

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 Morgan 00:00

Before we get into the show, I wanted to let you know about a new resource that I created. It is a PDF that will walk you through how to create your own personal definition of leadership and why this matters. Now, more than ever, Funny enough, when I interviewed 140 of the world's top CEOs, this was actually the hardest thing for them to do. I know crazy, right? But this is also something that we have to do because you cannot build and you cannot become what you don't define.

Jacob Morgan 00:28

So in this PDF, not only will I walk you through a framework for how you can define leadership. But I will also share with you some of the definitions from CEOs I interviewed, including from the CEOs of organizations like Oracle, like Verizon, and KPMG. So you will see and hear exactly how these other CEOs are thinking about leadership. If you want to grab that PDF, you can go to defineleadership.com. And of course, please don't forget to subscribe to the YouTube channel.

Jacob Morgan 01:01

Today's episode is a rather personal one. And those of you who follow my content, subscribe to my channel, listen to my show, you know that I usually don't share a lot of personal stuff. Even on social media, I'm just not someone who shares a lot of personal information. I don't know, that's just how I was raised. I've been burned a few times in the past, but I'm trying to get a little bit better I'm trying to work on is trying to open up a little bit more. Because a lot of people actually ask me very personal questions, and a lot of people who listen to my content or read my books or whatnot, they even come up to me and they say, Hey, how are your kids? I'm like, wait a minute, how do you know I have kids. And I forgot that I you know, I mentioned in my book, I talked about it on my show. So I'm trying to get better, you know, sharing personal stuff opening up a little bit.

Jacob Morgan 01:48

But this was one of the first times or one of the first talks that I've given where I really actually opened up to an audience. This talk was given in 2018. And it was for TED Academy. And I think it was around 2000 people. This was an event that took place in Greece in a huge amphitheater, so beautiful, beautiful venue. But of course, you know, I was quite nervous giving this giving this talk. And they asked me to share something personal. So I put together a talk on how to future proof your career. But I shared a lot of personal stories and anecdotes and insights and things that I've had to go through or things that I have gone through over the years. I've only given this talk once in my entire life. And that

was for TED Academy. So I never gave this talk ever again. I think I've talked about some of the themes in this talk again in the future. But as far as the talk goes, never ever did it again.

Jacob Morgan 02:44

It was 15 minutes. And as you can imagine, for Ted, I was very, very nervous. I practice consistently, I must have practiced this talk over 100 times. I was practicing while I was driving in the car I was practicing while we were giving a bath to our child to our daughter Naomi, my other kid Noah, I wasn't even born yet. I was practicing it all the freaking time. So much so that actually think my wife could have given this talk on my behalf. And just had the exact same words down word for word like she, she knew it that well. That's how much how often I spent practicing. And she helped me quite a lot with it, and gave me a lot of wonderful ideas. And usually I don't practice or rehearse the talk. And you know, usually I have some specific points that I know I want to hit in the talk. But I don't rehearse it. I don't script it. I don't plan it out word for word. But for TED, it has to be 15 minutes. Otherwise, they come out with the hook in a yank you offstage. So I really had to practice all of this stuff to make sure that it stayed at around 15 minutes and not too much under or not too much over.

Jacob Morgan 03:55

Thankfully, with my acting background, when I was a kid, I was in drama class. I was an extra in a couple movies and TV shows and I spent pretty much my young childhood, doing a lot of drama and doing plays in theaters. So I spent a lot of time rehearsing and practicing and memorizing scripts and doing that sort of stuff. So that that kind of paid off a little bit when I was getting ready for this talk. It was also quite stressful because I was gone for 10 days. Right after this talk that I was supposed to give in Greece. I was giving another talk in Mexico, so I had to leave a couple days prior to get the Greece. Then I gave my talk and I had to fly out the next day after my talk in the evening at like 10 o'clock at night. It was around a 36 hour journey to get to Mexico where I was doing something for the president of Mexico there, Vicente Fox. And I had to stay there for a few days and then came home and in total It was around 10 days of not being with my family of eating food in airports of not being able to do my usual routine that I like to do so it was tough. It was tough. And I mean, I suppose that's one of the benefits of doing a lot of things virtually nowadays is I have my, my creature comforts.

Jacob Morgan 05:10

So it was it was fun. I mean, I'm glad I ended up doing this talk. I think it was, I received a lot of great feedback from everybody who said that they learned a lot about me, and they really enjoyed my opening up, which is, which is great. My wife is always encouraging me to, you know, open up and share a little bit more. So I wanted to share this personal talk with you, in hopes that you'll give you some ideas and inspiration for how you can future proof your career and your life. And also, it'll give you a little bit of insight into who I am, as a person, where I come from, where my family comes from, and so that we can build a little bit of a better relationship together. Since you know me, I'm a little bit more of a human level. So I hope you enjoy this talk that I gave for TED Academy in 2018. Let's get right into it.

Jacob Morgan 06:05

I was cheated, lied to betrayed. All this happened within just six months of being in a relationship. Naturally, I did what any rational person would do. And I decided it was time to end the relationship. So

I waited until the right moment, I planned. And finally, I handed in my resignation letter. Now I'm not special. There are millions of people around the world every single day, who feel this way about the managers and the organizations that they work for.

Jacob Morgan 06:48

In fact, right now, if you were to look up the word employee in the dictionary, you would find that synonyms for the word employee include cog, servant, and slave. If you look up the word manager in the dictionary, you find that synonyms include slave driver, boss and my favorite one zookeeper. But it gets better. If you look up the word work in the dictionary, synonyms include daily grind, drudgery, and struggle. So if you put these three things together, we are all cogs, working for a zookeeper as we go about our daily drudgery. Wow, work sucks. And this is literally how we have built our organizations over the last 50 100 and 150 years, on top of these outdated ways of thinking about work.

Jacob Morgan 07:59

And it's no wonder that so many people around the world don't like their jobs or their careers. It's literally ingrained in our culture. It's in our society. It's how we even talk about work.

Jacob Morgan 08:10

Now, I was never a good student. In fact, for the majority of my life, I was a rather terrible student. The only two subjects I seem to be any good at, or drama, and physical education. But when I got to university, I realized that this was my last opportunity to do something in school. And if I ever wanted to get a good job, that I really need to perform well in university, so I studied really hard. I graduated with honors with a dual degree in economics and psychology. I had these big crazy dreams of one day becoming the CMO of an organization like Coca Cola. My first job out of college, the one where I felt so lied and betrayed to during the interview process, I was told that I would be meeting with executives and entrepreneurs traveling across the country, and doing all sorts of meaningful and impactful work. A couple months into my job. I'm stuck doing data entry, cold calling, PowerPoint presentations. Combine that with a three hour daily commute in bumper to bumper, Los Angeles traffic. That was my life. And I'll never forget this.

Jacob Morgan 09:29

One day the CEO comes out of his beautiful corner office and he says, Jacob come over here I have something really important for you. I got excited, I thought this is it. This is the moment something amazing is going to happen. And so run over to him and I say Yes, what is it and he puts his hand into his pocket and he takes out his wallet. And from his wallet, he gives me a crisp, clean \$10 bill slaps it right in my hand and says I'm late for a meeting. I need you to go to Starbucks and get me a cup of coffee and get something for yourself. As well, what are you out of your damn mind, this is why you worked so hard in school is to get you a cup of coffee, get your own stupid cup of coffee. So when I got on the inside, on the outside, I said, of course, I would love to get you that cup of coffee that I'm dreaming of getting you coffee. And that was one of the last full time jobs I'd had working for anybody else. And that was around 10 years ago.

Jacob Morgan 10:31

And looking back, I suppose I should be very thankful to that executive into that cup of coffee, because it taught me a very important lesson. There is no such thing as job security. In fact, the only security that can exist is the one that you create for yourself. today's world that we live in work is life and life, his work, the two things are blending, they're becoming one. And it's why I find it so fascinating. Sometimes when I have conversations with people, and I say, how are you? And they'll say, Well, my personal life is going great. But my work life is terrible. But consider that you spend almost as much time on planet earth working as you do living. And if the work side of your life isn't going well, chances are, your life in general, is not going well.

Jacob Morgan 11:27

So over the last 10 years, I discovered three strategies that allowed me to shape my work and as a result to create a better personal life for myself. First is you cannot rely on educational institutions or companies to teach you everything you need to know about personal or professional development. You have to become a perpetual learner, you must learn how to learn. This is perhaps the most important skill that you can possess. And it's taking control over what that looks like. My family's from the Republic of Georgia. Now usually, when I say Georgia, people think of Hey, y'all, I'm from the south, kind of Georgia in the United States. But I'm talking about the hill Mother Russia, kind of Georgia, right? It's a very different part of the world. In fact, my last name, my original last name isn't even Morgan, it's mommy says really. I try saying that three times fast. And my family came from the Republic of Georgia in the 80s his refugees, and they went from the Republic of Georgia, to Italy, to Australia, to finally ending up in the United States.

Jacob Morgan 12:40

Now as refugees, when they came to America, they knew nothing. And they had nothing. My dad learned how to speak English by watching a popular talk show the Johnny Carson show with a English to Russian translation dictionary, so that he can understand the words that Johnny Carson was saved. Right, that is the ultimate perpetual learner. And this is for the days of Google. This is before we had access to all of these amazing tools and resources at our disposal. But being a perpetual learner also means paying attention to the tangential. Now, how many of you have had this happen? You're in conversation with somebody. And at some point during the conversation, the other person says I am so heads down. In fact, I'm willing to bet that most people in this room have even said I am so heads down. But the problem with saying that you're so heads down is that you miss everything else that's happening in the world. It's no longer good enough to be heads down. You need to be heads up. You need to be head side to side and you even need to be heads behind you. You need to be aware of how your skills and abilities can be applied, not just to what's right in front of you, but to things that are a little bit on the side. Be a perpetual learner pay attention to the tangential.

Jacob Morgan 14:13

The second thing that I learned is that you have to fake it till you make it. After my first job out of college, my whole goal in life simply became How can I make a living without having to work for anybody else ever again. And at the time, I was finding all sorts of jobs online on websites like Craigslist, I wrote articles for \$15 an article I did whatever I could to try to make money. The reality of the situation was that I was a struggling young kid without making much money. But what I told myself was that I was this young entrepreneur building a life for himself that he truly wanted to live. And I

would repeat that phrase Over and over every single day all the time even to this day, what you believe in what you tell yourself matters, because it will guide your behaviors, it will guide your actions and it will guide how you feel about yourself.

Jacob Morgan 15:18

I remember one time I was actually on a stage much like this one. And I was behind the stage getting ready to come on. And the music was playing the lights were beaming in from behind the stage, the announcer says and now please welcome to the stage Jacob Morgan. And people were clapping. And I came out, I looked at everybody and I thought, am I naked, am I wearing any pants, I had this imposter syndrome moment that 70% of people around the world at some point experience. To be honest, I don't know how I made it through my talk. But I thought I had given such a terrible performance that my career was over. I thought nobody's gonna want to hire me after this. And so I just wanted to get off stage, not see anybody to not talk to anybody to just go home.

Jacob Morgan 16:06

And as I was getting ready to walk off the stage, these executives were lining up to come speak with me, to shake my hand to ask me for feedback to tell me that they enjoyed my talk. It was at that moment that I realized, I am wearing pants, and that I do belong. In my situation, it wasn't just the imaginary voices in my head, I had that were telling me I was no good. I had real voices from real people telling me I was no good. These are people today, we call them online trolls, they would leave you leave angry comments on my website, create fake Twitter accounts about me, they would message my wife, then girlfriend, telling her to break up with me because I was bad for her career. You can imagine how angry they are now that we're actually married. And for months, I would let these people make me feel bad. And four months after that, I would argue and fight and debate with all of them. And then finally, I realized nobody knows who these people are. And perhaps more importantly, nobody cares.

Jacob Morgan 17:13

Whether you are dealing with imaginary voices in your head, telling you that you're no good, or real voices that are telling you you're no good. You have to remember to be optimistic, you're a beast. What you tell yourself matters, He will guide your behaviors, your actions, and how you feel. And you can think of yourself as the struggling young kid without any money. Or you can think of yourself as the young entrepreneur wanting to build a life for themselves that they truly want to live. It's a choice. It's how you think, fake it till you make it.

Jacob Morgan 17:53

The last thing that I learned is perhaps the most controversial, and that is don't follow your passion. Bring your passion with you. Follow your passion is one of the biggest business platitudes we keep hearing about, we're always told to follow our passions. But the problem with that is first, it assumes that passion lives outside of you and that you need to go chase it. Second, it assumes that passion is one static thing, right? Here's your passion, go get it. But as you grow as you experience different things, as you become good at different things, your passion is going to change. And lastly, most of us can't even figure out our passion before we choose what to pursue. I was never passionate about the future of work, or employee experience or speaking or doing any of the stuff that I'm doing. But as I got

involved with doing these things, I noticed that people would start to share my ideas, that opportunities would start to unlock for me. And then I became passionate about what it is that I'm doing. I learned to focus on the little things that allowed me to see the big picture of what I was trying to create.

Jacob Morgan 19:08

It reminds me a lot of a story about a man who went to visit a construction site. And on the construction site. He sees three people working and he goes up to the first person and he says what do you do? And the person says, I am laying bricks. And he goes up to the second person and he says, What are you doing? And the person says I'm building a wall and he goes up to the third person and as he's walking up to the third person, he hears him singing a tune. When he goes over to me, he says My goodness, what do you do? The person stops their work, wipes their brow takes off their hat, looks up the sky and says I'm building a cathedral.

Jacob Morgan 19:54

Everyone is passionate about something. Isn't it better to live your Life, bringing that passion with you to everything that you do, instead of tasting it. In a world where everybody is told to follow their passion, you can instead stand out by bringing yours. If you can be a perpetual learner, if you can fake it till you make it. And if you don't follow your passion, you bring it with you, then you will take more control over your work life. And as a result, you will build a life for yourself that you truly want to live. And if this struggling young kid without any money was able to do it, then so can you. Thank you.

Jacob Morgan 20:52

Thanks for tuning into this show. I really do hope you enjoyed it. And don't forget to head over to defineleadership.com to grab a copy of my brand new PDF that's gonna walk you through a framework on how to create your own personal definition of leadership. And why that matters. Now more than ever, you will also see the definitions of leadership from some of the CEOs I interviewed including from the CEOs of organizations like KPMG, Oracle, and Verizon. Again, you can get that PDF at defineleadership.com and of course, I would love it if you subscribe to this YouTube channel for more videos just like this. And for interviews with some of the world's top business leaders, thank you for watching.