

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 00:53

Hello, everyone, thank you for joining me for another episode of the future of work with Jacob Morgan. My guest today is Ryan Hawk. He's the author of a book called Welcome to Management: How to Grow from Top Performer to Excellent Leader. He's also the host of one of the world's most popular leadership and management podcasts called The Learning Leader podcast. Ryan, thank you for joining me.

Ryan 01:16

Thanks for having me, Jacob. Excited to be with you today.

Jacob 01:19

Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. So I have so many questions for you just about your book, your story, all the stuff that you've been doing over the past few years. Why don't we just start with some background information about you. So going way back to, to young Ryan, how you grew up where you were raised? How did you eventually get into doing what you're doing now.

Ryan 01:43

I was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio, to where I currently live. Went to Centerville High School, went to college initially at Miami University and ended up graduating from Ohio University. And eventually, after a lot of time playing sports, and played in college and played a little bit after college, I then got in the world of professional selling, and was able to do relatively well and this at a job and got promoted a few times and also went back to school to get my MBA, and consider going back to school again, to get another graduate degree, however, instead decided to start my own form of a leadership PhD program.

Ryan 02:34

And I wanted to do that in the form of having direct long form one on one conversations with professors that were all of my choice. And so I chose to do that in the form of a podcast and call it The Learning Leader show because my favorite leaders in the world are the ones who are always striving to learn to grow to improve, they don't think they have it all figured out. They realize they need the help of others. They're reading they're meeting with mentors, they certainly are willing to change their mind when better evidence presents itself.

Ryan 03:13

And so yeah, I started that about six years ago. And fortunately, people seem to like it. And because of that, it's afforded me the opportunity to leave my corporate jobs that I had about three and a half years ago. And now it's what I do full time.

Jacob 03:33

Very cool. Yeah. I mean, it's one of the reasons why I started my podcast as well, just to learn from a lot of the business leaders who are out there. And so you've been doing this for six years, I think you have over like 400 episodes, right?

Ryan 03:47

Yep. Yep.

Jacob 03:48

So I'm curious from all the leaders that you interviewed, are there any that popped to mind as far as being the most memorable discussions you've had? And can you share anything out about what you've learned from some of these memorable interviews?

Ryan 04:03

As you know, this is a question that's similar to asking who is my favorite child? And that that changes by the day now? I if I didn't name a few, I would say it's more along the lines of the relationships that have been built since we've recorded so, the first one that comes to mind would be four star general Stanley McChrystal, primarily because we had a great talk. And I looked up the General McChrystal and his book Team of Teams for a long time and was fortunate that he came on the show.

Ryan 04:40

But it was a great episode, but the coolest part was, at the end of it, he invited me to come to Gettysburg and tour the battlefield along with him and the class that he teaches at Yale, and I canceled everything and jumped on a flight and I did it and, you know, did a morning run before the sun came up to the battlefield from the hotel with General McChrystal and his wife and some other friends and students. And then we toured the thing the whole day, I had a big dinner, and it was a life changing event. And it went, it went well. And I ended up asking him afterwards, if he would write the foreword to my book, I just thought, well, I might as well swing for the fences. What's the worst that could happen? And he said, Yes. And he did. And now he, you know, he wrote the foreword to my book.

Ryan 05:31

So it's a lot of lessons learned. If you approach people with genuine curiosity, and you're trying to learn you, you're interested in their story, and then you never really know what could happen, you could become friends with one of your heroes. And, and in that case, it's a relationship that I really value. And I have a number of those. But this is one that's really important to me. So I would say he has come on the podcast again. So I use about on more than once, but also has written that forward and did it as like, he didn't act like he's doing me a favor or anything. He was just said, Sure. And then really pieced together some really great work that I'm proud is in my book, and in fact, leads off the book. So I would say General McChrystal's probably at or near the top of the list.

Jacob 06:20

How do you compare and just out of curiosity, having a traditional full time job with, you know, being an entrepreneur doing what you're doing now and not having to be in the corporate world? What do you enjoy more and why?

Ryan 06:34

Just have complete ownership. All the good and the bad that goes with complete ownership, something like along the lines of net revenue is not something I necessarily thought of when I was an employee of a big company. Net revenue, meaning I have to generate all of the revenue and all of my costs. And that's something as an employee, you don't necessarily think about unless you have an ownership stake in the business.

Ryan 07:02

So I think everyone would benefit from owning a business in some way shape, or form and paying close attention to income and costs, and everything that goes into to running something on your own. And I think that's, that's probably the one of the biggest things I think about is what am I doing to build my business today? How are my efforts towards building my business? Whether it's putting together an awesome podcast episode or writing my next book, or whatever it may be? What am I doing to help build my business today? And that's something I'm thinking about constantly.

Jacob 07:41

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. It's very different. But it's, it's a fun, fun adventure. And if you have the right mindset going into it, I think it can it can certainly be a lot of fun and lucrative for people. I want to go back to some of the full time jobs you had.. Well, first, do you remember the first full time job you've ever had?

Ryan 08:03

Of course, I mean, I I wouldn't call my summer jobs that I had, that they were not initially full time even if I worked eight hours a day. But my first real job was was when I got done playing football after college, I worked as a telephonic sales professional at LexisNexis smile and dial cold calling the law firms and attorneys Yeah, I was making 60-70 calls a day. And sometimes you know, you get you go O for 70 you know, those rough days. And I think I think there's a lot though that can be learned from it, especially if you're a young recent college graduate and you don't really know what you want to do, which is what the position that I was in, I think getting a job working in the profession of sales is one of the best choices you could make because regardless of what you decide to do moving forward, sales and selling is a will be a part of your life.

Ryan 08:59

Whether you're actually have a sales job with a you're carrying a bag and you have a quota or you're trying to sell yourself, sell your ideas, work with other people, all of that there's a sales component, Dan Pink's book to sell is human details, all of that I encourage everyone to read it regardless of your profession. And so, for me that first job being a telephonic sales professional, where I had no idea what I was doing, I never sold a thing in my life. And then I Well at least I didn't think I'd sold a thing in my

life. Although I was a football player and a captain and I was having to, in a way, sell others why they should follow me. I didn't realize at the time and then getting it getting a job like that in the professional world was extremely helpful for everything that has come since then, because I had to learn the value of perseverance of getting rejected, and coming back day after day after day.

Ryan 09:51

And that's hard. It wasn't always fun, but it was rewarding and fulfilling once I started to learn some things and do a bit better at it. It's helped me and everything else I've done since then.

Jacob 10:02

And you went on to become a sales executive at that company that you were a part of as well. Right?

Ryan 10:07

Yeah, I started in sales as a as a rep, and then eventually got promoted to a management role. And then I was a director at the company. And then I went to a sister company of LexisNexis, where I was vice president of North American sales were responsible for half a half per \$500 million territory. So yeah, certainly, my responsibility went from a small little individual territory to a large team and a whole division of a business.

Jacob 10:33

Were you like when you think back to the leadership and the management training programs that you were a part of? First, did you get any formal leadership and management training? And if you did, what was that, like?

Ryan 10:48

There was a new manager boot camp. As part of our program, I love LexisNexis. I just spoke with their CEO, Mike Walsh the other day, so nothing but awesome things to say about Lexus, but most companies, and I did a big survey of this. So as I was writing my first book, most companies don't have an extensive program for people making that initial leap from individual contributor to first time manager.

Ryan 11:12

And, and so yes, I had a little boot camp that was a day and a half. And we had a binder that we took with us, but for the most part, the training is on the job is doing it and making mistakes and trying to learn from them. And so my hope is to try to help minimize the mistakes made by others that they can learn from the mistakes made by me and many others and do it better the first time instead of having to stumble their way through for the first few years, like I did. So the program was, it existed, there just wasn't that much to it.

Ryan 11:22

And in some companies, there's literally no training. In fact, I know because I work with some of them now. So that's, that's a, that's an underserved market. And it was another reason why I wanted to focus on that part at that time in your career, because if you ask a lot of people, you'll find that they're that they haven't had a ton of training in that regard.

Jacob 12:07

Yeah, I mean, even when I was writing my book, and I was doing research on this, I found that most people actually get into a leadership role at some point, usually first leadership role in your 20s. It could be mid or late 20s. But you know, even if you're a supervisor, leading one or two or three other people, but most people don't actually get any formal leadership training until they're in their 30s. And in some cases in their 40s, you basically go for like 15, in some cases, 20 years, where you're leading people without actually having any kind of leadership training, and you just kind of have to figure things out on your own.

Jacob 12:38

And then one day, a decade or two later, somebody says, Oh, hey, Jacob, by the way, we're gonna give you this leadership training program, even though you've, you've been doing who knows what, for the last 15 years? And it's just, it's completely crazy. That that is how so many people think about it.

Jacob 12:56

So your book has an interesting title, how to go from top performer to excellent leader. So first, what is the difference between being a top performer and an excellent leader, because oftentimes, people mix up the two. And they think that if you are a great performer, you're a great individual contributor, inherently, you're a leader, or inherently, you're going to be a good leader, because you're your driving results. But as we now know, those are not the same thing. So what's the difference?

Ryan 13:22

Well, I mean, it's, it's funny than the, the way to get the opportunity to interview for a management job, and most places, and the place where I worked, was they, they look at the top of the stack rankings, and the handful of people at the top of the stack, the sales stack rankings, get a chance to interview and they have the best chance to get the job. And the the funny part about it is there's there's very little of what you did as an individual contributor that actually translates to you being a good coach or manager of a team of others doing that.

Ryan 14:01

The skill sets just completely different. And I understand why you look towards the top performer because basically the thought process as well, they were really good. So they probably have earned some respect from their peers. Let's elevate them and then tell them Okay, tell everybody else exactly what you did. So that you can create a bunch of clones essentially. And, and so I get that that's, that's why it's happens. However, there are some there are a lot of superstar performers that are horrible coaches.

Ryan 14:34

It's just like, have you Did you ever grow up in a math class with a math teacher who was a genius when it comes to solving math equations and math problems? However, what they weren't good at was explaining how to do it to others. They could get up on the board and I'm thinking one specific teacher right now. He was incredible at actually doing the math problem. But when anyone else who wasn't nearly as smart as him had Questions, he struggled to explain how we can do it. Right? So the same

thing happens in sports like Magic Johnson coach to Lakers at one point, he was terrible at it. Right. But he because he's a great player, Michael Jordan, same not really a great coach, Larry Bird was a coach, but was just okay a better front office guy of selecting talent and he is actually coaching others.

Ryan 15:21

So it's not always the top performer is going to be a great coach, like look in the NFL, a lot of the great coaches were not the starting quarterback, they were the backup or the third string, or even guys who didn't make it to the NFL are doing it. Sean McVeigh is one of them. He went to Miami where I went initially and was it was an average receiver. And now he's like the hot coach in the NFL.

Ryan 15:41

So I think the same happens in this in the sales world. The same happens in all the business world where you're just grabbing the top performer, without actually fully checking, can they coach others who aren't as talented as them? Can they help other people who aren't naturally as good as them? And that's the problem is, is sometimes we elevate and promote people who are just not good teachers, not good coaches, and a big element of management of leading a team is, is teaching and coaching other people to levels that they didn't even realize they were capable of reaching.

Jacob 16:17

Yeah, and I love the analogy. I think we see that in a lot of different spaces, right? I mean, you can be a great chef, but you have a tough time teaching other people how to cook. You know, I take a lot of chess lessons, and I've taken chess lessons with various you know, grandmasters over the years. And I found that some of them are while they're amazing players, they have a very hard time explaining concepts and ideas. whereas others who are not, you know, as great players are very good teachers. And it's been it's really, really interesting that we always assume like you said, we want to create the clones, right?

Jacob 16:50

Clearly, you figured out the secret sauce, and now teach everybody else how to do it. And so how are you seeing that change now? Where are you seeing that change in organizations have they figured out that just because you're making a lot of money doesn't necessarily mean you're a great leader of other people.

Ryan 17:07

Um, I think the results are mixed, I think what needs to happen is you have to create multiple career paths for people. The typical career path is you get promoted from an individual contributor to running your own team or to managing a team. And so people see that as the only avenue for growth. And they feel like if they don't go on that path, they're not growing, when in reality, there are some people that just belong and an individual contributor role. And so companies need to make sure those people feel like they're still growing their career, they're still doing well, without going into a management role.

Ryan 17:47

So there are there are ways to do this by giving them more responsibility, more territory, more projects to do outside of actually managing a team or having full time employees that work for them. I think

some companies are doing a better job at that, as well as trying to identify people who have the leadership and management skills early on and, work with them long before it's time for them to get promoted. Realizing though, that it is important that you're a performer it is important that you do great work and what you're currently doing, but also identifying the other skills and behaviors in a person that they seem to have a strong desire to help other people who seem to have a desire to put others before them, as opposed to just saying, I'm going to aggressively do my job and not really worry about anything else.

Ryan 18:09

And I think it's good to have both sets of people or a wide variety of people, I, I love having people on my team that I knew, they're never going to be a manager and that's completely fine. They're going to crush it here. Let's just do everything we can to support them to make sure they're feeling growth to take care of them. As well as there's the other group that maybe they really want to be a manager and they have some of that innate skill and talent that let's let's work with them to get better and better. So when it comes time for them to run a team, they're in a better position than I was when I got promoted and just thought, okay, because I lead on the football field, I can lead in the business world, when in reality, you know, turned out not to be that accurate.

Jacob 19:21

It's interesting, because I think a lot of people assume that to become successful when you get promoted to a management position, that's a sign of growth of development and becoming more successful. But like you said, you can be an individual contributor, and be growing and becoming more successful. And there are a lot of really great individual contributors out there making a lot of money. You know, they're very, very happy, but they're not necessarily leading others. So I think maybe part of it is we need to separate this idea that being in a leadership or in a management position is the same thing as being successful.

Jacob 19:55

Those two don't have to be the same thing. And I think that's a That's something a lot of people have a very, very hard time with. Because, you know, when you look at the hierarchy, the corporate ladder, that's basically how it's built. The higher up you go, the more people you are responsible for, the more successful you are. And as we now know, that is definitely not the case.

Ryan 20:16

For sure, for sure, I think companies are getting better at this. But that's still that's still a path that a lot of people see where they get to get an entry level job and think, Well, I hope I can become the CEO someday, when that that might not be the right path for them.

Jacob 20:31

Yep, I mean, that's, I mean, when I was in college, that's what I thought I was gonna do that I'd be the CMO of a company one day, you know, climb that corporate ladder, and, you know, haven't had a full time job working for anybody else in around 15 years and never looked back. So you never know how things are gonna turn out.

Ryan 20:48

Awesome.

Jacob 20:50

Why do you think top performers oftentimes become leaders? And it's interesting, because sometimes they don't even want to be, like, I've talked to a lot of top performers before, who have turned down leadership or management positions inside of organizations, because they say it's not worth the responsibility, because they know they're not good leaders, and they're just, you know they're happy to just be on their own. Um, so why do you think we we keep forcing or going to the top performers, and assuming that they're going to be the leaders is it like just a mental block that we have,

Ryan 21:26

I mean, it's been that way, for a long time, probably been that way for people who are in the leadership positions now, especially if they've been in the workforce for many years. And so the assumption is just that's the way it is. So we keep doing it, when when in reality that that methodology of well, this is the way we've always done, it, is seriously flawed. So I think that's, that's why that happens. And I have I have some close friends that are currently individual contributors that are being pressured by their companies, we want you in management, or we want you to leadership position, and they just have no desire, they're doing really well, they're making good money, they're very good at their jobs. And they and they also have a life outside of work, that they love their their spouses, their kids.

Ryan 22:07

And they don't want the extra responsibility of a bunch of people for a little bit, maybe for maybe a higher base salary, but maybe not a not a higher total compensation package. Because as an individual contributor, they can do really well. So I think I do, I do think that's changing a bit where people don't feel like compelled or forced to go there, they are finding other avenues to be good in their current role and continue to grow in their current role. And companies that are, I think, on the cutting edge are really good at this, that they find ways for growth for people outside of just the traditional path of going straight up.

Jacob 22:46

So when you look at a managerial role inside of an organization, who do you think that is best suited for? In other words, how can you tell if you would make a better individual contributor, or if you should consider going into a managerial position?

Ryan 23:07

I mean, I think the people who are best suited for those management jobs, enjoy and are fulfilled by teaching and coaching, and helping other people that there are people who feel genuine fulfillment, from seeing other people do well their lives are richer, by genuinely helping other people do well. I think they're probably more collaborative. They're more selfless. They're more about other people, versus the ones who have a goal, and are determined to do everything within their power to achieve and exceed that singular goal and mission. And those people also sometimes struggle with others who don't view the world the way that they do.

Ryan 24:06

Whereas a manager or a leader, has an understanding and a value of a diverse way of thinking of being surrounded by others who may offer up different points of view, who are willing to put themselves in the other person's shoes and understand life from their perspective and what they're dealing with. And they have the patience and willingness and desire to want to do that. Versus the one who just myopically focused on this is what I'm, I'm going to do and nobody's going to get in my way. And I'm going to go go, go go go to completely different types of people and styles. Both can be right. As long as like Jim Collins would say, I think I like having both of those types of people on the bus. We just have to make sure they're in the right seat.

Jacob 24:57

Yeah. Yeah, no, that's very well said. It actually reminds me of a story. I recently had the CEO of UScellular, Laurent Therival on my podcast, and he was telling you a story where early on in his career, he was brought in to this startup, you know, not a tiny startup but considered a startup. And he had all these financial goals and all these business metrics that he was supposed to achieve and kind of help turn the company around. And he create, he created his vision, he created his plan, he did everything, he implemented it. And he met all those goals. He met all of his objectives. And so the board that all the executive team, they call him into a meeting, and he thinks he's going in there, they're going to be toasting him with champagne and saying, congratulations, you did this amazing job.

Jacob 25:42

And he goes into this meeting, and they say, Well, you know, congratulations, you did everything you said you were gonna do, you're fired. And he told me, he's like, what is this like some kind of a weird joke. And he realized that he got fired because nobody liked him. And it was, like you said, it was only his plan. He didn't bring anybody else along on the journey. He didn't, you know, he didn't have that human aspect of leadership, it was just very much command and control. Here's what's going to happen, go do it. And although he achieved the goals that he set out to achieve, nobody wanted to work with him. And, and he learned a very, very hard lesson, you know, many, many years ago. And I love that story that sometimes just because you can do something from a business perspective, still does not make you the best leader that's out there.

Ryan 26:37

It's a great point, I think there's it's maybe underrated skill to be likable. That doesn't mean, that doesn't mean you do everything for that goal. And I do think there are people that exists that are both respected and liked. But certainly I know when I think about the work that I do, and the people I work with, it's much more enjoyable. When you're dealing with people you genuinely like, and you want to be around.

Ryan 27:05

I mean, if you're fortunate to get the point where you get to pick your clients, I'm not choosing to work with clients that are that aren't enjoyable to be with. I mean, at the beginning, maybe you have to scratch and claw to get get whatever you can get. But once you get established a bit, and you get your business going, and you can choose not choosing to work with those types of people.

Jacob 27:25

Yeah, couldn't agree more. So I want to transition a little bit to talk about your book. So you have these three sections in there, which are lead yourself, and then you have build your team and lead your team. So I thought we could spend a couple minutes about talking about each one of those. Starting off with leading yourself and the story that I was hoping you could start off with is and correct me if I'm wrong. Were you a battling Hall of Fame quarterback or Ben Roethlisberger at Miami University. So can you can you share a little bit about that and what you learned from that experience?

Ryan 28:01

Sure. So Ben and I are the same age same recruiting class at Miami same position. Both played quarterback here in the state of Ohio, him at Finley me at Centerville and and went there graduated class of 2000 and went there to Miami in 2000 and started competing for that job. There's a fifth year senior who was a returning quarterback our first year and we battled it out for two years rotated the first few games our second year against Michigan and Iowa and eventually, you know, his talent was was too too great.

Ryan 28:40

And he ended up earning the job, late great Terry Heppner chose him to be the starter obviously made right choice and I think it was good as a good learning because I'd been the starting quarterback the starting point guard starting shortstop pitcher outfielder on every team I've ever been on, including my freshman year in high school on the varsity team. And so it was the first time I'd ever wanted something and didn't get it despite putting everything I had into it.

Ryan 29:09

And so when you're 19 years old, and somebody tells you that despite everything you put into it and your attitude and your effort was good, but somebody else has just flat out better than you that really knocks you on your back and I think we all need times to get knocked down a bit especially if you get a little bit of an ego and arrogance about you as as one would. As a starting quarterback. Or at least I did and that's what happened to me. So I was I was stuck with with what what do i do that i was I've been told the only way I'm going to play as a quarterback is if this guy gets hurt. And that did not seem likely and he never did by the way at Miami and only has gotten hurt very little amount and his entire really long NFL career, which is still going.

Ryan 29:57

So it forced me to really think, what should I do and I transferred to Ohio University and competed all over again to be the starter there and then was fortunate to get to play for a couple years and get voted Captain by my teammates, my, my, my final season. And that also gave me the chance to play football after college in the Arena Football League and briefly in the Canadian league. So, you know, I, again, I think it's certainly one of the biggest inflection points of my life of doing everything within my power to earn something and have someone else telling me that I wasn't good enough. I think it's, it's probably useful for all of us to have that happen to us a few times

Jacob 30:39

I love that story. But let's, let's talk a little bit about the section of the book leading yourself. And I love I love that section. Because a lot of people forget that before you can lead others before you can lead a team, you have to start with yourself. So when you say lead yourself, what do you actually mean? And how can you go about doing that.

Ryan 31:00

So one of the phrases that I think is useful for a person to think about is, as you mentioned, the it's important for us to first look inward before we look outward to help other people, we have to take care of ourselves. First, we've heard all of the metaphors about the oxygen mask or other things when it comes to leading yourself. For me, it was all about trying to become as the great Charlie Munger would say, a learning machine. And if I became that type of person that would better it would put me in a better position, to lead others to build a team to lead a team for others to want to follow me if they saw me as a learning machine as somebody who was constantly striving to get better.

Ryan 31:47

And so I just built this four part framework for myself of what it means to be a learning machine of regularly one fueling my intake engine to have not just being a learner, but being a doer. So I'm experimenting based upon what I've learned, three of making sure I pause and reflect and analyze what worked of my experiments and what didn't work. What am I gonna keep doing, what should I stop doing, and then fourth, regularly putting myself in the position of being a teacher, because teaching is the greatest tool I found, for learning nothing creates more clarity of thought for me, than writing and sharing what I believe with others.

Ryan 32:22

I don't want to make a fool of myself, when I stand up in front of 1000 people, I want to get very clear on what I know, and what I believe and what I'm about to share with you to help you to help your life. And so in order to do that, I have to get very clear on what I believe in. So that's why that four part system is what is what it's all about, for me to become a learning machine. And that's, that's what he equates a good day for me is if I can spend parts in each of those four quadrants of the of the day. And I found when I do that people seem to want to follow.

Jacob 32:55

So for somebody, you know, because most people who listen to the show, not everybody, but I'd say the majority of people do have a full time job. And so when they think about that quadrant, can we break it down a little bit? Like, how long does this take? How long do you need to be in each quadrant? What are some things that you can do just anything, anything specific that would make this tangible for people so that they can actually bring this into the career into their careers into their lives and follow that kind of same, that same approach that you do?

Ryan 33:25

So let's say you have read an HBR article about how to run better meetings, you've met with a mentor and brought this up to him or her about how to run better meetings. And they've provided feedback because they've led teams for many years. So you have this new idea, or new sense for how to open a

meeting how to make sure the meeting goes smoothly how to leave the meeting with great takeaways and action items and people who are responsible for those things, right? Let's say we've learned this through the process of our intake engine, because we took it in through an HBr article and a mentor

Ryan 34:00

Second, it does us no good sit back. Wow. Now I know how to run a meeting, well, you actually have to go and do it. So you experiment with your new key learning from the HBr article and from your mentor, and you try it out, you actually put it into play, you have a mindset of someone who's regularly experimenting with what they're learning. So you go and do it at your next meeting. And maybe even if you're lucky, your mentor can join you for the meeting. So they can be in there and watch which I've done and I encourage others to do.

Ryan 34:32

Third, and this could all happen in a day. Third. Afterwards, you you reflect on how it went. You asked a few of your core members of your team that have been with you for a while that you've built good relationships with where they can really tell you the unvarnished truth. How did that go? We tried something new. What do you think? So you're reflecting on and your mentor as well, you're reflecting on I learned this new way to run a meeting. I experiment by actually doing it and running the meeting. Now I'm taking time to reflect, analyze, think, what should I continue and keep doing have the new style of running the meeting? What should I stop doing?

Ryan 35:11

And then fourth, let's say you have a meeting with somebody that you're mentoring, because now you're in a leadership position. And you say, Hey, here's something that happened with me today, I learned about this new way of running a meeting from this HBr article, and from my conversation with my mentor actually went and did it, then I reflected on it. And here's a few of the things that actually went really well. Here are a few things I learned. Don't even bother, right. But now is the way that I'm going to move forward. And so you teaching the other person now cements what you've learned what you've picked up, you want to help that person. So you're trying really hard to understand all the good parts of the new way to run a meeting.

Ryan 35:51

And before you know it, you've been in all four quadrants, and one day, or maybe a few days, whatever it may be of saying this is how to end you do that for basically everything within your career, or everything in your life, of always striving to fuel the intake engine run experiments based on what you learned, reflect on how it went, What to keep doing what to stop and then sharing with other people. And it just goes on and on and on and never stops. And that you that if you once you pause at the end of the year, and you're regularly behaving, wow, look at everything we've done over the course of the year, we've changed a lot because you're in this constant state of being a learning machine. And that's how I think you can regularly figure out new and better ways to do things.

Jacob 36:40

Do you recommend going through those kind of those four quadrants? Is this supposed to be a daily thing? So are you supposed to learn something new every day implement something new every day? Or is that not like a strict rule behind it?

Ryan 36:54

I don't know if there's a strict rule, I don't know how realistic it is to be able to live that way. I mean, I don't want to be robotic and act like you have to do that. I think just like that is a great day I just described it would be a great work day. That is that has happened. But I certainly want to spend time, at least some of those quadrants every I mean, every day, I'm in the I'm in the first one every day, no matter what I am, there's going to be some sort of reading, listening to podcasts, watching something reading, whatever it may be, that I will spend time every day, then I want to plan out what the experiments are with what I'm learning, maybe I learned a new style of opening a paragraph for writing my book, but and then and then I need to think about how that went by sending it to a friend of mine to who's a better writer than me to help me out.

Ryan 37:39

And then once I figure out what I learned, I'm going to teach it to somebody else. So that may take a week. But that's another way that I am on the cycle of learning. And now at the at the end of that I'm in a much better position, because I'm just always in the mindset of fueling the intake engine and then going through the next steps.

Jacob 37:57

Yeah, no, I love it. And I think the important thing is that these can be small things. You know, I always like to think of, if you could improve by 1% a day, then by the end of the year, you're going to be 37 times better. So 1% a day for a leader might be like you said, you listen to a podcast article, you watch a video for five minutes, maybe you practice empathy. So when somebody comes to you with a problem, before responding right away, you kind of take a deep breath, think of a time when you were in a similar situation and then respond.

Jacob 38:24

So you can do these little things. And I think that's important for people to realize, because when they think of trying to become a better leader, sometimes they think I don't have time for this. It's too much effort. Like I can't do like this whole transformation. But we're talking about small things over time that can yield to a lot of really, really big results. Like you said, reading an HBR article, you know, how long is that gonna take 5-10 minutes, and then try to put something into practice. So I love the kind of simplicity behind it.

Jacob 38:51

You also have this great, great quote or the great way that you talk about leading yourself and that's, you can command compliance, but you cannot command commitment. Can you talk about the difference between compliance and commitment and why the commitment part is so, so important?

Ryan 39:11

So think about the best boss you ever had. And think about the worst boss you ever had. The worst boss you ever had you complied to their orders because you had to, because you wanted to keep your job. You complied until you didn't have to. You complied because maybe you're supporting your family and you need the paycheck.

Ryan 39:11

Now think about the best boss you've ever had. You probably chose to commit to them and their mission. You chose not them. They weren't it wasn't positional leadership, meaning they're there in a leadership role because of their title you chose to commit to them leadership is about when people intentionally and purposely choose to follow follow you when they otherwise have the power to not. So I want to be that type of leader, I think it's important for us to strive to be that type of leader where people have the power to do something else, to follow somebody else, and yet they still choose to follow you.

Ryan 40:14

So compliance can be commanded, but commitment cannot, I can't command you to commit to me, I have to earn that I have to earn respect, I have to earn the right for you to choose to commit to me. And so that's what the whole, all of the behaviors and actions and characteristics of excellent leadership is all about trying to build the type of team or organization where people will intentionally choose to want to follow you not just say, Well, he's my boss. So I have to because I don't want to get fired. And because I need this paycheck, right?

Ryan 40:49

Like we all you know, we've all been that person before, I would imagine, at least most of us I know I have. And so that's not that's not you know, the type of leader we want to be wouldn't be the type of leader that that is able to build a committed team of people. And that just takes a lot of never ending work.

Jacob 41:08

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I know self discipline is a is a big part of it. Can you talk about what you do for self discipline? Because we don't usually hear about this in a leadership context. But I very much follow a lot of the same principle, you know, wake up early, eat healthy exercise, like you got to have a little bit of that self discipline as a leader. Why is that so important? And can you talk about your regimen specifically in what you do?

Ryan 41:32

I mean, I just believe discipline creates trust. If I know that I can count on my leader or the person I'm following that they're going to show up, they're going to be there. They're going to do the work. They're reliable, dependable, again, not sexy words. They're consistent, not sexy. All very effective. And so yeah, I mean, discipline is important to me, I want to see Can somebody show up when it's hard? Can somebody consistently do it day after day, after day consistencies in my family's DNA, it's something I think that's been ingrained in us from our dad and my mom, from early on, that we show up and get to work every day. Regardless, you don't feel bad show up and get to work.

Ryan 42:20

And I think that's part of me, it's part of something I value very much is somebody consistently showing up and doing the work. And in order to do that, you know, I set routines and rituals in place. Yes, just like you mentioned, people are probably tired of hearing about morning routines. But it's important to me, I wake up early and have to move my body physically, that's really important to me, too. I mean, we get one body, I want to take care of it as best I can to do everything I can to fuel it with healthy Whole Foods as much as possible. I'm lucky to have a really great wife who studies that stuff constantly. So she helps me with that.

Ryan 42:58

And I love working out like it is more mental than physical for me to put strain on my body to push myself beyond limits that I feel like I have, and in doing that, I think frees me up to be more creative later in the day. And make puts me in a better position to lead other people and to write books and record podcasts and do all of that other words, so also creates stamina and energy. And so I would say all of that is vital to me that I do look for that in other people, I do look for people who are disciplined, and have a work ethic and are consistent and reliable. And I can depend on them. That's something that's important to me. And if I sense a leader is not disciplined or isn't willing to do that. Yeah, I'm probably not as apt to follow.

Jacob 43:45

It's funny from all the CEOs I interviewed, and even for my recent book alone, I talked to 140 CEOs. And one of the most consistent themes was work ethic. And everybody said, there is no substitute for working hard. It doesn't matter how well you want to be, you know, practicing empathy, or how good of a listener that you want to be. There's absolutely no substitute for working hard. And even though you're great at things like emotional intelligence, or even though you're great at all these other things, you still need to show up every day, you need to work hard and not not just work hard.

Jacob 44:21

I forgot that a which CEO was he said that one of his rules is always show up and do 10% more than what you're asked. So, you know, because people are going to recognize and that's how you kind of show up. That's how you get these other opportunities. You do the things that other people don't want to do you take the projects that other people don't want to take the things that make you uncomfortable. So I love I love that focus on discipline. And it's I suppose it's a little bit of a tough love approach. And a lot of people are not comfortable with it, but it's you know, it's what require it what's required if you want to succeed and grow personally and professionally.

Ryan 44:55

I had Carly Fiorina on my show. Have you had Have you talked to Carly?

Jacob Morgan 44:58

No, no.

Ryan 44:59

She is a first female CEO of a Fortune 50 company. And Carly, I said she started as like a secretary type job. And I said, How did you do that? And she said, early in my career, always ran towards the fire. Good metaphor, what do you mean, say more. And, and and she said, I always looked for the tough jobs that had nothing to do with my current job. And I raised my hand, and I ran towards them, and I and I did them. And I solve tough problems. And it was always willing to take on the challenge. And because she was running towards the fire regularly, she kept getting promoted and kept getting promoted.

Ryan 45:42

And hardly any of the, what the work she was doing was within the realm of what her current job said she was to do. And so I think of people of like, if you can find a way to solve tough problems, that is one of the the number one ways to build a career is seek out the tough problems work hard to solve them. People will notice and they'll say, I want her on my team, I want him on my team. If you're the type of person who does that.

Jacob 46:07

Yeah, for sure. Let's go to the second part of the book, which is about building your team. And you had a story and I'm hoping you can share this about you. So you are a first time manager and one of the big mistakes that you made for not firing someone. So can you can you share that story and any other stories that popped into mind as far as big mistakes made when you were a first time manager? What other mistakes were out there?

Ryan 46:34

Well, so we in the selling world and I guess other parts of the business, if it's pretty black and white, and our job either hitting the number or you're not. And if you're at a certain level then then we had these performance plans a performance improvement plan a pip things like that people call them. And there's one particular person on my team who was a single mother and I loved her. I mean, she was great. A great person, a great mom, supported her family, however, was not you know, we had changed some things in our in our job and how we are going about it, and she wasn't doing great, got put on a performance plan.

Ryan 47:17

And it got to the point where it was time to fire her and I just couldn't do it. I felt terrible. I knew she was the sole breadwinner, we had a number of conversations about the personal life and family. I couldn't do it couldn't pull the trigger I kept. Let's give her another month, give her another month, give her another month. And my boss was all over me and ever and in HR even what are you doing the plan said that she should have been fired months ago, couldn't do it couldn't do it.

Ryan 47:17

And eventually it came to the day where I was getting pressure from above and others and I and so I brought her in and HR is in there. And my boss's even came in to sit down on this one. I did it and she's crying and looked at me and said, I thought the plan didn't mean anything. I thought I thought you were going to let me slide forever, because I should have been fired months ago. And it just kind of dawned

on me that you part of being a manager and part of being a leader is holding people accountable. And my word became meaningless to a number of people. I mean, everybody in that room, and then I even had some of my top performers walk up to me afterwards and say, yeah, we love her too. And she's great. But what are you doing, man? Like, you got to make tough decisions.

Ryan 48:25

That's part of being a leader, and we lost faith in you, we lost, we didn't think you could pull the trigger or make the tough call. And don't get me wrong. I mean, everyone hates firing people, like it's the worst part of being in a management role is having to fire people. But that's, that's part of the deal. Like, if you can't do that, you shouldn't be in that role. And if and certainly I like to think it comes from a good place, and I can make excuses for myself, Oh, I you know, I felt bad for family. But at the end of the day, you know, it's not serving anybody to not hold people accountable.

Ryan 48:58

And so that was a big mistake I made early in my career that I learned from and I was I was grateful that I did have people pulled me aside and really questioned me in wonder if I could do the job well, because I couldn't make the tough call. And I think I got better from that moment moving forward. Because I learned that if I wanted to work in a job like that I had to be willing to do it. And so I certainly took a lot of notes. And that's how it ended up in the book because it still has had an impact on me to this day. And it was many years ago.

Jacob 49:30

And I it's a tough story. I mean, I had something similar happened with actually both my wife did were when we were starting our businesses, we had somebody who we hired to help us with a lot of social media stuff. And when we first started our businesses, you know, mine many years ago, she was she did a pretty good job to kind of help get things off the ground. But as things became bigger as the business grew, his content started getting out there more frequently. She really, really struggled and she would she just wasn't able to do it.

Jacob 50:00

Every time we would go on meetings, there would always be an excuse, you know, this didn't work. I'm sorry, I couldn't do this, you know, I had to go here, I had this emergency, I had to take care of and it went on like this for, I don't know, eight months, and I just couldn't let her go. Because she was with me from the beginning, I felt bad and guilty. And I thought, Okay, well, she has a good excuse. And then finally, I just couldn't do it anymore. Because I realized that the business was fundamentally not growing. Because she was not able to keep up and help create this brand and share the content.

Jacob 50:34

And, you know, we had a very hard conversation, we had to let her go, of course, crying, you know, all that sort of stuff. There was very, very unpleasant for me. But once that happened, and I transitioned and brought on somebody else who was used to working in that more fast paced, larger scale environment, the business took off. So it's, I think we kind of all go through that process of firing is hard. We don't want to do it. But there's a difference between kind of that personal connection relationship, and I think sometimes the, the business side, and like you said, you do need to make those tough,

unpleasant calls. Sometimes it's the nature of the beast, especially when you work for yourself, you know, no one's no one's there pushing you to do it. Like, you have to come to that realization. And that I think, is really, really tough.

Ryan 51:21

It's hard, man, it's hard. Especially if you're you're compassionate person, you have empathy for people in their situations, it's really hard. And it's the least fun part. About I think leading is when you have to let people go, and but it is it is a necessary part of the job. And if it's not something you're willing or able to do, then you have to reassess. Maybe I shouldn't be in a job where where I have to make these calls. And that's if that's the case, that's fine. I mean, you know, that's, that's fine. But but make sure you learn that and move forward based on how you feel about that.

Jacob 51:58

So maybe one more point, before we jump to the last section of the book, you talk about the importance of deciding on a type of leader that you want to be how how do you decide on the kind of leader that you want to be? I mean, do you just mentally tell yourself like, I want to be the type of leader that is empathetic, I want to be the type of leader who cares about people like how do you build your leadership style, your persona to become an excellent leader?

Ryan 52:23

I think it's a combination of what's unique about you, and your personality. And your we're all some of our experiences are the sum of your experiences as well as people you admire. And so I've, I've regularly tried to mash together the combination of what's me as well as with the people I look up to the most. And that's kind of become so what do they do that that just blows me away that they're so effective.

Ryan 52:51

So my, one of my bosses named Brian Miller was just this incredible storyteller. And the way he opened every single Town Hall was with an amazing story with no wasted words. And so Brian and I have had so many conversations about how I can become as good a storyteller as him, right? My dad just writes these epically awesome emails to his team. And I would get inside his head to ask him, what's your mindset around putting together an email, like these little things that I'm taking bit after bit after bit from people and taking the qualities that they have, and then really combining it with my own personality.

Ryan 53:33

And that's the type of leader that I want to be. So I would say it's a combination like the world, you grow up, sometimes you think the world is black and white. And what you realize as you mature and grow as the world is just gray. And I mean that in a good way, because it's there's this messy middle at Brenton Beshore talks about, and I had him on my show. And he's like, that's just that's what the world's like.

Ryan 53:57

So when it comes to developing your style, there's no one size fits all. There's no one way you have to be I'd say take what's authentically you, and combine it with the people you really look up to the most

and see if you can implement some new key ideas or ways they go about leading people that you love, in order to make it still yours. But add in bits and pieces along the way. So you can get better at parts of this leadership game that you really like.

Jacob 54:27

Love it. I know we're pretty much out of time. So maybe we could just touch for one minute or so in the last section of the book just so people have a little bit of context. And it's leading your team and you talked about the importance of setting a clear strategy vision communicating effectively. What do you think is really important for people to take away from that section of the book on lead your team?

Ryan 54:51

I would just say that there are when you get placed or you earn a leadership role. Knowing all of the attributes, or the parts of the job are important. For example, I said, I'm going to be the rah, rah, inspirational guy to my team, and all of the management stuff of figuring out how to work within the constraints of the system, or, or the numbers part, or all of the analytics are the parts that you have to send off to partners all I'll have somebody else do that stuff for me, I don't really want to do that.

Ryan 55:26

And I remember my dad sat me down, he's like, dude, you have to do all three, I mean, by all three was you have to lead you have to manage, you have to coach right, the coaching for the performance and coaching for development, that the grand inspirational visionary stuff, as well as the management and administration and stewardship of resources that's what the management part, if you want to be good in one of those roles, you've got to focus on all three and not try to outsource those parts of the job. That's part of the deal.

Ryan 55:53

And I didn't realize that or think about that. Initially, I thought I don't have to do those other parts. And that was just wrong. And I'd say for those who get promoted, think those through and work on crafting each of those to the best of your ability and continually working on getting better at them to

Jacob 56:08

Well, Ryan, I mean, I can't believe the time already went by this quickly. I mean, it's it's crazy. I still have like 20 questions I could ask you. But it's good because this will give people a lot of incentive to check out your book and check out your podcast. So can you let people know where can they go to learn more about you, your book, your podcast, I mean, anything that you want to mention for people to check out, please feel free to do so.

Ryan 56:30

Learningleader.com is where everything is you can get a hold of me there too, as well as if you are an audio listener and you're only on your phone, you can text the word learners, learners to 44222 so texting learners, to 44222 also gets access to pretty much everything that I do as or you can go to learningleader.com. And you'll see everything that that I do there.

Jacob 56:54

I love it. Ryan, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me.

Ryan 56:59

Thanks Jacob, I appreciate your preparation and get a chance to talk today man, it was a lot of fun.

Jacob 57:04

Yeah, no, I agree. And thanks, everyone for tuning in my guest again, Ryan Hawk. Check out his book, Welcome to Management. And don't forget to check out his podcast again. It's one of the most popular leadership and management podcasts on the planet and it is called The Learning Leader podcast. I will see all of you next week.