between what happens inside of companies and what happens outside of companies with our customers. And so I figured why not interview one of the world's leading experts on this topic, and she has a brand new book that just came out. So Blake welcome to the show.

**0:00:50 Blake:** Hi, Jacob. Thank you for having me.

**0:00:52 Jacob:** Of course. And we're sitting here at home on our comfy couch with our two dogs next to us. So if you hear any dogs growling in the background, I apologize in advance. So obviously, I know you very well, but a lot of people listening to the podcast might not know your story. So why don't you let listeners know, How'd you get involved with this stuff? What's your background, your story?

**0:01:19 Blake:** Yeah, so I have had the pleasure of focusing on the topic of...

[background conversation]

**0:02:26 Jacob:** So Blake, just jump into your story.

**0:02:30 Blake:** Like most good things in life, I completely fell into the topic of customer experience by accident. I had moved to New York City because I felt that the world had good things in store for me other than living near my parents. And I moved there with big dreams of being a glamorous magazine editor. And soon I saw the print industry put the last nail in the coffin, and I realized the jobs in that industry really were drying up. And so I got recruited randomly, for my journalism skills, by a conference company. And I spent five years there, I spent a few years producing events. Which, it was funny because you'd give all this responsibility to a 21-year-old. So you'd go out and... You'd run an entire event by yourself at 21. So it was pretty shocking, in a good way, though. I started networking and doing influencer and social media engagement, even though nobody called it that because it was 2006. And a couple of years into that stint at the conference company, the chairman and I were kind of friendly. And he was kind of the silent partner, and he wanted to turn a conference company into a media company. He saw what was happening with digital content. And so I had this great chance to be a brand, which no one talked about at the time. But I was the online persona before that was really something that companies did. And I had a

podcast in 2009 called Customer Creation with Blake Landall before...

**0:04:04 Jacob:** Which people can still... I think if you...

**0:04:05 Blake:** It's still online.

**0:04:07 Jacob:** If you wanna hear Blake's podcast from over a decade ago, you can still Google it and find some funny things on there.

**0:04:12 Blake:** Yeah, and I have a lot of interviews still up online. And I met Jacob a few years later after I had been focusing on customer experience. And this was back when really this wasn't a hot topic. CRM was an exciting topic for maybe like 10 people who were interested in it, plus Zappos of course, the shoe company, the shoe e-commerce website. And I had all of this online content already. And I moved to San Francisco to be with Jacob and I took a bunch of terrible jobs, and really couldn't find my footing for a few years until I became a Customer Service Executive for a Fortune 100 software company for two years. Then I realized I hated working in the corporate world, and I wanted to just continue all the thought leadership I had been doing on the side full-time, focusing on my customer experience column on Forbes, my new podcast show, and really doing what Jacob did, which was focusing on being a speaker and a thought leader full-time. That was really my dream. Because I love content. I love being part of the conversation, I love selling and curating information products, that's what I do.

**0:05:31 Blake:** And now it's been about 12 years, and I really feel like this topic is so important. And I've enjoyed creating this new category of customer experience, and helping bring my message of customer centricity to people all over the world to help them understand that, "Hey, if you treat people well, if you make people's lives easier and better, they will always come back." And really the point is always about nurturing relationships and earning a place in someone's life by being helpful to them. That's really the premise of everything that I do, and even in my new book, *The Customer of the Future*.

**0:06:16 Jacob:** Very cool. And then what is it about customer experience that attracted you to this space?

**0:06:23 Blake:** I think I've always been kind of a sensitive young lady, caring about emotions, caring about relationships. And so that really transfers over nicely to the area of customer experience because it's all about how you make people feel, and what experience you're building for them. I think being a sensitive person, that I have freakish antenna radar on my head, invisible, and Jacob can attest to this. [chuckle] I'm really intuitive, I can often pick up on things in the room that other people won't see, and it comes from being introverted. I was a complete book worm my whole childhood, and watched a lot of documentaries. I'm just interested in being a listener and a watcher of the world. You won't find me being the loudest person at the party. I'll be someone in the corner watching or having a conversation with one or two people. And that's my personality, and I think it's transferred over nicely to studying human behavior and helping educate others on these nuances of building relationships, and making people feel good, and being thoughtful. And that's really the word of everything I do. I always believe that companies would benefit from hiring more thoughtful leaders because today we're competing on thoughtfulness. We're competing on the knowledge of how we can make our customers lives easier and better. Even with employee experience, we're competing on thoughtfulness.

**0:08:00 Blake:** Well, what are the experiences that employees who work here want to have? And how can we be a competitive and attractive company to these employees by being extremely considerate of what the modern employee wants?

**0:08:16 Jacob:** I know that one of the things that you always talk about is the difference between customer experience and customer service. And those are very popular terms that are thrown around a lot, oftentimes intermingled, interchanged with one another. So what is the difference between customer experience and customer service?

**0:08:35 Blake:** So when I started in this industry, and I really started focusing on it like five, six years ago, I was really frustrated because I found that so many customer service technology companies, they really wanted to own the topic of customer experience. So they would use it interchangeably with the phrase customer service, customer experience and customer service as if they were the same thing. And that really made no sense to me because I felt, "Well, service is what happens when a product breaks. But experience, now that can be shaped by your engineers of the product, who you hire, so much more than what happens after that product leaves a factory and lands into the hand of the customer." And so in my first book, I tried to set the record straight on, "Hey, customer experience is shaped by a lot more than simply your contact center. So hey, customer service industry people, stop using these phrases interchangeably. You're damaging this new and exciting category of experience, which involves many other groups." Often actually marketing owns this category. And that was really my goal, was to set the record straight on these two phrases and how different they actually were.

**0:09:45 Jacob:** When you look at the... I don't wanna say the history of customer experience. But it's clearly becoming a very big topic now. Are there any particular trends that are really forcing organizations to spend more time looking at customer experience now.

**0:10:00 Blake:** I would say the biggest trend is the whale of Amazon, is that com... Forever now companies are changed because customers have experiences with Amazon, with Spotify music listening, with Apple products, with Netflix. And you get these deliciously personalized, easy, seamless, zero friction customer experiences. And then you look at some of the most hated industries out there like insurance, cable, telecom. These organizations are just so slow, they're moving in a glacial pace to keep up with these trends. And that's really... Amazon has changed the game for everybody. But I think it was... Amazon, it was inevitable that one company would figure out all of these things. Because we all have all of the same technology, but not all of us are so obsessed with the experience as Jeff Bezos is at his company.

**0:11:00 Jacob:** You actually have a pretty interesting story in your book about Jeff that shows just how obsessed he is with customer experience. Can you share that story? Because it's one of my favorite ones, at least.

**0:11:13 Blake:** Yeah, so Jacob and I had the chance to go up to Amazon last fall. And we really wanted to see the magic behind this company. Like, What is their secret sauce? So we had this chance to peek behind the curtain. And what we found really shocked us, or at least shocked me. And what I discovered when I went to Amazon, I didn't discover magic bunnies being pulled out of hats, much to my disappointment. The most customer-centric company in the world, Amazon, clearly had really hard-working, humble people who were singularly focused on customer experience. And it was everywhere, it was in the language you'd see in the bathrooms on the walls, in the shipping department, the head of HR, contact center agent. No matter who you talked to,

everybody was drinking the Kool-Aid of customer experience. And that mindset piece is so rare, it rarely exists. And after a disappointing day of not seeing any magic, I went to dinner with Jacob, actually, and a friend of Jacob's, who he's known for way longer than me, and that is an employee at Amazon. And he told us this story of Jeff Bezos and a meeting Jeff was running around the holidays.

**0:12:29 Blake:** And Jeff had 30 executives in the room, and he really wanted to get a pulse on what was happening with customer service. Because everybody listening on this podcast knows that during the holidays call volume can go up in the contact center, you've got longer lines, you've got more transactions. And so Jeff had this meeting with 30 executives and one of the executives was the head of customer service. And we'll call him John. And Jeff asked John, he said, "Hey John, can you let me know how long does it take for a customer to reach an agent in the call center?" And John had that look on his face, like when your boss asks you for something and you really don't know the answer but you can't say no. So John says to Jeff. "Well, I think it's under a minute." Jeff looks at him, says, "Really? Okay, great. Let's see." Jeff takes out his phone, dials 1800 Amazon customer service, puts it on speaker, and sets it down on the table. And 30 executives sit around a room and they wait. One minute passes by, nobody picks up. They wait. Two minutes pass by, nobody picks up. They wait. Now after three minutes, the head of service, John, is looking clearly uncomfortable. His face at this point has turned a dark shade of beet red and he's sweating.

**0:14:00 Blake:** Everyone in the room is looking pretty uncomfortable as well. And Jeff is looking visibly angry. Four-and-a-half minutes pass by before someone picks up the phone and says, "Hello, this is Amazon Customer Service. How may I help you?" Jeff hangs up the phone. Not long after this meeting. The head of service resigns. So my question is, In what world does the most recognizable CEO in the world, literally the richest man in the world, care that much about something most CEOs would rather not care about, which is call center hold time? And that's what makes Amazon so special, it's that mindset. It's the thing that the CEO wakes up in the morning, he jumps out of bed excited to serve somebody. And every other employee is aligned with that mindset, and it's this free invisible thing. This is the secret sauce that companies do not have.

**0:15:01 Jacob:** How does the employee experience fit in with the customer experience? And we share a home office, we sit side by side. My most recent book's on employee experience, you have two books on customer experience. So we've talked about this quite a bit, and I know a lot of the listeners are very interested in how these two connect. So where's the connection point between what happens inside the company versus how those people treat customers?

**0:15:30 Blake:** Everyone listening to this podcast, including you, Jacob, have been served by someone who clearly doesn't wanna be there.

**0:15:36 Jacob:** Oh, yes.

**0:15:38 Blake:** Like an employee who just almost seems depressed, and you just feel sorry for them. You're like, "Gosh, what is going on? This job must really stink." And so, clearly we've all been served by people who are not happy in their jobs. I don't think people are that different. What they want in their jobs, and you can speak to this as well, Jacob, is they wanna feel safe at work, they wanna feel comfortable, they wanna have some agency over what they do, they want to be treated like an adult, they wanna be compensated fairly. And when you don't do these things, when you miss the boat on employee experience and you forget that how you make your employees feel has an absolute impact on your customer's experience of your brand, you are missing the first piece

in a customer experience strategy. And Jacob, I often share his research in my keynotes, about culture, technology, and physical space, and the research he did that correlated employee experience with profits. And I just feel like there's so much common sense missing in the business world. It's like free money. It's like if you just have common sense and you are smart and you make long-term investments, and you treat your people well, and you're a human being with a soul, and your company has a culture that has a soul, absolutely, you will be more profitable. And I'd love to talk to your audience about the Workday story, maybe you've heard.

**0:17:08 Jacob:** Yeah, yeah. That was actually a really cool story. I like that one.

**0:17:12 Blake:** So I like to tell this story. I met an executive, actually at a dinner thrown by my husband. Thanks, Jacob. And he is an HR executive at Workday. He told me the story of a salesperson who worked at the software company, and this guy could not sell that darn software. ERP systems are notoriously difficult to sell, they're replaced only every 10 years. And this guy could not sell this product to save his life. And his day went from bad to worse because he found out that his daughter was suffering from dwarfism. Which, if any of you have kids, when your kid is sick you know, there's nothing more upsetting. And to make it worse, the insurance offered by the company wasn't going to cover any of the medical attention that she needed to become a normal healthy toddler. So before quitting, 'cause he can't sell the software, and the insurance policy isn't good, he goes to HR. He sheepishly walks over and he says, "Hey guys, can I have an exception on this insurance policy? It would really mean a lot to me."

**0:18:16 Blake:** To his surprise, they grant it. He gets the insurance coverage for his daughter. This guy, this sales guy, is so grateful that he has a complete turn around. He starts selling everything. He becomes the highest grossing sales person at the company bringing in million dollar deals. And the company with his help, becomes a billion dollar software company that we know it is today. But what I love about this story is that the head of HR didn't even remember approving this policy change for this young man because it was just so normal to be a human being and do the right thing for the human beings that work for you. And I think most companies, they've become so procedure obsessed, so operations obsessed, so money obsessed that they completely miss the human element, they treat their employees like robots, which is ironic because we're all afraid of being replaced by robots. Well, most companies already treat their employees like robots and their employees treat customers like robots. So if you're listening to this or just the person that is not a robot, that has good values, that has integrity, your company has integrity, has a good culture, does the right thing when you can, you will... You are the company of the future, the book is called *The Customer of The Future*, the company of the future, has a soul, and has the culture to reflect that soul.

**0:19:47 Jacob:** And one of the reasons I like that story is because in a lot of organizations, if an employee doesn't meet their number, usually the first thing that happens is a manager, goes over to them and they have that talk with them. The performance talk of like, "Hey you're not meeting your numbers, you should meet them the next quarter".

**0:20:02 Blake:** I know, that talk [chuckle]..

**0:20:03 Jacob:** Yeah, and it's very much like, get the numbers up or you're not gonna be here very long, but it sounds like in this story, it wasn't just about that, it was more about "hey, what's going on?" It's understanding what's going on in the person's personal life that maybe is impacting their ability to sell and most companies never make that connection, they just see that if you're in sales, you're not closing your deals, but they don't ask Why is there something going on at home, is there,

some sort of a...

**0:20:32 Blake:** Yeah they don't care. They don't wanna know.

**0:20:33 Jacob:** Yeah, they don't care. Are you dealing with a tragedy? Are you going through a divorce? Do you have a sick kid? Are you...

**0:20:37 Blake:** Do you not have what you need to do your job.

**0:20:40 Jacob:** Yeah exactly.

**0:20:40 Blake:** Do you not have training or onboarding?

**0:20:41 Jacob:** Exactly they just purely look at the... You didn't meet the numbers, and your basic, the whole talk is meet the numbers next quarter or else.

**0:20:50 Blake:** But don't you think... I can imagine with the Fortunate 100 company I worked at, I can imagine my managers who one, I just didn't like at all, and I felt like he was kind of a robot. He had no EQ.

**0:21:02 Jacob:** He was a robot. I remember those... [chuckle] I remember some of the stories. I won't say anything. I won't say.

**0:21:06 Blake:** Alright, shh, don't expose me. But I can imagine him saying "Well I'm held to these standards. If I don't perform then I'll get fired. So why should I treat you any differently?"

**0:21:18 Jacob:** Yeah, yeah, that's the mentality that a lot of organizations have. And it's, I guess, to your earlier point, it does start at the top. If you as a senior leader, treat your employees like that, those employees will then treat their employees like that. And actually, for my new book that's coming out in January, one of the interesting things of research that I found is that when you have toxic leaders it spreads like a virus, so a toxic leader creates that toxic culture, but the flip side of that is also true is that when you have a good leader that also spreads like a virus, a good virus. So it really does start with the leaders inside your company and the mentality and approach that they have and if they're purely just focused on numbers and profits, then that's what everybody else is gonna be focusing on to the detriment of creating that kind of a human company.

**0:22:10 Blake:** I think the problem is that the fear-based culture it can... It works like people will do anything when they're afraid, but what are you missing out on what could be if you didn't live with fear, if you didn't lead in a punishment-based organization? But more about inspiration, here's what is possible, here's the vision, here's your role in the vision, and I'm sure you can speak 'cause you did all those interviews, but to me it's actually more powerful to be positive, but it's harder because I think it's easy as a human being to succumb to negativity, I think most of us are wired for negativity.

**0:22:44 Jacob:** It's easier to be negative I agree.

**0:22:46 Blake:** It's much easier, it's much harder to be a leader, but what I tell my audiences today in my speech for my book is that, "Today, we're living in a really complicated times," and I write about this in my book. And employees are going through complicated times... And we've seen these

different cultural waves and movements and the "Me too." It's really changed people's experience at work, and I think that today's environment, economic, environmental, political requires transformational leadership. And you're not gonna get that by chance. We've gotta spend more time hiring and developing really strong leaders with the values and the integrity that are aligned with the company. Not just leave it up to chance.

**0:23:31 Jacob:** Yeah, you need to have more purpose in how these things are done. And one of the other interesting things and I talk about this as well, when I look at employee experience are this concept of moments that matter and understanding the important moments in the lives of your employees, and I was hoping you could share your story because I think there are two specific moments that everybody can relate to. So first is your first day on the job. That's a very impactful moment that matters for everybody. Another one might be, when you have your first child when you get married, when you get your first promotion but in your case, you had a pretty impactful employee experience on your last day at your previous company, which... And I actually couldn't believe that story, when you told me. So can you share that story too because I think people will get a kick out of that.

**0:24:19 Blake:** I'll never forget it. I had spent two years at this company... Jacob has heard me talk about this a million times, when I was hired I loved my boss. She was like a mama bear, she took care of us. It was like a very typical male-dominated software company that was started in the '60s. Like very old culture.

**0:24:40 Jacob:** Some people might be able to figure out who the company is now software company...

**0:24:44 Blake:** Please go on my LinkedIn, eventually I might get sued but I'm willing to take that chance.

**0:24:47 Jacob:** I don't think that will happen.

**0:24:49 Blake:** Anyway and I just adored this boss. I really felt, she was quirky, but I just felt like she really cared about me. I remember one day I was so stressed out because I was new, and it's just my personality to try really hard and she was like, "Blake you need to breathe, you're not breathing". I mean, that's not something a boss would normally say to their employee. They just ignore them, like, "Wow, Barbara is weird." But anyway... But unfortunately, after a while, she was demoted, and they had this younger dude to replace her and take over the customer service team.

**0:25:24 Jacob:** And we were literally... I remember when it happened. So we were getting on a flight to Prague...

**0:25:28 Blake:** I was, yeah, 'cause she let me do a speech about my work with you.

**0:25:32 Jacob:** Yeah. So we were literally getting on a flight to Prague. We were both speaking at a conference there. And we literally... We just walked on to the plane, and we were about to find our seats. You were carrying our suitcases. And all of a sudden, Blake gets this phone call. And I remember you started crying right after you found out.

**0:25:49 Blake:** Yeah, because I knew what was gonna happen. I already knew. Like I told you guys, I'm very intuitive. I saw it all happening before my eyes. And it did happen. I wasn't a popular

person there. I worked remotely. I was like a social media influencer, so of course, everyone probably just thought I was full of myself and just into self-promotion. And I remember I would look on LinkedIn, and the general manager of the company was constantly looking at my LinkedIn profile, which is not... That's not a great tool. If you're already paranoid, don't use that tool [chuckle] I remember he was constantly looking at my LinkedIn presence, and I'm like, "Why is this guy doing this?" But I think they had a plan. At big companies, they always go through this very carefully orchestrated long process to get you out. First, they have to warn you, and then you get maybe a second warning... It's like a... But it's all carefully orchestrated. If they want you out, you're out. But in order to not get sued, they'll go through a three-month process.

**0:26:48 Jacob:** Yeah.

**0:26:48 Blake:** But yeah, so he eventually... I was laid off, and then there were a lot of gaps.

**0:26:52 Jacob:** And so the story was, yeah, when we were on the flight, you found out that your... The manager that you loved was being replaced by somebody who I guess had a reputation of not being that kind of warm human leader.

**0:27:03 Blake:** Well, I had already worked with him. He was an employee on the team, and he...

**0:27:07 Jacob:** I guess you knew that's how he was.

**0:27:07 Blake:** I already knew him, and I knew he wasn't gonna be good. And it was already... It was odd for me to be on the team. I was an odd-ball. As I said, I didn't have the technical training. I was a social media influencer who talked about being customer-centric. But I think I might have been a bad hire for this particular group 'cause they weren't even ready for me. I was a change agent, and they didn't want change. But long story short, she was demoted.

**0:27:36 Jacob:** Well, I also find... Before you move on, is that at the same company on the same team, there was one person that a lot of people loved and another person that a lot of people wanted to stay away from. And they both got to that position. They both got promoted by somebody. So, I always find that to be really, really interesting.

**0:27:50 Blake:** Well, I think some people did like him. The people he already worked with and he protected and he had their backs... It was a lot of guys, to be honest. They were... I think they were excited 'cause this person they were already had... They were some particle with, he was getting promoted, which meant they would do well. I mean, it was complete. It wasn't about innovation. I mean, this is the problem with these big, old companies. It's not about innovation, it's about survival. It's about hierarchy. Anyway, long story short, let's fast forward to the day of my exit interview. I go to Silicon Valley to turn in my laptop. My boss can't be there to say goodbye to me, of course. And he...

**0:28:32 Jacob:** This was the new boss, the guy.

**0:28:33 Blake:** Yeah, he couldn't be there, he lived out of state. And he had another manager do the exit interview. You know, where you signed the paperwork, you hand over your badge and your laptop. She was literally running a meeting, consecutively, during this exit interview. So she literally didn't talk to me or look me in the eye. She just had me sign some things as she led a team meeting on her laptop in the lobby of this corporation. And it was just the most inhumane,

disgusting... Like we wanted...

**0:29:04 Jacob:** She didn't ask you anything? She didn't?

**0:29:05 Blake:** No. Like you just wanna take a shower after you're like, "Uh." It was so dehumanizing. And I just can't believe that people treat other people like this. And I did write about this experience in my book, although everybody's anonymous. But it's just... It's really a shame to see these companies go through this because I don't believe they're gonna ever achieve the innovation they once had. And this is why, because this kind of nonsense happens every single day inside these big companies.

**0:29:37 Jacob:** Yeah. And, I mean, even if your last day or the way that they laid you off, it would have been a good experience. Maybe you would have even considered going back in the future. If it would have been... If they treated you well, they treated you with respect, they said, "We're sorry it didn't work out. Maybe there are future opportunities. This wasn't just the right hire." If they were human about it, who knows what would have turned out. And I think it's true for a lot of employees when they quit or they get fired. And I hear plenty of stories, especially here in the Bay Area, companies like Cisco or LinkedIn, where employees leave to go work somewhere else. And then after they worked for another company, they realize how good they had it at the previous company and they actually wanna go back because that's how well they were treated, even on their last day. But it sounds like in a lot of companies, once they know you're out the door, it's sort of like, "You're dead to me. You just get out and don't come back."

**0:30:30 Blake:** Yeah. My first job was at a company that had a notoriously terrible culture, but I always landed with good bosses. And they protected me. It wasn't... I wouldn't say it was the best culture, but I was so happy there. I really thrived, and it was because... I remember my first boss. Our daughter has the same name as her [laughter] It was sort of coincidence, but you'll never forget your first job, your first boss. I remember we went to San Diego to run some events, and she really made me feel like an adult. And she was a bit of a friend and a mentor. She was someone who was so much more mature for her age and so confident. I didn't have any confidence. I didn't know what I was doing. But I survived. I even thrived there. Now they tell stories about me to the new employees. They say...

**0:31:25 Jacob:** Sing songs about you. You're the legend. You're like a...

**0:31:28 Blake:** Don't make fun of me. I'm proud of this. They say, "This is what you can become," because it's a very difficult job. I wouldn't say it's easy. It's a lot of mundane work, and it's difficult, but they say, "This is what you can become. You can become... "

**0:31:42 Jacob:** You're the alumni, you're the success story.

**0:31:44 Blake:** Yeah. And it's not... It wasn't a great culture, it was because of my bosses. And I think the manager, that's really where the culture sits often. It's with that manager in the middle of the company.

**0:31:53 Jacob:** Yeah. And part of it is also acknowledging that even if your employees are young... A lot of younger employees are becoming leaders and managers in companies. And they're...

**0:32:02 Blake:** She was super young, and she managed the older people.

**0:32:05 Jacob:** A lot of people in their early mid-20s are becoming leaders inside of organizations. And what I found out from my upcoming book is that the average age for somebody to get into a leadership program is, guess how old.

**0:32:17 Blake:** To get into a leadership program?

**0:32:18 Jacob:** Yeah. What's the average age for people to start a leadership training or development program?

**0:32:24 Blake:** My God, maybe 40.

**0:32:25 Jacob:** Yeah. Mid-40s. So you can imagine you are a leader in your maybe mid-20s, and you literally go for 15, maybe 20 years, before you even get taught how to lead properly, before you get into any of these types of programs, which is completely mind-boggling. And I think...

**0:32:46 Blake:** That's probably why the cultures are so bad too.

**0:32:47 Jacob:** Yeah. That's why the cultures are so bad. And so I think that's a great lesson that if you have leaders out there, I mean, start these programs young.

**0:32:55 Blake:** And you can tell as a customer, you can tell when you walk into an organization and they treat you all... My favorite example is a hospital, because you're very vulnerable and so things soak into your... Emotionally, you soak everything up. I remember when we had our first daughter and I was very, very nervous the day you took me to deliver.

**0:33:13 Jacob:** You were nervous. I don't think I felt.

**0:33:15 Blake:** I didn't care about what's going on with you. I was barely... I was just scared. And I just remember this nurse, and she was so warm, so professional. "I'm gonna take care of you." This is someone who liked her job, felt pride in her work. We ran into her months later after I had my daughter.

**0:33:31 Jacob:** I remember.

**0:33:31 Blake:** And we just took a picture with her and gave her the biggest hug. Jacob, you talk about these moments that matter. Why is it that we leave the training up to chance? It's ridiculous. If we would just invest in training, customers would come back, tell their friends. In fact, that delivery story... I know you love when I talk about all these gross stuff.

**0:33:53 Jacob:** Oh, it's my favorite, my favorite topic.

**0:33:55 Blake:** But it was kind of a disaster. If you ask any woman, how was your labor and delivery? No one's ever gonna say to you, "It was pretty easy actually." If it's someone who's had a second child, they'll say, "Oh, it's so much easier." But it's usually fraught with complications, stressful. But I actually wrote a glowing article about this company in Forbes because they... We had issues, but they fixed them. The manager came over, shook our hand, "Thank you for your feedback."

**0:34:22 Jacob:** I remember that when we were leaving. He personally came and talked to you.

**0:34:23 Blake:** And that meant so much to me. Even though it was a complete disaster, I wrote this beautiful article about them because I just appreciated the effort so much, the willingness to care.

**0:34:33 Jacob:** Yeah, they were really interested in your feedback. He gave you his email. I remember all that sort of stuff. Yeah, it was good.

**0:34:38 Blake:** He didn't even know who I was. He didn't know I had a Forbes column and that he was going to end up being in it.

**0:34:42 Jacob:** No. No. No, he had no idea.

**0:34:43 Blake:** Different than United Airlines [laughter]

**0:34:45 Jacob:** Yes.

**0:34:46 Blake:** They don't care if you're who you are, they'll treat you like... Anyway.

**0:34:51 Jacob:** Well no, that's actually an interesting story. I don't know if you wanna share. Do you wanna share your recent United Airlines story?

**0:34:56 Blake:** Oh man.

**0:34:57 Jacob:** You don't have to.

**0:34:57 Blake:** I can. I am pregnant. We're not really... When are you gonna release this podcast?

**0:35:03 Jacob:** In a couple of days.

**0:35:05 Blake:** Yeah, I'm pregnant. I'm still... Yeah, it's probably too early to talk about it.

**0:35:09 Jacob:** See, this is what you get for listening to this show. You get all sorts of interesting details. So baby number two on the way.

**0:35:13 Blake:** Baby number two is coming, and I went to London in my first trimester, which was stressful. I'm not gonna lie, I felt really sick. And on the way back, I had a connection, which was London to Germany, Germany-home, San Francisco. And my first flight was delayed, and I was very worried that I wasn't going to get to my second flight. And they promised me, "Oh, we're gonna take care of you." This was Lufthansa, the partner airline. "We're gonna take care of you. We're gonna have someone meet you on the tarmac. We're gonna make sure you're fine." They never showed up. Nobody made sure I was fine. Of course, they had all promised me, United and Lufthansa, that I wouldn't be late. I was late.

**0:35:52 Jacob:** And you were getting the text messages. The...

**0:35:55 Blake:** I was DMing on Twitter with the social media team, saying... Telling them, "I'm coming, please hold the plane."

**0:36:02 Jacob:** But didn't you also get text messages from United that said you'd still make your flight? I remember you texted me a screenshot.

**0:36:06 Blake:** It wasn't a text, it was a direct message on Twitter. Because actually, if you social... Their social media team on Twitter is very quick. But of course...

**0:36:14 Jacob:** Yeah. So I think you got an automated message from the United Airlines' system that also said you'll still make your flight or something like that.

**0:36:20 Blake:** No, it wasn't automated, it was a person.

**0:36:21 Jacob:** It was actually a human that told you that.

**0:36:22 Blake:** Yeah, because he told me. They know how long it takes to get across the airport.

**0:36:26 Jacob:** Oh, wow. Okay. It's even worse than I believed.

**0:36:26 Blake:** But when I finally got to Frankfurt, I was on a tarmac, on a bus, having to wait. I had 15 minutes before take-off of my next flight, waiting for the entire plane to unload. And I had to run through, I had to go through customs again. I had to run across the airport. Meanwhile, I'm pregnant and I feel like absolute garbage. I finally get to United gate agent, I am the last person to load. The first... I am so upset. I am almost in tears. I am out of breath, I can hardly breathe. She's like, "Oh, don't worry. Calm down." The first one, very nice. "Calm down. You're here, you're okay." And I had a business class seat, which is the only way I would do this damn job, is flying business class because it's hard being pregnant. Anyway, you can imagine. And I've earned it, everybody. I've earned it, I've put in my time doing terrible things.

**0:37:19 Jacob:** That's hundreds of thousands of miles a year traveling. Yeah, business classes.

**0:37:22 Blake:** Well, let's not exaggerate, not hundreds, over my life anyway. The second guy has that look on his face, like, "Oh oh, no, you don't." He says, "No, sorry, you're very late, and we've given your seat away in business class." And I said, "What?" I was shocked, like, "How could you do that?" And he said to me, "Do you wanna get on this flight at all or not?" I was so upset and I just wanted to get home to... I had promised my daughter I would be home, my three-year-old. And I didn't wanna stay overnight in Germany. I wanted to go home. And they put me in coach.

**0:38:00 Jacob:** Well, I remember you called me, and then I called some... I'm a Global Services member with United Airlines, and I call... And Global Services is their highest tier status. So I called United Airlines, the Global Service, and first... They told me a couple of things. First, they said nothing that they can do will override what happens at the ground, at the airport there. And then an agent told me that sometimes they're allowed to make exceptions, but they're not allowed to do it too often because the person who does it might get fired, because they can't have a business class seat flying without having anybody in it. So that sometimes they make exceptions, but if they do it too many times they get reprimanded for it. Which I thought was complete... That's completely insane. So you can imagine the full story. Here's this pregnant woman running across the airport, she's being told she's gonna make it to the flight, everything's gonna be fine, and she gets there only to find out that they gave away the seat and not only did they give away the seat, they put you in coach and then they wouldn't even give you food.

**0:39:13 Blake:** Yeah, I didn't bring any food with me and any of you ladies who have had a baby or men who've watched someone have a baby, it's physically, really hard, I feel sick a lot. And the only thing that stops you from feeling sick is eating. It's gonna happen when I'm eating or sleeping. And I didn't bring any food, but I told them in coach, I said "No, I didn't bring any food, and I unfortunately have to eat a lot of snacks and things like, "Can I have my business class food?", Which everyone knows is much better. And she was very rude and said "No," and was just oddly rude, she was very disrespectful to me. Like, you're nobody. Have you ever been treated by a flight attendant like you're nobody, you know what I'm talking about, and...

**0:39:53 Jacob:** Yeah, it's not a very human experience. If they would have practiced a little bit of empathy, if they would have...

**0:39:58 Blake:** Oh, there was no empathy, zero.

**0:40:00 Jacob:** If they would have been communicating with each other. Probably what makes it worse is that they promised you that you would be fine, only for you to get there to find out that you're not fine.

**0:40:08 Blake:** Right. And here's the customer experience lesson aside from the culture at United which to me is very, very toxic. And I told my friend who's a famous customer service speaker, the story he's like, "Well you know, United doesn't beat its competitors, they beat their customers." And I couldn't help but laugh. It's such a shame though, because I like United, I want them to be successful, but they have so zero willingness to change the culture. But the lesson is, I had been communicating on Twitter with the agent, and after each dialogue back and forth on Twitter, on direct message, they would say, "Are you satisfied?" Net promoters go, "Were you satisfied with this interaction?" And I wrote them a message back like, "Guys, this is not the spirit of customer experience." The customer doesn't care how fast you answered on Twitter, they wanna know that their issue are solved. And so that was one of the lessons, this company... That's short sighted, that's your head in the sand. That is... Can I check my box, please? Can I just check my box? It's all I want, Can I check my box?

**0:41:17 Blake:** Meanwhile, I'm gonna write about this in Forbes, this story will forever live with me. And they might check their box but the minute I can switch to something better, I absolutely will.

**0:41:29 Jacob:** Yeah, it's good to practice a little bit of empathy. And like you said, we're both on United Airlines, we both want them to do well, but. Let's be honest. And I'm sure everybody listening to this have their own fair share of horror stories and things, and I'll probably get some emails from folks. I don't wanna make this into a bash United Airlines, because I'm sure people had bad experiences in all sorts of airlines. It's just one of those things where I think the airline industry is one that can do well to have more human leaders to practice a little bit more empathy, to improve the communication between team members, to create that better experience because flying is stressful, it can be tough, it can be upsetting, and it just seems like a human element is totally missing. So if you're listening to this and you're in the airline industry, hopefully there are things that you can start to do to create a little bit more of a human company. So I wanted to shift gears a little bit. Your book talks about these 10 guiding principles, and we probably won't get into all 10 of them in detail, but maybe we could just go through what these 10 are, and you can give a sentence or two about each one. Do you remember all 10?

**0:42:42 Blake:** Mm-hmm.

**0:42:43 Jacob:** You do?

**0:42:43 Blake:** Of course. Yeah, I've been doing these interviews...

**0:42:45 Jacob:** Well, that's impressive.

**0:42:46 Blake:** And speeches, Jacob. Have some faith.

[chuckle]

**0:42:47 Jacob:** That's crazy that you remember. I'm gonna test you, I have your book open right here.

**0:42:51 Blake:** Do you want me to do it in the three buckets? Which is easier for people to understand, the three buckets, the topics?

**0:42:56 Jacob:** It's up to you, you can either do the 10 principles, maybe just do the 10 principles because they're specific and people would relate to them.

**0:43:04 Blake:** Okay.

**0:43:05 Jacob:** And just a sentence about each one of those.

**0:43:07 Blake:** They might be out of order because I remember them in three buckets now for my speech.

[chuckle]

**0:43:11 Jacob:** That's fine, I can read them here.

**0:43:12 Blake:** No, no, I have most of them. The first are easy, this is my trip to Amazon. Because actually, I originally was gonna write a book about technology 'cause I thought technology is everything. Spotify, Netflix, Amazon, Apple, look at all these technology companies, these are the experiences we want. But then I went up to Amazon and I didn't find my secret sauce, and I thought, "Oh my God, it's mindset. That's what these companies can't get". So the first chapter is on what is a customer experience mindset? And it's just an attitude, it's that jumping out of bed in the morning excited to serve someone else. The second piece is culture. So what does it mean to have a customer-centric culture? And there, I talk about employee experience and the links between the two disciplines. The third chapter is on leadership development, because what I found is that companies make this huge mistake which is hiring a Chief Customer Officer and saying, "Okay, done, nailed customer experience", but it's ridiculous to think one person can change your company or even one CEO who set to turn around the company. No, it's not going to happen.

**0:44:28 Blake:** It's hiring leaders and managers, and then developing them into being employee and customer-centric, that is really the missing link. And then we get into the technology chapters, which are... I've helped to shape this category of customer experience, and I've written a lot about customer experience technology, which is a whole category now that's worth billions and billions of

dollars, and there you'll find information about cognitive computing technologies and AI, and robotic process automation. In these chapters you do get a little technical and specific. But I couldn't write this book without providing that because I felt that readers deserved it. And then we talk about digital transformation. I know I'm mixing my chapters up but you're not...

**0:45:16 Jacob:** But digital transformation is also actually a big one. A lot of people I know listening to this are interested in digital transformation as well.

**0:45:23 Blake:** Yeah, 85% of executives believe they have two years or less to make significant inroads in digital transformation before being left behind by competitors, and that's from IDC. So clearly... And every time I go to give a speech, I ask the audience, "How many of you are doing digital transformation? How many are done, and how many are doing nothing?"

**0:45:43 Jacob:** What is that by the way, how would you explain digital transformation to somebody?

**0:45:47 Blake:** Solving traditional problems with technology.

**0:45:49 Jacob:** That's pretty simple.

**0:45:50 Blake:** But clearly it's a strategy, it's not just that, I think it means something different for every company, but without fail when I ask my audiences, "How many of you are doing nothing?" Like a third of the room has told me they're doing nothing. And so it's really a shame because if we wanna provide better employee experiences of customer experiences, we have to start thinking about long-term technology investments.

**0:46:12 Jacob:** Totally agree. Okay, go into the next.

**0:46:16 Blake:** And so we also in the book talk at length about analytics, about this new area of forward-looking analytics, because now with machine learning and AI. In the past, we'd look at what happened in back of us and say, "Well, here's what happened, and here's how that can inform the future". But now we can use machine learning and AI to predict what could happen in the future. And that is huge implications for not just marketing, but so many areas of our business. I also talk about customer... I'm totally mixing up my chapters. Sorry honey, but you're my husband so you'll just definitely...

**0:46:49 Jacob:** They don't need to go in order.

**0:46:51 Blake:** We also talk about marketing. There's a great quote from Ann Henley that, "What would your marketing look like if your customers signed your paycheck? And I think that's how marketers need to think today. So in the book we look at some of the biggest trends, not just with customer-focused marketing, but media consumption habits of young people, of how young people want companies that have an environmental soul that care about the political and environmental decisions they are making. Because the Edelman trust barometer actually... I'm rambling a little bit, but the Edelman Trust Barometer actually shows that employees are now looking to their employers to take a social and political stance. The trust in the government is at all-time low. So what does that mean for how you talk to your employees? What does that mean for your customer marketing? And so now it's like nothing you do is in a vacuum. Everything you do is public, this new level of transparency has huge implications for how you communicate, how you make decisions. And

marketing... In some of these chapters there is a little bit of everything, so it's hard to boil it down to one area. But the theme throughout the book is just this customer focus. So no matter if it's... I'm talking about a technology strategy, or an analytic strategy, or personalization which I get into later, it's all singularly focused on customer experience.

**0:48:21 Jacob:** What is it that you think... And those were all the 10 principles.

**0:48:24 Blake:** And ethics. We forgot, designing a code of ethics.

**0:48:26 Jacob:** No, ethics and data privacy.

**0:48:28 Blake:** And data privacy.

**0:48:29 Jacob:** Do you wanna talk about that one really quick?

**0:48:31 Blake:** Well, my identity was stolen.

**0:48:33 Jacob:** Oh yeah.

**0:48:34 Blake:** And I used to think that the world was a fair and balanced place until that happened, and I realize...

**0:48:39 Jacob:** I remember the website and I was like, "Hey, I didn't know you were in the cryptocurrency game?"

**0:48:44 Blake:** Right. It was a Bitcoin website, and that was when I had this epiphany that, "Wow, it really is the wild wild west of the Internet still." Because we found this website, they put me up there as an employee with my real name. Pretty took a goal for them. They put up a Facebook page with my Instagram photos and like fake...

**0:49:04 Jacob:** Wait, they created a fake Facebook page?

**0:49:05 Blake:** Yeah. Fake quotes about me, showing me living my best life as an employee of this company. And I sent a message to them on Chat and they laughed at me. "Haha, there's nothing you can do." And they were right, and for months, there was nothing I could do until Jacob's little brother who's actually pretty smart said, "Hey Blake. I looked them up, their host provider is in California." I think they were in England or India, but the host was in California, and so that was how I got it taken down. But it took months and people were contacting me, "Hey, Blake, I got scanned by this company. Looks like you work there". It was just so upsetting, and it was a reminder that it's a very vulnerable position to be in as a customer when your data is stolen with AI, machine learning everything is moving very quickly. Most of us are signing terms and conditions without ever reading them, most of us are extremely uncomfortable with our data being auto-collected which it is. So as a company, how are we being thoughtful about protecting the customer, even from their own naivety?

**0:50:11 Jacob:** I love that story about how your data was stolen. I remember when you were talking to the guy in Chat support, and he was basically like, "Haha, see what you can do. There's nothing you can do, you're gonna be fine."

**0:50:22 Blake:** Yeah.

**0:50:22 Jacob:** Or we're gonna be fine. So it really kind of a goal of some people that... They know what they're doing, and they're doing it anyway. But thankfully we were able to get it taken care of. Well, we have a couple minutes left, and before I get into some rapid fire questions for you, maybe you can share, what is it that the employee experience side can learn from customer experience? And even vice versa, what can these two different functions learn from each other? Because they represent different areas of the company. One is the internal, one is the external. But at the same time, one can't exist without the other. They're like the ying and yang. So what can we learn from each other in this space?

**0:51:01 Blake:** We're all curators designing experiences for other people. And so the way to be a good experience designer is to really know who you are designing an experience for and what that individual wants. And it requires extra effort. In all of a certain relationships in our own lives we know what it means to give and nurture relationship, or when we're being sloppy. And if we want to attract people to us, whether they are employees or customers, today requires being extremely thoughtful, not leaving it up to chance. And we have all of these amazing tools that help us in that pursuit of designing delicious experiences for other people, that they actually want. And that make them wanna be around us. And so it's really this theme of earning your keep every single day, not taking it for granted. And that's really how as a employer or as a business trying to make money, you're not ever gonna make money or attract really smart employees by accident. They're not...

**0:52:06 Blake:** People are very selfish, and they have choice. And so whenever you have choice, you have to be better, you have to give more, you have to be smarter, and be more thoughtful about how you create an experience for someone else. And that experience is a competitive advantage because no matter if it's at work or as a customer, today people value experiences over things, access over ownership, and that is huge implications for our businesses because when you have all these people who have the luxury of choice, then you better be good or else you're not gonna attract anybody.

**0:52:42 Jacob:** So if you're working in the employee experience space, what is maybe one or two things that we can learn from those who work in the customer experience space?

**0:52:52 Blake:** I like to talk about Capital One. They are really a company I write about in my book that understand the value of this culture of kindness. And they actually treat their call center agents with respect like the Ritz-Carlton, they give employees money to be able to actually do things for customers when customers are going through hard times. And so you're getting these stories out of Capital One that are unbelievable. Like a call center agent who recognize the customer's having a really bad day and sends her on a tropical vacation. And then the agent and the customer end up on The Ellen Show, and millions of people see the story all over the world. That is not an accident, it's an operationalized culture of kindness that comes out of this young bank, Capital One that's only 30-something years old.

**0:53:42 Blake:** And so the point is, these things are not accidents, being a successful business today takes hard work, but if you're just the one who has common sense, if you have integrity, if you have fair business practices, I believe that you can make it based on these old principles of integrity, of a commitment to being better. Jeff Bezos recently said, "I believe that one day Amazon will fail. Amazon will go bankrupt." And that's this humility, this awareness of... His company's own mortality. Like even Amazon could disappear overnight. That keeps him humble. And earning our

keep every single day, no matter if it's in our relationships with our family, with our employees, with our customers, it's that humility. All of this could just go away. So every single day we need to try our best and commit to our originally established own vision and not let it lose its luster over time.

**0:54:47 Jacob:** So are you saying that customer experience people have more humility and vulnerability than employee experience people?

**0:54:53 Blake:** No.

**0:54:55 Jacob:** So from all of that, how would you boil that down into what can the employee experience people learn from customer experience people?

**0:55:03 Blake:** I think you are in service to your people, your employees are your customers, you work in customer service every day. Often people joke that HR, they're really just your lawyers who protect you from being sued. Don't be the company that is notorious for having an HR that just protects the company. You really need to make sure that you have human resources for the humans that work for you. And so don't forget that you are also in the business of serving customers, but those customers work inside the walls of your company.

**0:55:36 Jacob:** I think that's a good point. And you heard it, Blake is not saying that customer experience people are more...

**0:55:42 Blake:** No, I'm not.

**0:55:44 Jacob:** We all have humility and vulnerability in the experience space. Well, to wrap up, I have a couple of rapid fire questions for you. So what has been your greatest failure?

[chuckle]

**0:55:55 Blake:** My greatest failure...

**0:55:56 Jacob:** You had to know these were coming. I know you've listened to an episode of my podcast before. So what's your greatest failure?

**0:56:03 Blake:** I just say this, but I think my greatest failure was spending so much of my youth not liking myself, and being really hard on myself, and trying to impress other people. I wish I would have just spent less time beating myself up and embracing how quirky and sensitive I was, and not ever trying to grow up fast. I wish as a young woman, I would have like myself more as I do now that I'm 35.

**0:56:33 Jacob:** What's your most embarrassing moment?

**0:56:36 Blake:** I don't wanna draw into the childhood, like am I...

**0:56:39 Jacob:** No not childhood, like a grown, maybe a work memory, most embarrassing thing that happen to your work, if you have one?

**0:56:46 Blake:** Yeah, honestly, I used to be extremely insecure and uncomfortable in small groups.

So I think I've probably exposed how introverted I am by looking like I wanted to cry when people have called on me in meetings. Many years ago, those are painful memories I wish I could erase from my brain.

**0:57:10 Jacob:** What are you most proud of? Work-wise.

**0:57:14 Blake:** Work-wise. I am so proud. I'm actually so proud to be a speaker, because every single time I get on the stage I face my fear of speaking in front of people. And I have faked it for so long, but now I actually... Even I walked off a stage last week and people said, "Oh my God, I loved your stories and I... Really, the clients were happy, and I just felt like... I got a speaking coach, I worked really hard on this, and I'm really proud of how much I faced my fear. It has not been easy as you know.

**0:57:50 Jacob:** Oh I know. Most people say that they would rather face death than speaking on stage. So it's definitely something that requires a lot of work. And yes, you've been working on it quite a bit. What's been the hardest business decision you've ever had to make?

**0:58:07 Blake:** The hardest business decision I've ever had to make was quitting a... I think probably quitting jobs, quitting a non-profit where I felt like I was being bullied by the boss, and not having anything else to look toward and being... Unemployment, having to go on unemployment multiple times. There were a few years where I just... I didn't know what I was gonna do was completely by faith.

**0:58:32 Jacob:** I remember, and even our coming to San Francisco from New York was a little bit of a leap of faith as well. Last two questions for you. Who's the best mentor you've ever had?

**0:58:43 Blake:** Best mentor, probably you. [chuckle] You've taught me so much about just being a bit... Having this business.

**0:58:54 Jacob:** But I'm not easy. I'm pretty hard.

**0:58:58 Blake:** I don't think either of us are easy.

**0:59:00 Jacob:** You probably have some...

**0:59:00 Blake:** So it kinda works.

**0:59:01 Jacob:** Okay. Yeah, hey I'll take it, I'll take any praise I can get. Well, thank you for that. And maybe last question for you. If you were doing a different career, what do you think you would have ended up doing and why?

**0:59:12 Blake:** I love to bake and cook. I think it would have been fun. You always say, "Oh, let's open a bakery." I also love... I can do so many things.

**0:59:19 Jacob:** Well, I want you to open a bakery. I just wanna eat there.

**0:59:22 Blake:** I love dog, I love working with dogs. I think I would have been a great dog lady. I don't even know how that would translate...

**0:59:30 Jacob:** There's two dogs they're passed out next to us, two yoki rescues, one is sprawled on the couch and the another one's curled up in a little ball. Alright, so dog lady, whatever that is. It seems like it has a lot of income potential, which would have been very good for us with a family or a baker. Well, Blake where can people go to learn more about you, your book, where can they buy this magnificent book that literally just came out? It's brand new. Anything that you wanna mention, please feel free to do so.

**1:00:03 Blake:** Yeah, I would love for your listeners to find me at [blakemichellemorgan.com](http://blakemichellemorgan.com) or look up my book on Amazon, "The Customer of the Future". And would really love to hear from any of you. My email, you can send me email [blake@blakemichellemorgan.com](mailto:blake@blakemichellemorgan.com).

**1:00:20 Jacob:** Well, thank you for being a wonderful guest, and I love you very much.

**1:00:25 Blake:** Thanks honey. Thanks for this promotion opportunity, I love you too.

**1:00:29 Jacob:** There we go. Well, thanks everyone for tuning in. This has been another episode of the Future Work podcast. My guest again, has been my wife, Blake Morgan. Make sure to check out her book, it's called "The Customer of the Future" available wherever books are sold. And you can also just Google her or go to her website [blakemichellemorgan@gmail.com](mailto:blakemichellemorgan@gmail.com). I'll see all of you next week.