

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 02:56

Hello everyone, thank you for joining me today. My guest is Doug DeVos, the former CEO and current chairman at Amway. Doug, thank you for joining me.

Doug 03:07

Jacob great to join you again, my friend. Good to see you.

Jacob 03:11

Yes. So a lot of people don't realize that Doug was actually a guest. I think it was 2016. And we were talking a lot about entrepreneurship back then. So it's been for four years and some change.

Doug 03:28

Time flies when you're having fun, doesn't it?

Jacob 03:30

Yeah, it does, for sure. So I'm actually curious, what have you been up to since then? I mean, when we spoke, I think you were still the seat, and you left at the end of 2018. So since then, how have things been going? What have you been up to?

Doug 03:45

Wow, you know, life goes on. So my wife and I have four kids that are getting to be adults now. So you add a wedding, a couple weddings since then, and, you know, life moves on, you know, still staying close to a lot of stuff in the community, you know, that we really enjoy, you know, trying to help Grand Rapids be a better place connecting with business leaders. So it's, it keeps me busy. I stay in. It's amazing, stay busy. Wait, what? After you transition?

Jacob 04:16

Yeah. And you're still involved in the sailing world?

Doug 04:20

I am. Yes. You know, that's one of my, my passions that I just can't shake, you know, so we love to sail I grew up sailing, you know, on Lake Michigan with my dad and my brothers and, and it became a passion for me. And we've recently got involved with New York Yacht Club, and we're trying to go win the America's Cup. So that competition starts in January of 2021. And, and partnering with Hap Fauth,

and Roger Penske, and the New York club has just been a great, a great experience. And so we're hoping that the American magic team can get it done.

Jacob 04:56

Yeah, well, I'll be rooting for you guys. Come January. So for people watching who are maybe not familiar with Amway as a company, maybe you can give us a little bit of background information about the organization, how many employees you guys have? What do you guys do?

Doug 05:10

Sure, absolutely. Amway's a direct selling company started about 60 years ago, global in scope today about \$8 billion, little over that worth of sales globally, about 15,000 employees. But as a direct selling company, we work through a group of independent people who literally own their own business selling our products. And there's about a million people around the world who do that some make it a full time, business endeavor for themselves some part time, and many, just occasional.

Doug 05:43

But that's how our business operates. We have primarily wellness products that we sell our Nutrilite line, then we have beauty products, we have a variety of other products, over 400 products that we've developed over the years that we sell. And it's a beautiful, you know, of course, I would say that it's a beautiful business, wonderful people, like I say global in scope, and that's really a special part of it. Because when it comes to, you know, opportunity, the Amway business provides opportunity to everybody wherever they're from, through their own initiative, the hard work and, and that's what my father and his partner Jay Van Andel believed, when they started Amway, they believe that everybody, anybody, if given the opportunity would do something with it. And so they wanted to provide a business opportunity for everyone.

Jacob 06:36

Very cool. So one of the things they realized they didn't ask you, when you were on the show last time, is just a little bit of background information about yourself. So I'm really curious, how, how did you grow up? How did you eventually get to become the CEO of Amway? What was it like, you know, your family started this, this really amazing company? And what was it like growing up?

Doug 06:56

Well, it's a funny story, because my father and Jay were friends in high school. And so, so right, after they got married, they wanted to live to get near each other. So we were actually neighbors of the Van Andel family as we grew up, so and it was a small town of Ada, Michigan, just outside Grand Rapids. So there weren't a lot of other people around in Ada at that time. So everything in our experience growing up was Amway.

Doug 07:24

Again, the nature of our business, we had employee events, we had, you know, business owner events at the house, so you were just in completely overwhelmed and part of the organization and loved it from the beginning. So, uh, so we would work there, you know, after after school, you know, in high school, and then through college. And then after I graduated from Purdue, I wanted to work there full time. And

so program work in Europe. I moved to Brussels, Belgium, and worked as a European sales manager there and then kind of had different roles in different parts of the company parts. And, and, and then they had a chance to lead it for a number of years, which was just a tremendous blessing.

Jacob 08:13

Very cool. That's Yeah, it's quite a story on so early on. How big was Amway? I mean, was it like 510 people that eventually grew to 15,000?

Doug 08:24

It was it was a very small, a very small organization here in Ada, Michigan, it basically started out of the basements of our house and Jays house. You know, they had a direct selling experience, dad and Jay did, they ran with a company called Nutrilite, selling wellness products. And they did that for about 10 years, then for a variety of reasons they made some changes and started Amway.

Doug 08:51

And they started out their basements with just the two of them. And, and it went from there. So who would have imagined it would have turned into what it is today, and it is, in the early 70s, we were looking for a wellness line and went back and Amway bought Nutrilite really kind of put the band back together again, if you will. So it's a great story.

Jacob 09:13

Were there any times during the history of the company where you thought maybe the company would go wonder or go out of business? Somebody was trying to take you over? And did you have any like tough, tough hurdles you guys had to get through?

Doug 09:27

Well, we've had a lot of tough hurdles. You know, because the business model, our kind of model of direct selling, to a certain extent was unknown. So it was challenged in the 1970s, here in the US by the Federal Trade Commission, was it legitimate? Was it not? And that was a huge risk and a huge challenge that we faced some of that around the world and in fact, today, Amway China's our biggest marketing app shortly after we started there in the mid 1990s. We were challenged there, there was a question of the legitimacy of the business model.

Doug 09:59

Obviously, it's been validated and verified there and in all markets around the world of how our business model operates. So from that perspective, there's been some, you know, some stormy weather. And then we've had some just market challenges where we've had markets that have, you know, had some great successes; we've had some great challenges. And so it's been an ongoing cycle of adjusting and adapting, but still always moving forward.

Jacob 10:28

And what about how current events today have impacted the business? You know, we've been seeing a lot with COVID, with Black Lives Matter, the kind of social and racial injustice, that's going out there? Is this impacted me at all? And have you guys done anything?

Doug 10:45

Well, you know, boy, you know, the marketplace always impacts, you know, what we do? You know, and I think probably the best way to articulate it is to say, we've always understood who we are, and why we do what we do. And so when things change dramatically around us, we have a foundation to go back to. We know, we know this, we know what we're trying to accomplish, we know who we're working with, we know how to how we want to approach the market.

Doug 11:13

And so the market adjusts and adapts, we have a foundation from which we can move, and be agile, and, and still stay connected to the marketplace. So and when these things happen, when you talk about injustice in the world, we go back and say we have provided an opportunity for everybody, anybody from the very beginning. So we have we can express our values through how we operate. You know, because we've been doing it ever since we began so we don't have to make something up or try to catch up or adjust. But what we do have to do is look at ourselves honestly and say, can we do it better? Can we provide a better opportunity for more people, that becomes more real, and can we give them better products to sell and better support with technology and, and operations?

Doug 12:07

Those are the things that we have to challenge ourselves and be honest to say, you know, in some aspects of the business, we could be better, we should be better, and we will be better. And that's how we want to look at those sorts of things. So you know, so you know, and if you take maybe you know, the health issues of the pandemic, and you say, well, we've always been talking about wellness, we've always been talking about prevention, we don't talk about cure, we talk about being healthy, and living a healthy lifestyle, which would prepare you for this sort of a situation or any other kind of a situation that you may have.

Doug 12:42

So we go back to our values, to be able to adjust and adapt and meet the marketplace, where it is. That's how we tried to approach

Jacob 12:51

Has COVID impacted, I mean, obviously, direct selling and probably made it challenging for a lot of the people with Amway. So you guys had to adapt or find kind of creative ways to still be able to do direct selling

Doug 13:07

Oh absolutely. It's, it's, it's changed, you know, virtually everything about how we operate, not who we are, but how we operate. We love meetings, oh, we love traveling the world, we love getting together, we love doing all these fun things together. Can't do that anymore. We love demonstrating products personally with customers and in recruiting new people to start their own businesses. Can't do it the same way anymore.

Doug 13:34

So the beauty of an entrepreneurial organization or a business full of entrepreneurs, they adjust quickly, you know, they move because they have to, they're on the front lines. And because of the nature of our business model, we don't have a lot of capital infrastructure that they have to deal with. They buy a computer, they do things differently. They figure out online, old and young, they figure out how to adapt, they figure out how to adjust. And so our business has transitioned through this pandemic, pretty successfully.

Doug 14:09

Now we you know, we were actually performing better than we had expected before things hit. So we're everyone's scrambling in our workplace, okay, we're all working remotely. We're doing things differently. Our manufacturing facilities, we all we had to adapt all of our manufacturing processes in a matter of months, because as I said earlier, we operate in China. we first saw it there. We saw it in Europe. So we went adapting and by the way, we've been telling other businesses how we've done it. We've been comparing notes with other global businesses, especially here in Michigan. So what are you learning? What are you learning? Here's what we can do to adapt, adjust.

Doug 14:47

And so there's no trade secrets, everybody-- I thought it was a real special aspect of the business committee--everybody was sharing best practices with each other to say how can we do you know how can We make sure our employees, our customers stay safe in this new environment. And so everything's changed, but we've been able to continue to operate.

Jacob 15:09

There's a couple of people who are watching live, one person said that their mom was at Amway 50 years ago. Somebody else, Jade, says her cousin brought Amway to Turkey. So you definitely have some people who are watching who themselves or their family members have been a part of Amway, which I think is pretty cool.

Doug 15:31

Wonderful.

Jacob 15:32

So it's interesting. You talked about having to adapt. Did you have any stories or examples of how some of these entrepreneurs have had to adapt? Just so that people can kind of get a vision? I'm assuming it had to move towards online towards the internet. But how I mean, what did that adaptation look like?

Doug 15:55

So so I'll give you an example. Just yesterday. Amway Korea would have our national convention we would have it at the sometimes the Olympic Stadium, we'd get 10s of thousands of people, we'd have a huge event we bring in big acts we'd have you know, we have great you know, entertainment camaraderie, business content, you know, product expos all around the facility. Yesterday we did it with a with you know, completely online I dialed in from here are our new CEO Milind Pant, he dialed in from

his home. You know, we had other executives that that joined, you know, virtually, we had, you know, leaders inside the business, they're all joined virtually, there's a great studio with a host with, with screens all around behind them.

Doug 16:45

So kind of like if you're watching NBA game, you got people participating on the screens that are around the stage. So it, we tried to create a great feeling again, but that was one of the adaptations that we just had to do.

Doug 16:58

And the other thing is really the move online. As I said, we love the personal interaction. But with from an e commerce perspective, we've been moving in the e commerce direction for a long time, just took a huge uptick, as you can imagine, where everybody really started to use, you know, that capability, it put a lot of stress on us. And, you know, sometimes we weren't as good as we thought we were in execution. But those are some of the main examples that we've seen.

Jacob 17:29

Well, it seems like you guys had to reinvent yourselves a little bit as well to kind of adapt to this new world that we're all a part of. And maybe we can talk a little bit about the leadership component, because obviously leading now behind the behind the screen, you know, you have 15,000 people, you said over a million people who are involved with Amway, how do you engage and motivate and inspire all these people when you're behind a webcam and behind a computer?

Doug 17:55

Sure, again, the beauty of the entrepreneurial spirit is that they inspire themselves. What we do is we make sure we provide the infrastructure, the foundation, we make sure that the product quality is there, the innovation is there. So that when they're representing the product, when they're talking about it to a new customer or prospect that they can have confidence in the work that's behind them, we've talked a little bit about the, you know, the technology components and things of that nature.

Doug 18:24

Our job is to make sure that that original idea that anybody can have a business of their own, that everybody should have access to a real opportunity to achieve the goals that they want to achieve. And so our role is to find a lot of new ways to keep communicating that message and not just communicating it, demonstrating it by new product introductions, new promotional incentive campaigns, new business support operations that we have, so that when they see it and feel it, it allows them to inspire themselves.

Doug 19:07

Because it's always been about them and their goals, they may want a full time income, they may want a part time income or something else. Like I said earlier, our job is to help them achieve where they are and so however, the method is it's the message in my opinion, that's the vital part, and that we continue to be, you know, laser focused on providing that opportunity for people.

Jacob 19:35

What about for people who are not, maybe on the direct selling side, but kind of in the back office, you know, people who are running marketing, HR, you know, people who are more full time at Amway? How do you motivate and engage and inspire those types of team members. So I'm assuming you still have to think about like talent development, leadership development, recruiting new employees, I mean, all the traditional aspects of basically running a business.

Doug 20:00

Oh, absolutely. And so, you know, the big thing in that component is to make sure we continue to not only talk about our foundations, but express a vision, here's where we're going, here's how we're unique in the marketplace, here's what's creative and new, that you can experience as a leader in the management of a company like Amway, here's what we can demonstrate, here's how we can, you know, create a market that special and new and not only reaches a customer with a product, but helps somebody have their own business along the way.

Doug 20:39

And then it's through being much more collaborative. And actually, some of the things that we found in the global business, we can break down a few barriers with technology. So we've found some ways that we can almost connect more often stay in touch more often than we would in the past, we would delay things, well, I'll talk to you about it when I when I fly over there next month, or, or some other time, because we're so relational. And so we've had to learn new skills, and new ways of communicating where the company is going of staying on top of things and working really quickly.

Doug 21:17

Because the market's moving fast, and we have to adapt quickly, as well. And I'm really proud of the whole management team around the world for what they've done. To adapt, again, I've transitioned so I get to watch and cheer. And really marvel at the way the business has made those adaptations.

Jacob 21:41

Were there any new practices or policies or things that were put into place inside of Amway that allowed for these adaptations, just trying to learn a little bit more about some of the things that you guys did, so that other people watching might be able to implement some of those things in their companies.

Doug 21:58

Sure, we focused on culture, we, in fact, what we tried to do is with policies that were in place, we tried to put a pause on them, rather than trying to think you know, top down, here's how we're going to direct it, we're going to trust everybody to understand that we're working in a different environment. And so one of the things we did is we really increased our communication dramatically, we would do an employee survey every two years, how's it going? What's happening? We're doing them every 30 days, you know, quick, quick, you know, you know, quick shots, what's happening in this market? What's happening in that market? What are you sensing? What are you feeling so we can adapt and adjust.

Doug 22:36

And really, from a policy standpoint, kind of put things on hold and say, Look, we're gonna trust you to be responsible, we know you're going to work. And you were going to have to do it differently. Because we can't do it the way we were, we're going to trust you to do it. And we've been rewarded dramatically, because the productivity has stayed the same or even increased. And we know a lot of people are doing it tough circumstances, you're working at home in a different environment, it's one thing you know, in my situation, our kids are grown, they're out of the house, you know, we're fine. If you've got, you know...

Jacob 23:09

I have two kids, a four year old and a four month old.

Doug 23:13

There you go.

Jacob 23:14

I'm feeling the pain, man, I'm feeling the pain,

Doug 23:16

Not so easy is it? You know, especially in some countries where they're not coming back to going back to school, so you don't have that normal break in the routine either. So what we've tried to do from a policy standpoint is say, you know, let's put those on hold. Let's focus on culture, how are we adapting? How are we adjusting? How are we staying focused, and we're gonna trust people to be responsible to still stay productive, and that's really happened.

Jacob 23:41

So what are some of the traditional I guess, policies that you guys put on hold that you kind of said, you know, don't worry about this for a little while until things get back to normal?

Doug 23:51

Well, you know, vacation policy, you know, attendance policies, certainly in the manufacturing space, if we have to be a little bit different, because people do have to be there physically, but how they, how they, you know, how they arrive, how their, how their workspace is configured, you know, those sorts of things have had to change. So we, you know, we've really tried to make sure that, that we're addressing everything that they're going to have to have from their side so that they feel safe, that they feel rewarded.

Doug 24:24

I think our evaluation systems, you know, again, be gone. You know, we had an annual evaluation systems, we're doing those every 90 days, just more checking in what's working, what's not working, it's really not an evaluation. It's a coaching system. That's the, that's what we want to have with our work. You know, again, in the manufacturing side, the workspace environments changed. We wanted to do that more with the had planned to do it a little differently on the on the office side, if you will, but COVID has changed all of that. So, you know, so we don't really have a physical workspace in the same way.

It's more of a virtual workspace now, although we are having, in some markets, some people coming back in from time to time, but it's a different workplace.

Doug 25:08

So I think to your point, you know, it's it's letting people and letting people express themselves in a productive and helpful way business going forward, we've tried to, you know, to a certain extent, let them lead and we can follow in support.

Jacob 25:23

So I'm trying to think of just kind of like broad buckets of how you guys have had to reinvent, it seems like one was a heavy investment in, in technology, things like e commerce. Another area was in workplace policies and practices, you've had to kind of pause some of your traditional workplace practices, maybe even get rid of them and kind of adapt them seems like another area was around communication and collaboration and increasing that.

Jacob 25:50

You mentioned going from like doing these surveys every two or three years to now every 30 days, it seems like a performance management system is changed, now you're doing a lot more more coaching, doing something a little a lot more speedier, so to speak. Any other areas or buckets that you think we're missing as far as how you as an organization, have had to reinvent yourselves.

Doug 26:16

Well you know, I think you've found the big ones out of there. You know, it's the only other thing I'd add is, like I was trying to get to it, just, it's a, it really does get to the cultural side of believing in people, we believe that people given an opportunity can have a business of their own and be successful, we feel the same way with our employees, they want to work, they want to be productive, they want to do well. And so when we allow that to happen, we can follow their lead.

Jacob 26:47

Culture is, uh, you know, it's talked about by... it's everywhere, right? Every company always talks about culture. How do you guys think about culture internally? I mean, how do you how do you explain it? How do you define it? What is the Amway culture like?

Doug 27:01

Well, we want start with your heart, right, you want to get on it, you want to have this, you know, this heart for the business, heart for other people, I remember an interaction I had with a group of employees once. And we had, we had done some program to kind of help communication and foster communication amongst a manufacturing team. And they began to say what that meant for them. And there was one person who said, you know, this, this guy next to me, I couldn't stand him. It was the worst thing in the world. Before we started this thing, I just couldn't stand working with him. I didn't even really even like him.

Doug 27:38

But because we had to talk, I found out what he was dealing with, when he wasn't at work, I found out that his home situation was really tough, he had some huge burdens that he was bringing to work. And when I understood that I stopped to approach him as a person first, before a colleague or a co worker, our relationship has just bloomed. I love this person now, because I know who they are.

Doug 28:03

So we want we want to lead with our heart, we want to have a creative mindset, we always want to be innovative and, and thinking, you know, if I go back to the, the time of my dad and Jay, again, they would tell a story, it's after World War II, that, you know, the world was available to them, they just come out of the service, they wanted to start their life. And that that enthusiasm, that energy that we can do it, we can accomplish anything sort of mentality. We want to have that as part of our operations, as well.

Doug 28:37

So those are two critical elements, I think that we spent a lot of time talking about that we really want to, you know, build that culture that we lead with a heart, and that we have this growth mindset, we're always creative, are always thinking of new ways to move forward.

Jacob 28:54

I love the leading from the heart component, because it seems like now we need that more than ever. There are some stories in the media of companies that maybe have not been leading from the heart, you know, firing thousands of employees going through tough times. And then you see other stories of leaders who are trying to be more compassionate leading from the heart, you know, trying to get there to understand their employees as human beings, not just as workers.

Jacob 29:18

So I love that focus of leading from the heart, how do you get your other leaders to, to embrace this concept? I mean, is it at odds of like, is leading from the heart, is it mutually exclusive to trying to make money or can you balance both of those things together?

Doug 29:41

Boy yeah, I think it's foundation to being successful. Because until you, you know, leading from the heart doesn't mean you don't hold people accountable. It doesn't mean you don't set targets and goals for yourself or for others. It just means that when you're working with people, you work with them different differently, that you don't, you're not a boss with a subordinate, you're a leader with a team. And so your role, you begin to think of your role differently of bringing people in.

Doug 30:11

And, I know there's a lot of situations where business has been unbelievably disrupted. And, and I know there's a lot of business owners that are just broken up because they can't keep their employees in their current situation, they just can't afford it, they can't make it happen. And, and so that doesn't mean you have that you don't have empathy, that you don't have cares and concerns. But you're trying to balance you know, some of those sorts of things. But you can still lead with your heart in that

process. And be honest with your employees, you tell them what's going on, you do the most that you can to help them transition through you. You're talking to other businesses that aren't going through the disruption and say, Hey, I get great employees that maybe you could hire.

Doug 30:55

We did this years ago, when we had a downturn, we just scoured, or area in Grand Rapids, we connected with as many other businesses as we could, we said, Look, we're struggling right now. But some of those people who are doing really well and said, you know, if you're looking for somebody with this talent, boy, we might have some people who could really help your organization out. And we worked really hard at placing people. So even though we couldn't provide the ongoing employment that we wanted to, we were still able to invest in them as individuals, because just because they weren't working for us anymore, didn't mean they lost value, didn't mean that their talent went away.

Doug 31:35

Because of the job with us, they still had that that was their talent, their value, they just, we just wanted to help facilitate it. So they could apply it for somewhere else, because we couldn't provide them the same opportunity in those sorts of times. And so I see that leading with a heart, it really doesn't take away from accountability or challenge or effort or anything like that.

Jacob 31:58

I love that message that even during tough times, even if you can't afford to keep or pay all your people, you can still lead with empathy and help take care of them. Even not to use a terrible metaphor. But as the as the ship is kind of going down, you can still make sure that your people are, are taken care of, and they can kind of find safe passage. So I love that it's kind of like a sad metaphor to think of as the ship is going down. And you're the captain going down with the ship and trying to help as many people as you can. But I think it's a suitable metaphor.

Jacob 32:28

So somebody who is watching live, Leandra was asking, what are your, they were asking about your concerns for next year, but I think maybe we can expand that a little bit broader to just when when you look at what's happening in the world now, what are some of the things that maybe you are worried about in the world of business? Either next year or in the coming years?

Doug 32:51

Yeah. You know, I think the, you know, the challenges that we're going to face when you go through tough times. To me, all come around division. And I think, you know, whether, if you take it in a global scope, it's country versus country, it's this country's fault, or that country's fault. And like, Well, wait, well, let's, let's be careful with that. Or if you look, even internally inside the United States, well, it's this group or that group? Well, let's be careful with that, you know, I'm blessed to have had a chance to continue to serve on the National Board of Trustees of the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. And and you find that through the US Constitution, you know, there's a lot of things there. But what it is, is, it's an idea, and a document that helps bring people together, not that we have all the answers, we want to be a more perfect union.

Doug 33:48

But it's a place if we'll work together, even if we disagree. And, and there's been a lot of disagreement since the founding of our country. But people found a way to, to work together, even the formation of the Constitution took a whole bunch of people all summer long arguing until they found something but they didn't give up on the conversation. They didn't give up on their future.

Doug 34:11

And I think I think the biggest challenge for business is to is to continue to apply that that faith, that belief in the future, and really challenge ourselves to work through whatever the challenges are, but to do it together, don't blame other people, but figure out how to connect with other people say, well, let's let's, let's focus on the on the problem or the challenge and see what we can do to address it. You know, some industries are going to have a tougher time with that because of what has happened in the marketplace than others.

Doug 34:49

But, you know, there's just nothing you know that you can't change the marketplace. All you can do is change yourself and how you adapt to it. But I think if we do it from a collaborative standpoint We're gonna have a much better shot at getting through to the future than we are if we just, you know, go rogue or independent or start to divide.

Jacob 35:08

Yeah, I always tell, tell leaders that the biggest fear that you should have isn't that somebody disagrees with you. It's that somebody doesn't know what you stand for to begin with.

Doug 35:17

There you go.

Jacob 35:18

Yeah, I feel like a lot of business leaders. Throughout history, they've always kind of wanted to play neutral territory, Dana, I don't want to upset these people. I don't want to upset those people. They might be customer, so I'm just kind of kind of played safe. And now more than ever, a lot of employees want you to take a stance on something, you know, what do you believe in? What do you care about? What causes are you fighting for? So I think that now more than ever, we really do need leaders who are, you know, not worrying that people are going to disagree with them, but worry that people don't know what you stand for to begin with.

Doug 35:49

Sure, sure. And beautifully said, Jacob. I love that. And I would I would only add to it that when you express yourself you respect when somebody else expresses themselves. As well.

Jacob 36:01

Yep. Yep. For sure. Um, so you were mentioning that a lot of people were having to kind of reinvent and change themselves, too. So I kind of wanted to segue a little bit to that on a personal level. But

before we jump into that kind of one transition question for you, and I'm really interested in what what is the typical day look like for you?

Doug 36:21

You know, I don't know that I've ever had a typical day and at least in years past, some sort of normalcy I was traveling somewhere for, for business, or I was at least going to an office. Right now, you know, it's, you know, I'm at home, I go to some, you know, some workplaces, you know, I traveling has been virtually non existent. And so, you know, so that's been different.

Doug 36:46

Probably the biggest thing, you know, from, from a role in a big organization like Amway, when, when you're the leader there, you know, everything comes to you. It's just a flow of information and a flow of work, that happens, the biggest thing that I've had to do is think through, okay, now, what do I want to do? How am I going to, you know, express myself in a new way, and you really do have to reinvent yourself, and it's hard. I've struggled, I'll be honest with you, it's hard to kind of get in that new way, and feel like I've hit a stride in any way.

Doug 37:25

I'm still learning a ton. And it's been challenging to say, Okay, here's what I want to do. Oh, okay, I did that. I didn't like as much as I thought it would. So I'm going to pivot. And now I'm going to start to do this a little bit more. Okay, well, that didn't work out the way I thought. So what I'm going to pick up. So I'm learning all the way through and trying to put together that, I don't know if it's a typical workday, but that work stream. What is it where I'm going to be thinking and focused and collaborating with people, you know, on a subject? How do I take it from things that I might have an interest in to things that I really want to focus on?

Jacob 38:01

Do you have a regular, either routine or daily practice that you do consistently?

Doug 38:10

You know, the one thing I try to do, especially with all of COVID, when we're working from whatever, say, I'm at least going to get up in the morning, I'm going to take a shower, I'm going to clean up, and and pretend like I'm going to work somewhere, even if I'm just right next door or right in the house, you know, or whatever the case is.

Doug 38:30

But I think the main thing is to wake up and try to engage your mind, you know, and what are you thinking about? What are you doing? So you do create that process of going forward? What's the book plan am I working, even if I have to adjust the plan? I'm going to get up and here's my list, you know, here's my tasks, you know, for the day, I think those are some of the routines that I that I tried to stick with. And again, I'll be I'm trying to create, you know, as you talk about reinventing it, you know that these are, these are not simple things, and everyone's going to do it differently in their own way.

Doug 39:15

But I think getting to a few of those things where you can take a step forward, or two steps forward, maybe one step back, but you're still going in a direction and still have that that ultimate goal or target that you're working towards.

Jacob 39:28

What one moment or situation do you think is most impacted your approach to leadership? Any stories or scenarios or situations come to mind?

Doug 39:39

Well, there's a fun story that pops in my mind when you when you when you say that and I reflected on it often. We at Amway we got involved in are down in our community in the downtown area. And, and this is a number of years ago, we got involved with a developer and we there was a building that was built We were kind of behind the scenes and this developer was upfront. But as you can imagine, everything went wrong. You know, the sides were falling off the building that the toilets didn't work in this building. It was a, you know, one of the bigger buildings in our city. And it, it was a disaster from every perspective.

Doug 40:18

And there was a question, what do you do? Okay, the developer left, we were kind of stuck with it. And we had a meeting with my dad and Jay and the, the Van Andel family and our family. And there was two presentations, one, you could you know, just pursue the insurance route, you know, call it a day, get the insurance money, take, you know, forget it. And the other one was invest in it, take the risk and move forward.

Doug 40:42

And some of us in the second generation, some of the kids at the time said, well, let's just go with the insurance and take it down. And we're going to call it Hollywood or do a Bruce Willis movie, or we'll do something, you know, and we're just going to, you know, create, take it down. And that's it, call it a day and make it you know, make a party out of it. That did not go over well, with my father and Jay. And as we were kind of laughing and joking. They were quiet, and my father's stops, as in kind of got the attention of all of us and said, Jay, what do you think?

Doug 41:18

And Jay was at the end of the of the table where we were talking and he just was shaking his head. He goes, No, no, he goes, we don't blow things up. We build things up. And that's what we do. And that's what we're going to do, we're going to build, we're going to go forward. And if even if it went wrong, we're going to figure out how to overcome it, and move on. And I think about that often, because there's been a lot of things in life, and in business that go wrong. And the temptation would be just to bail. And I think the leadership example that you know that Jay set with that very simple message, we don't do that. This is what we do. I reflect on that often.

Jacob 42:06

I love that story. That's awesome. Is the is the building still around?

Doug 42:09

It is building still around still functional, operating, operating much better, but it did have to be rebuilt.

Jacob 42:16

Wow. So you guys did kind of go all into it and fix it up?

Doug 42:20

Yes, yes, we went into it and fix it up, redid it and a number of other things in the area. They're ultimately, you know, since then, so this was in the Gosh, this would be in the, you know, in the early 90s. And so since then we have continued to build on that. And that's the message that, you know, that that Jay and my dad sent to us. And that's the one that they lived was, you know, we go forward, we build things up.

Jacob 42:44

Today with all the uncertainty that's out there. I mean, I know uncertainties just kind of a fact of life fact of business. But why would people that I talk to you, it just feels like things are a little more uncertain, moving a little bit faster now. And correct me if I'm wrong, but I mean, you've been a leader for a very long time. And it seems like in the past, as a leader, you had a little bit more luxury to kind of see what was going on, you had a little bit of a playbook a little bit of a blueprint, like you had more of a kind of a path to know what to do. Whereas it's now things are changing so quickly. You have no compass, you have no blueprint, you got to kind of make the path yourself. Um, so first, do you agree with that? And second, how do you lead in that kind of a world where you can't see forward?

Doug 43:38

You know, Jacob, you're you're spot on, it is really uncertain today. And one of the things that you could do in the past, you would say, Well, okay, here's where we've been going, I have a reasonable idea that we're going to keep going in that direction, you may have a plus or minus 10% variation on that or something. But the variations today are just so dramatic.

Doug 44:01

You know, I think you you, you lead then from the inside out, you know, you start with your values and your belief systems, what do you believe in? And then you figure out how to apply it to those changing conditions. You know, we would have to do that on a regular basis to say what what do we believe in because your belief, your belief system, whatever it is for you, it is going to drive a set of behaviors in my opinion. So when you believe something, you're going to go in a direction and then you're going to make adjustments, you know, to the uncertainty Wow, I didn't see that one coming. But here's how we can turn this challenge into an opportunity. You know, and here's how we can you know, move and you know, and minimize the bad or maximize the good in whatever change is happening but you are spot on it is it is not simple.

Doug 44:59

And that's why I feel going back to who you are as a person. If you're in a leadership position with an organization, who are you as an organization? And why do you exist? Start with those questions. Why

are we here? And then you can say, Okay, what are we trying to accomplish in this environment? And then you can really get down to the variations of how are we going to do it, when everything's changing so fast.

Doug 45:24

That's when you believe in your people and the teams around you who are going to, you know, just try to figure out how to come together and find solutions.

Jacob 45:33

What happens if you make a mistake? You ever made a big mistake or a bad choice at Amway, that that, you know, cost the company? I mean, how do you deal with that when you do make a mistake or fail?

Doug 45:47

Well, there's so many I can't count, right? You know, so mistakes are learning opportunities. You know, you fess up to it, you understand it? You know, well, how did I get into this? What did I do? What did I miss? You know, what did I think about, you know, is, you know, I am, I really try to shy away from blaming somebody else for something that goes wrong. For what I've done.

Doug 46:17

You know, there's a funny story, we had a local business leader who struggled with that, whenever something would go wrong, he'd have to have somebody to blame. And one of his management team said, Look, I will be the I will be the source of your problems. So don't just get mad, just blame me. And so in their management meetings, he as soon as something would go wrong, he would get furious. And then he would, the guy would go, it's all my fault. And he'd go, you're right, it's your fault. But then he could get beyond it. So whatever system works for you, you know, move on.

Doug 46:44

But, you know, every mistake we try to look at, in fact, we, it didn't work real well. But I actually tried to find a way once to, to almost recognize and celebrate mistakes for the learning opportunities that they presented, I couldn't get a lot of people to say, hey, by the way, let me tell you what I screwed up here, or what I screwed up there. But but for myself, you know, I just tried to be honest about it and tried to learn from it. So that I just didn't repeat them. And so that the next time you could make a better decision.

Jacob 47:17

Does one come to mind for you that the particular mistake or failure you had.

Doug 47:23

Gosh, I'll have to Well, I'll give you a simple one. But hopefully, it's indicative in Europe in the late 80s, early 90s, the wall was coming down between East and West our business in West Germany was expanding into East Germany. But we were exploding, it was just growing like crazy. People were looking for opportunity. They're looking for products from the west. And we couldn't keep up with anything. We were scrambling all the time.

Doug 47:51

And so as soon as we got a product shipment in, we were just trying to get it into, you know, get it out, get it delivered as quickly as we could. And we didn't check the validity of the truck driver. So he had a whole shipment of product that we got and put on a truck and sent into East Germany and never saw it. Again. It's a simple one, but it's okay, did we do our homework here. He did we did we know who the shipping company was. And we think about the guaranteed, we're all just scrambling, okay, so maybe you can, you know, you can allow it in that capacity.

Jacob 48:29

But he just took off with your stuff?

Doug 48:32

It was it was just gone. So, usually, I think, you know, mistakes would be when I was trying to react, or when I didn't have a good grasp of the of the situation.

Doug 48:44

Another simple one that comes to mind. These aren't huge ones. But they do come to mind because they represent just silly things that I did. I was in I was responsible for special events department many years ago in my career, and, and there was a program and I was backstage and I didn't know that they had changed the program. And there were people backstage that I thought were supposed to be on stage. So I grabbed them and literally pushed them on stage. You have to go you're on stage, you're on stage.

Doug 49:14

And I pushed them out there and they kind of walked out wondering, and the the manager looked at me and goes, Doug, we changed the program. They're not supposed to be on stage, but we'll adjust, you know, we'll make it work and, and I just kind of sulked away and went okay, I promise I won't do that again. Yeah, those are a couple things that come to that come to mind.

Doug 49:37

You know, I think some of the bigger mistakes some of the strategic mistakes. Generally, if we missed an opportunity, the marketplace, I think we didn't, you know, we didn't transition probably if you go back to the early days of e commerce, we didn't transition as quickly as we could have or should have. I think those are the biggest things where we were maybe timid or didn't experiment as much as we could have, you know, I think that's one where if you look at our history, we're a little bit behind some of the technology that we needed. We've worked really hard in recent years to catch up. But that's another one that I think was a big, a big issue for us.

Jacob 50:13

Those are, those are awesome stories. I love those. So in the last few minutes that we have left, I want to talk a little bit more about personal reinvention. Because as you know, there are a lot of people out there, they're struggling, you know, business owners, I know a lot of people who got laid off from their

jobs. And a lot of people are having a little bit of a soul searching moment and trying to figure out, you know, what, what do I do now?

Jacob 50:35

Do you have any advice or suggestions or recommendations for people that are kind of at that point right now, where they're trying to figure out if they should reinvent themselves? And if so, how? I mean, how do you? How do you think through this?

Doug 50:48

Yeah, yeah, well, you know, the first thing I'd say is just because a job or something has changed around you doesn't change your value, you have value just because you are who you are, you have gifts, you have talents, you have skills, and you're just trying to then find the next place to apply those values so that you can be rewarded as well. So you have a fair exchange of value that you're providing and reward that you're receiving.

Doug 51:12

And then I would take an expansive view of that I would consider alternatives that you maybe didn't consider before, when you were in a place of comfort, what's outside of your comfort zone, that you may have thought about, but you may have thought was too risky before. You know, boy, you know, that would be fun, but I've got a pretty good, you know, gig going right here. And I don't know if I want to go there. You know, I think that, you know that when you find yourself in that position, you express yourself with a level of confidence that you're going to find your way forward.

Doug 51:49

Don't feel stuck, you know, my, my father, you know, grew up in the in the Great Depression in the United States. And he shared an experience years ago of watching his father, my grandfather, he had lost his job, he they had lost their home, they were living in their his grandparents home. And and there was a young man at the door selling something and he watched his father have an exchange with the young man. And the young man was saying this young boy was saying, sir, I have to sell this. It's the last item I have, I can't go home until I sell this. And he said it only costs a dime. And my dad had to watch his father look at the young man said, Son, I'd love to help you. I'd love to buy that. But I don't have a dime. Can't help.

Doug 52:37

And he saw the distress that my grandfather was feeling. But then he relayed that how am I how am I grandfather would always tell him he was someday we're going to get out of this, someday I'm going to get a job, someday we're going to get our house back, it's going to get better. He never allowed himself with his attitude to be stuck, he was going to move forward. So you know, with a belief in yourself, and then engage your mind and maybe an area where you hadn't thought about before of taking that risk, and then start the process.

Doug 53:09

And you'll probably have a few failures, a few things won't work out, you won't get the next opportunity to come your way that you were hoping for. But if you keep at it, and you keep that attitude strong, and

you keep working at it, I'm going to put I think we people put their money on people who are trying to find a way forward even in tough situations.

Jacob 53:28

Where does that positivity come from? You know, I mean, for yourself, for your dad, your grandfather, you know, during those tough times, how, how do you stay positive in tough times? is just something that you're born with? Or they're like practices that you can do? I mean, how do you keep looking at the bright side?

Doug 53:48

Yeah, that's, that's, that's a great question. I guess it's, I guess, it's just experience, you know, you know, dad would share his experiences of the things that went wrong, but also the things that went right, you know, his sense of adventure that, that it's not always going to go well, but if you keep moving forward, you'll be okay.

Doug 54:08

And the story that that experience that they shared was, again, after World War Two, they started a flight school, but neither one of them knew how to fly. Dad and Jay they just wanted to be into business. And then after that, they sold that they bought a boat, they wanted to go to the you know, they wanted to go to South America. So never been on a sailboat before. And they found their way all the way down the east coast until they got off the coast of Cuba on the boat sank. You know, but they didn't stop they kept going.

Doug 54:09

So it was these stories of determination and persistence that seemed to turn out well in the end. And that's been my experience in the not that life is without challenge. Of course, there's challenges of course, there's tragedy. I know you've dealt with it, Jacob, everybody deals with it, you lose a loved one unexpectedly. Something happens that you didn't. You didn't plan on it's crushing. But you just have to keep moving forward.

Doug 55:03

And in my experience in the context, I've seen people move forward from really, really tough circumstances, and find a better a better future. And it's a lot better to keep that pursuit alive than to just stop and feel stuck.

Jacob 55:19

Yeah, I mean, if your dad would have would have stopped, I suppose Amway would have never been created right after the boat saying the flight school didn't go well, he could have just been like the hell with it. I'm never gonna amount to anything, I'm just gonna, you know, leave it there.

Doug 55:33

Exactly, you know, all those challenges. You just keep moving forward. And and, you know, that's, that's why it's not hard, to stay positive, it's fun to stay positive. On the other side, too, you know, you,

you just roll it up? Because you're always finding the next solution. Yeah. What's the next solution? Keeping keep your mind engaged and keep trying to find that solution?

Jacob 55:56

Well, I think that's a classic example of a growth mindset. Because people with a fixed mindset, you know, if the boat sinks, you think I'm done? The flight school closes, you think it's game over? Part of having a growth mindset is viewing those things as obstacles as challenges that you have to overcome, not as permanent, you know, permanent situation is that you're kind of stuck within. So I think that's a very classic example of what having a growth mindset means.

Doug 56:23

Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah. barriers are real. And a lot of people face them, and I get it. And it's just having that growth mindset, say, How do I find my way--over, around, through, under? How do I find my way around this barrier? And I know, those aren't easy discussions to have. But, you know, I think that when you keep trying to do it, you're going to find your way forward.

Jacob 56:46

Yeah. And you got to have a little bit of, it seems like courage, the be willing to take some risks, but I know for a lot of people who are in the process of going through reinvention, a sounds like your your advice is, you got to get to try it, because you're never gonna know until you do it.

Doug 57:00

Yeah, exactly. And again, I don't mean to minimize the challenge, you're probably going to have a night or two when you just, you know, when you want to pack it all in, but you know what, get up the next day and keep moving forward.

Jacob 57:14

Yeah, I think that's great advice. So the last other thing that I wanted to touch on, I know you guys have been doing a lot of philanthropy work, I think in the last five years alone, your family giveaway, probably 529 million I read, it was over a billion dollars so far in total. So I kind of want to get back to this idea of of a leader and the importance of not just positively impacting your business, but also positively impacting the community and the world at large. Why do you think that's so crucial? Why are you and your family giving so much back?

Doug 57:48

Well, it's an expression of, of a belief system, you know, from our faith, and the belief that when, when you're blessed when you've been given much that much is required, and that there's an opportunity to share and help others that you should take advantage of that opportunity, you could share, and you should help others when you have the capacity to do so.

Doug 58:10

And it's in a variety of ways. It's financially, as you said, our foundation, but there's a lot of people that we work with who volunteer who serve on boards, they give time, talent and treasure. It's the it's the trifecta. And so we believe that it's important to do that. And we believe we can offer a perspective that

can be helpful as well. It's not just the financial sources, I think it's it's applying some of the business things of the life experiences that are seen and share is how do we how do we engage in our community in a way that creates more opportunity and removes the barriers, we talked about the barriers earlier, and they are real.

Doug 58:56

So in the areas of whether it's an if you kind of take the institutions of society and a community and government and business and education to kind of go for that kind of, you know, call themselves out and say, what are the barriers inherent in those institutions? How do we work together? How do we find the right solutions? And so we can think outside of our business and in our community in a way that applies the same innovation, the most growth mindset, the leading with your heart sort of idea, to some situations where we maybe people haven't experienced that before.

Doug 59:35

And so if we can be helpful, we believe that we should. And we're always trying to apply the same business principles so that if we're going to help, we're not just going to write a check and walk away. Or we can say, let's put all of our researchers time, talent and treasure together and see, what can we do to really be helpful Who else can add to this? Who else can be part of it? How what what's the role of the institutions in society, that that can be helpful in the community. So we increase opportunity and decrease barriers to opportunity.

Doug 1:00:12

And then we're going to believe in people, if we can, as a society kind of have that shift, if we're more opportunity, fewer barriers, we're gonna believe that people are going to be able to do something with it, kind of like we started within our, our experience at Amway, we believe that people had an opportunity they would do something with it.

Jacob 1:00:29

I love the time, talent and treasure that is, that is a great one to remember. So I think as even as a leader, if you're if you're listening or watching this, that's something that you can remember to give your time, talent and treasure to, to people you work with to communities that you serve. That that's wonderful. Well, Doug, where can people go to learn either more about you, your family, Amway, anything that you want to mention for people to check out, please feel free to do so?

Doug 1:01:05

Check us out, you know, anything, you know, that all the social channels that that Amway has, I am on Instagram, you know, also try to be a little bit visual share, share a little life there. But um, you know, I think the the biggest thing is that, that people hear all your viewers listeners, you know, find out the search all the examples, I think, Jacob send a multi view because you have the connection and access to resources to lots of different thoughts, lots of different people who can add to their lives.

Doug 1:01:40

And so I would turn it right back to you, I think you do great work to explore these areas, and to share stories and create for your viewers and listeners access to some you know, different thoughts and maybe different thinking that can be helpful to them.

Jacob 1:01:57

Well, thank you very much. I really, really appreciate that. And thanks again for taking time out of your day to share some of your insights, your words of wisdom, I love the stories that you've shared from your dad, your grandfather from your own life. I think that's really where people learn the most from is from these stories. So thank you again for taking time out of your day.

Doug 1:02:16

Great, I love it. It's great to great to connect again and appreciate it. It was fun to have the chat.

Jacob 1:02:22

Yeah, likewise. And thanks, everyone, again for tuning in. My guest again, has been Doug DeVos. He is the former CEO of Amway, the current co-Chairman. Make sure to check out some of the work that they're doing. It's really been fascinating. And I will see all of you next time. Thank you very much.