

Jacob Morgan 00:00

to you is do you go by Lisa Ross release. Lisa Osborne Ross,

Lisa Osborne Ross 00:05

Lisa Osborne Ross, when it's written, that's case my parents don't get too upset with me. They're both dead. So it's like no real repercussions, but makes me feel better. But when you talk to me like this, Lisa is fine. But Lisa Osborne Ross, and they'll introduce you trying to say something really quickly. I know we again, we got the good webcam going, but can you reiterate how visually like the video is used at all? Or just just for you guys? And

Jacob Morgan 00:34

I don't know, we use the video on all the social channels too. Okay,

Lisa Osborne Ross 00:37

great. So let me just, I'm just gonna put you a little more in focus there in the middle.

Jacob Morgan 00:43

Let me put a memory card. All right. All right. Well, unless you have any other questions, I'll jump right in.

Lisa Osborne Ross 01:01

Nope, I'm ready. Okay, so just to give you an idea of the Jacob egg is telling me this, what makes this at the end of our time together, you feel good about this? If what?

Jacob Morgan 01:11

I'm What are you just educational content for the viewers for the listeners. So the last 15 minutes, is when I'll spend time asking you for like specific action items. So the first usually 3040 minutes is just kind of educational informative stuff that people can can bring to their companies and their teams. In the last usually 1015 minutes is around specific action items for leaders. So any advice that you might have directly to people out there who are leading teams and companies, okay. Just fun conversation, you know, candid, candid insights, probably a lot of the stuff that I'm sure you're already used to.

Lisa Osborne Ross 01:47

Okay, I'm pretty candid, so

Jacob Morgan 01:48

we should be okay. All right. Cool. Then I'll jump right in if that works for you. Yep, it does. All right. My guest today is Lisa Osborne Ross, Edelman's, US CEO. And recently she has been ranked on the Forbes 50 over 50. Lisa, thank you for joining me.

Lisa Osborne Ross 02:05

Thank you for having me. Well, first, congratulations

Jacob Morgan 02:07

on all these wonderful accomplishments. I hear all the wonderful things that you're doing. So congrats.

Lisa Osborne Ross 02:13

Thank you. Thank you, the 50 over 50 was interesting for me, because I had to remember that I was over 50. And it was a very, it was a very real reminder that I'm actually well over 50. So just entering this nother phase in my life and my career, and it was a nice way to start my new decade.

Jacob Morgan 02:30

Yeah, very cool. Well, why don't we start with a little bit of background information about you? So before you became CEO of Edelman in the United States? What were you doing much younger in your career or even much younger in your life? As far as where you were raised? How you grew up?

Lisa Osborne Ross 02:46

I'm one of these people. This is my favorite question, because it gives me a chance to pay homage to my parents. I'm a native Washingtonian, and I grew up in Washington when it was accurately referred to as Chocolate City. It was a bastion of black excellence. My dad worked for the first elected mayor of Washington, DC, Walter Washington. My mother, when she retired was the highest ranking woman of color in what was he W. I have three older brothers, and my parents are HBCU grads who met at Howard University, who believed that, you know, there's that adage to whom much is given much as expected, my parents point of view was if you have anything, you should give it back. And they raised us literally to believe that we could do well financially, we could live comfortable lives. But we also had to simultaneously give back and make a difference in society and make a difference in our communities. And I really feel like Jacob everything that I have done in my life, my personal and professional trajectory has been rooted in in those beliefs that my parents instilled. And that

Jacob Morgan 03:58

it sounds like carried you through your, your career to achieve professional success.

Lisa Osborne Ross 04:05

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I mean, I was, you know, I was educated in high school by feminist nuns. Wow, I went to an all girls prep school, and that might sound crazy. But Sister Mary Claire, who was our headmistress made very clear to us that as women, we had a responsibility to change the world as women, we had the power to change the world. They were feminist, before anybody was even talking about feminism, particularly for Catholic nuns, who told us that we could not cheer for the boy school because we could cheer for our own girls. I went on from Immaculata went to Marquette University, Jesuit institution, again, consistent with how I was raised that service matters and you make a difference and from market I came back home and I tried to make a difference and do well at the same time. How much

Jacob Morgan 04:59

of how How people are raised Do you think contributes to their success? Because, you know, there's some people who are raised in very difficult circumstances in situations who become successful. And there are other people who are raised in more fortunate situations and also become successful. So

when you reflect on your life and how you grew up, do you think you would have ended up a completely different person? Had those circumstances been different?

Lisa Osborne Ross 05:25

If you asked me, I have an answer. If you ask my parents, they will say no, my parents were very excited and happy to say that, regardless of where they sent me to school, regardless of how I was raised, and I was going to be this person, when my favorite stories about my my father was you, I was the youngest of three older brothers, my parents were in their 40s, when they had me, I was just surprised. Delighted to have a girl. And for most of my life, my father was like, Oh, my God, what have I done here? This is miraculous, and definitely a daddy's girl who, but I have my mother to balance. And my father's favorite line was my mother would say, you keep it up, Lisa. And you're going to end up in a women's penitentiary airy. And my dad would say, you know, she might be there, but she's gonna be running that shit. And so. So you know, it's a nature nurture thing. I think that how I was raised was such a gift for me. But I know people who were not raised as I was, and they are enormously personally and professionally successful. I know, people who were raised who I was in, they're incredibly unhappy. And I think you're not living fulfilled purpose filled life. So I think everything is a combination of nature and nurture. And I think everything's a combination of love and luck. You know, it's a little bit of,

Jacob Morgan 06:52

it seems like it's kind of a combination to how you approach it, and the mindset that you have going into it. Exactly, exactly. It's funny. I have, I have a six year old and some as well, I have two kids, a two year old son and a six year old girl. And I'm trying to kind of get that same mentality of she's going to be running the penitentiary, sometimes she she, she does think she can be very creative and manipulative and getting how she wants. And so I'm always trying to be aware of like, you know, do you punish her or get upset because she's doing something that she's not supposed to be doing? Or do you encourage the creative side of how she's able to figure out a way to get what she wants. And so sometimes I try to balance that. And I say, you know, Naomi, you're not supposed to do that. But that was a very creative way to kind of get what you wanted out of your teachers here. So I, you know, I'm trying to balance those things. Because the creativity, the ingenuity, of, of being able to get things in this world, I think, especially for young girl is very important to nurture, instead of just saying, don't do that, like, just listen all the time. So my wife and I are always really, really trying to balance that,

Lisa Osborne Ross 08:03

you know, you channel it. Yeah, I the reason I feel some security and giving parental advice, I have a soon to be 31 year old son, recently described as a chef of some renown. And I have a 29 year old daughter, who is a change maker, she's a change agent, and she worked for the Census Bureau. And both of my children were interesting. And in any direction, their behavior could have gone. But what we tried to do was channel like they had natural skills, and sometimes they were hard to manage. But it's like, how do you channel that? So that they can be who they are, but do it, but be who they are? For the sake of goodness?

Jacob Morgan 08:45

Yeah, it almost sounds like leading a team is similar, right? Like channeling the strengths and the skills that people on your team have and being able to kind of unlock that. So let's talk a little bit about your

your approach to leadership and maybe how do you remember the first leadership role you ever had in your career and what that was like?

Lisa Osborne Ross 09:06

My career or my life? I think my first leadership role was, you know, when I was five years old, and Miss Elliott's Elementary School, and you know, this goes to your point, right? Like, are you born like this? Or are you taught and it's a combination of the two. I think leadership is most powerful when you realize as a leader, that sometimes you lead in front, sometimes you lead behind, and sometimes you lead standing side by side. And I don't think a position a title puts you makes you a leader or not. There are people who are very junior in their careers or people on college campuses, there are people you know, in different walks of life, and they naturally lead and I think part of leadership and the thing that I have been told about my leadership style is that I can see the best in people. And I encouraged that best to come out. And I'm pretty good at setting goals. But I also understand that Jacob, the way you might approach something might be terribly different from the way that I approach it, and one is not better than the other, they're just different. And all of those skills are necessary to marshal an outcome. And it's why we all you know, embrace diversity of opinion representation, because you need different points of view, and you need different types of people to come to an outcome that's going to be materially beneficial to a wide range of people. So I think leadership is you can lead at any level. And I think teams are about finding the best in people and bringing that out. And I feel like I've, I've been thinking a lot, you know, this 50, or 50, was interesting for me, right? And so I've been thinking a lot about my life and my trajectory and how I got here, and what's next for me. And I think I fundamentally believe that there's a time and a place for everything. You know, I've said that there was a time where I exceeded the goals that other people set for me, there was a time where, you know, there was this interesting concept of leaning in several years ago, there was a time when I leaned back, never out. But I leaned back, because I had to take care of, you know, a ailing mother and my children really, really needed me. And I think now it is about building legacy. It is about impact. It's about integrity. It's about transparency, things that I think were always there for me, but I now have the freedom, psychologically, spiritually, title wise, to really lean into those things that are most important to me. I have no idea whether I answered your question about teams. But that all came to me and I just shared it.

Jacob Morgan 11:59

Yeah. And so hearing you talk, I forgot to ask. So you said you have a 31 year old daughter. So it sounds like you had kids fairly fairly young.

Lisa Osborne Ross 12:06

I love that about you. 31 year old son, and 29 year old daughter. I don't you know, he is relative. I find myself saying that a lot lately. Agents relative but yeah, I've been married for 34 years. Wow. And, and that's the other thing that, again, I'm super reflective right now. Work has always been important to me. But it's not the most important thing to me. You know, my 34 year old, your marriage is really important to me. Like children are really important to me the role I play in my community, the voice that I am for many, those are things that are really important to me. And my work is incredibly important, but it's not my life.

Jacob Morgan 12:52

Yeah. And I ask because my mom had me when she was very young, I think she was 18 or 19. So I had a Russian immigrant parents. And so my parents are 10 years apart, my dad's 10 years older. So wow, I was born when my obviously my mom was very, very young. And I'm curious if that impacted or influenced your career trajectory in any way? Do you feel that? Maybe it was, it was harder? Or was it more motivating to have kids at a younger age? And I asked my mom the same question to,

Lisa Osborne Ross 13:22

um, I will say I wasn't that young. When I had my kids. I was in my late 20s. But I do think this goes to your first question. And you can tell just what you shared about your parents, I do think how you were raised has an impact on on how you see the world. And so and I think the people that raised you is, so as I indicated, my parents were two very successful professional people, but they were also black people in the 60s and 70s. And it wasn't that easy. And my parents were the most remarkable role models to me because my mother, I lost my dad the year I graduated from college. But, you know, growing up, my parents were like this dashing couple who worked really, really hard and God knows what pain and challenges they dealt with internally being people of color, your parents being immigrants, who knows what pain that they were dealing with, but, you know, they were the president of the PTA and the girls and boys, you know, the Cub Scouts, and they were active in our faith community, and they just did it. And so it is, it's how I have sought to live my life. I saw my parents doing everything. And as you know, sometimes it's that cost of my parents being remarkable parents, being remarkable citizens, and being remarkable professionals. And as you probably now know, that's hard to manage all of that, but you know, you do what you have to do. Yeah,

Jacob Morgan 14:53

you do. I mean my dad, getting to your comment on pain, he doesn't even want to talk about his past. He refuses So he grew up in the former USSR, the Republican, Georgia is where he was born. And it's actually where I proposed to my wife because we went there to visit. So I went back there with my mom, my grandmother, my aunt, my dad refuses to go back. He doesn't even he speaks Georgian fluently, but he refuses to speak the language. Like that's how upset he was. Because they were, you know, they're Jewish. And so they were persecuted for being Jewish. And it was just a complete disaster. And he, he will not talk about his childhood. My family knows very little about his past, and he just does not want to bring it up. So yeah, it's tough.

Lisa Osborne Ross 15:35

But that makes him who he is in complete influences, the father and the grandfather.

Jacob Morgan 15:42

Yeah, definitely. So getting back to leadership, what was your first formal leadership role in an organization?

Lisa Osborne Ross 15:52

I, I think, probably when I was probably when I went to the White House, I had been at FleishmanHillard, I'd done some interesting things I was a part of, you have some really interesting accounts. But when I went to the White House in the Clinton administration, I first went in working for Bob Rice. As a comms director in the Department of Labor, I then went to the White House, and then I

worked as the Deputy Director of the Federal glass ceiling commission, and that was position. And then I went to the White House and was Chief of Staff of the White House women's office. And so I think that trajectory was the first time that I was in a recognized leadership role. And I learned a lot in those jobs. And I say that what I found most helpful when I worked in those capacities was, it's not how smart you are. It's not how hard you work. It is how valuable you are to an institution. And this is going to be corny as hell. It's also like, how are you to work with? No, you know, what is it like to work with you? Do you inspire people do? Are they excited about coming to work? Do they feel that they can share their hopes and dreams with you? And that you can get them to the other side of wherever they're trying to go? Do you lead by example? Do you say something in a meeting? And then do you carry it out afterwards? Do you talk about people in a way that's not constructive or helpful or additive. And so I think in those jobs, and interestingly, my children, so I was also a young mother at the time. And I think there was a parallel with the way I was trying to run my household. And transparency, and being aspirational, always like feeling I could do better and better and better. And then at work, I was doing the same thing of looking at my career, but looking at the career path of others, and helping them to get to the other side of where they want it to be in a way that they could sleep good at night, they sleep well at night, knowing they have done it with integrity, and with, with with professional expertise, and they've given it everything. And when you've given it everything you can sleep well at night. And so I think when I was in those jobs, those were the first official leadership roles that I had. And those are the things that I learned.

Jacob Morgan 18:24

Did you ever get any formal leadership training in those roles? Or were you just hired and you had to kind of figure things out on your own?

Lisa Osborne Ross 18:30

No, it's, you know, it's a great question. I'm sure that at some point through my seven years with the Clinton administration that I had some type of training, but it's not. We don't pay enough attention to training. Training is important. I look at it Edelman now, and we, in when I was at Ogilvy before and FleishmanHillard before that, and in all of my jobs, we promote people because they're good at their jobs. But we don't think about with that promotion, and they start managing people or they also good with their people. And that's significant. And I think that anytime you are promoted into a more senior role along with getting the training of you know, professional integrity or financial acumen and personnel that we should be taught how to lead and there's a difference between leading and managing. You can be taught how to manage with management training but leading is very, very different.

Jacob Morgan 19:30

What is the difference because I'm sure a lot of people are not thinking alright, well, what what is the difference between management and leadership managing and leading?

Lisa Osborne Ross 19:39

If you and I work together and I was in a position of seniority to you and I was responsible for for your well being your professional well being managing is you come into work, you and I set a goal. You get your you know, I say make 12 widgets, you make those 12 widgets you have a question about on how to make the widget I answered the question, when you finished with your widget making you come back

and I gave you 12 more. So I'm managing you through a process. Leadership is Jacob, let's talk about the widgets. Is this is this a what you want to do? Do you think you're a great widget maker? I think you're good here. But you probably could be a little stronger here. Let me show you how to excel at your widget making. And then also, let's have a conversation about what's next after you leave the widgets. After we make the widgets. And simultaneously, I'm saying, Jacob, watch me. I'm making widgets, but I'm also doing these other things. And if you have questions about what I'm doing, ask me, but I'm also going to say to you, hey, watch me in this circumstance. In these situations, what did you learn? What do you think I did? Well, and I'm going to lead you to another spot. And I'm going to challenge you on how you're making the widgets. Are you making them in a sustainable way? Are you being kind to other people, you've been respectful to other people? Are you respecting yourself? While you're making these widgets? That's leadership management is like maker widgets. Good job going on?

Jacob Morgan 21:11

Yeah, it sounds like kind of the the phrase that came to mind is that management is more along the lines of getting people to do more, but leadership is more around helping people become more.

Lisa Osborne Ross 21:21

Yes. Why didn't you say that? That was better than my widget story.

Jacob Morgan 21:27

It just popped into my mind as you were, you were going over the weekend.

Lisa Osborne Ross 21:32

I'm gonna take some credit for that, because that was short and tight. Yeah,

Jacob Morgan 21:35

that's a good quote. I gotta remember that. I'm gonna write that down afterwards. You talk to me about purpose earlier? What what is your purpose, like your personal purpose?

Lisa Osborne Ross 21:49

I think about my effort that I wanted to say. And right now I'm trending in the right direction. I wanted to say, extraordinary. Daughter. I wanted to say remarkable mother, solid wife, like, you know, working on it working on it's solid wife, and skilled, thoughtful practitioner, that cared about others and helped other people to reach their goals. That's what I that's what I think about some My purpose is my might listen. Again, I'm super corny. Today. Y'all mentioned that I went to Marquette University. Our motto is be the difference. Yeah. So I want to be the difference. My purpose is to be the difference and to be the difference for good.

Jacob Morgan 22:42

Do you think it's a morbid way? Like, like, Why think about, you know, the grave center when you've passed away? Some people might say, Lisa, why do you think about that? That seems like such a morbid and sad thing. But does it help you contextualize your life and being in the in the present, and when you think about the end?

Lisa Osborne Ross 22:58

You know, it's funny, I am remarkably good at being in the present. But I recognize that if you start you have to finish. And so for almost any project, think about this, Jacob, when you and I started this conversation, I said at the end of this, you'll feel good about what? So I think the way I naturally process any engagement is if at the end, what's the outcome at the end? What are we working toward? And same thing ask you about this interview? At the end of this interview, you will feel good about what? And so for me at the end of my life, which may be whenever, but at the end, how do I want to be recalled and remembered and what's lovely? Because I'm on track for everything that I wanted to do. I feel like I am making a difference in my community. I feel like I'm making a difference in my industry. In my agency, I had a I had a major coup this morning, wake up, I was on a call with my other global CEOs and I redirected something and I hung up the phone, I called my Chief of Staff and I was like I did it. Yes, yes. Yes, I've moved us in a different direction. And that inspires me. I get so excited about that. And so, you know, and that's the present. But, yeah.

Jacob Morgan 24:21

It seems like you're a high achiever is that? Well, cuz I'm asking because a lot of people who listen to this podcast will consider themselves as high achievers, they're productive, they're efficient, they lead they get things done. But sometimes people can get burned out from that. It's a very hard thing to maintain. And sometimes it can take away from things that you're doing in your personal life. How do you maintain that level of high achievement and accomplishing your goals while not getting burned out or exhausted or drained or stressed? What does that balance look like for you?

Lisa Osborne Ross 24:57

Okay, to be clear, I get exhausted, burnt out and stressed. I do it, you know, it's natural. But I have always been good about balancing them out. I've always been in particularly, I think, since my children became adult and I just had more time, I'm much better about self care. I match better about, like, I find life joyful is difficult as it is, and God knows that it's hard. It's particularly hard for the past three years, but I have always been able, and I think it's a coping mechanism, I think it's how I survived to find the joy in an experience, and to find the positive in an experience. And, and, but I am able to, to balance. I know when I'm, again, I've said before, I love my job, but my job is not my life. And even when I was raising my children, they were super important to me, but I couldn't raise them to believe that they were the center of the universe, because then they would be like little shitty people when they grew up. So, you know, I couldn't do that either. But I'm greedy. I just figured out the answer to your question, Jacob, I'm greedy. I want it all. And so I have figured out a way to feed myself with all of the things that I care about. But I recognize, you know, I'm going to have a bad day. I like the good ones. And so obviously, if I liked the good ones, I'm going to try to have more of them. And if the bad days don't feel good, clearly, I'm going to work hard to minimize those. So it's just I think it's a matter of them. I think it's just natural. It's just nature.

Jacob Morgan 26:46

How do you deal with the bad days or the failure? Or maybe do you even have a story of a difficult time or failure or something like that that happened to you professionally, that how you get how you had to get through it and what you did?

Lisa Osborne Ross 27:01

I have three ways to respond to that. President Obama, midway through his term said something that I have found to be so true, that when something fabulous happens, it's never as good as it seems. And when something terrible happens, it's never as bad as it seems. So I think I intuitively feel like that. But hearing it articulated, I was like, that's absolutely right. Second way to answer that question, I had a retreat with my operating committee at my house a couple of months back. And because of COVID, it was the first time because I was new in office, it was the first time we pulled everyone together. And it this has been hard for folks, we've financially done really well. But it's been hard. And I asked the question, what do you need when you're in the trenches from all of your colleagues? So these are like 25 people that run the US and Edelman? And I said, you know, each one of you go around, and when you're down and out, what do you need from your colleagues, and my Chief of Staff said, I need what I already get from Lisa. And that is perspective, that none of this is life or death. None of this is life or death. So that's the second thing that I do to like to keep myself balanced. Like it's just not life or death.

Jacob Morgan 28:20

It can feel like it does sometimes I think that's, oh, yeah, that's the problem.

Lisa Osborne Ross 28:25

If of course, it feels like and, and so you want to surround yourself with people that that lift you up and people that support you and people who tell you the truth. And it's it's just it's not you asked for a story. Early in my career as the head of the Washington office, I took on a piece of work that I felt personally very strongly about, but it was a very controversial piece of work. Long story short, my colleagues pretty much nationwide disagreed with my decision. There was a lot of bad press, I was dragged personally and professionally. And, and I was I was down it was really, really hard. And then I said to myself, I have to respect other people's points of view, even though mine is so strong. And I have to learn from this. And I have to find a way to be a better leader as a result of it. But it was it was it was quite challenging. But I came through it and I feel like I'm a better decision maker as a result of it.

Jacob Morgan 29:34

So when you say dragged through the mud, how bad was it? Was it just I disagree with you, Lisa. Or was it You're an idiot you shouldn't be leading. You're the worst. Like how, how bad were the critics and the naysayers for you?

Lisa Osborne Ross 29:51

Well, I wasn't I didn't say drag through the mail. I just said it dragged Oh, drag, okay. I was dragged i It was a In like, over a 72 hour period, I was in news outlets like the New York Times and the journal and politico and Axios for Chicago Tribune. That was that was publicly very difficult, all negative, all negative, all negative? Well, you know, it depends. It's funny. Again, you know, because people have different points of view. For many people, they saw my point of view, they were like, Yes, do that work. Other people were like, no, don't do that work. But for someone in my position to be in the paper for things like that. So professionally, it was very difficult. And then there were threats on my life. Because, wow,

Jacob Morgan 30:44

it got that extreme. Yeah,

Lisa Osborne Ross 30:45

it got that extreme that people, you know, sent notes to our office. And people, you know, sent a note to my home and said, you know, you're a bad person, and bad things are gonna happen to you. And, and that was hard. And, you know, that's not the first, or the last time that something like that has happened to me, that was because of a decision. But it is also happened to me, because I'm a woman of color in a very senior position. So you know, those things happen. But that's the world. But as I've said before, it's not my world. My world is my family, my community, the difference that I'm making. And so when I stay centered in that space, I'm strong enough and was strong enough to get through that and other types of things.

Jacob Morgan 31:33

How do you stay centered in that space? Do you have practices rituals that you use? Is it meditation? Like how do you? How do you make sure that you have that in that perspective?

Lisa Osborne Ross 31:47

One, I'm a voracious reader. Okay, I get lost in a really good audio book,

Jacob Morgan 31:53

non business book or business book. No, I,

Lisa Osborne Ross 31:56

Jacob, you could name every business book that's been on the New York Times bestseller, and I promise you have not read one of them. The other side of that list about what everybody else is reading, I promise you, I probably have read all of those. So I am a voracious reader, I spend a lot of time with my family. I live in a beautiful place. And so I hike a lot. I go to the beach when I can. I have an extraordinarily wonderful group of friends that I enjoy. And this is so lame. And I'm not going to look at my marketing person who's sitting across from me during this. I shop. I shop. Like it's my return like serious retail therapy. I should. Yeah. And listen, I didn't talk about this. My faith is important to me. Yeah, I mentioned that, you know, I went to an all girls prep school, which Sister Mary Claire, I went to Marquette University, my faith grounds me very, very much. And it's it's it is a stabilizing force in my life.

Jacob Morgan 33:00

And do you have any particular rituals or practices that you do? For example, do you make a priority to always do a date night? Or to do dinners with family together? Or to be out of work at a certain time? Or do you like they do control and plan those days like that?

Lisa Osborne Ross 33:16

I do. I try not to work on my birthday. I am extraordinarily protective of my off time. And I'm extraordinarily protective of my colleagues off time, too. So when I'm on vacation, I'm on vacation. And one time a colleague said what if the building is burning, I was like, There's nothing I can do about that. So don't call me about that either. But, and so I protect my time. I try not to work when I don't feel well.

If I'm sick, I definitely don't come to work. And I think by protecting my time, I'm also modeling to my colleagues, you can and should do this too. And Edelman, we, like many other organizations have leaned a lot into the mental health and well being of our colleagues. We recognize World Mental Health Day, the volume of email, I get on the difference that that has made for people. Again, I protect my well being and I try to do the same for others, we have increased our benefits. And two weeks ago, I got a letter from a woman that made me sob who talked about the fact that she was dealing with a crisis in her family and because of these increased benefits, she had the security of knowing that she could handle her business and not be worried about Of course not losing a job but losing her her spot in her place. I my husband of 34 years, just retired, although I'm not supposed to use that word. He is no longer working in his place of employment and the joy that he brings to every De is infectious for me. And we do have dates. And after 34 years, this man can make me giggle like a school girl. And I love it. I spend time with my children. I'm active in my sorority, I'm an AKA Alpha Kappa Alpha, same as the vice president. So, like, I have a pretty full life, but I protect my time I protect myself. And I, I try to do the same for others.

Jacob Morgan 35:30

So you try not to do a lot of work on the weekends, late nights.

Lisa Osborne Ross 35:34

I mean, if I have to, you know, sometimes I have to, you know, a crisis occurs, and I can't say, you know, so but I also have learned to distinguish between a crisis and a problem. And sometimes it's a problem and a problem can wait. And a crisis you have to deal with immediately. But sometimes, people define what an actual crisis is. But yeah, I'm, I'm protective of myself and my time, but I also give 200%. And I enjoy giving 200%. But, like, no one owns me. So I'm not available to anyone at all times. Anyone.

Jacob Morgan 36:14

I like that approach of differentiating between a problem and a crisis. I think one of the challenges that a lot of people have is every problem feels like a crisis. Yes. It was funny. I, yeah, I had that feeling the other day, I can't remember what I was doing. I was doing something. And I was like, these little things were coming up, and I'm like, damn it, you know, I'm like, I'm never gonna figure this out. And then I randomly took a break. And I went to social media. And there's, there's a show that we really like my wife. And I really like an Amazon called catastrophe. I don't know if you've seen it. I've heard of it. And one of the actors is Rob, what's his name? Michael veiny. And I randomly came across this this thing that he was talking about, he wrote this book, how he lost a child, like years ago, when he was the child was three years old, had a brain tumor, and the child ended up passing away. And he wrote this book, I think it's called a heart that works. Like unsolicited promotion. I think it's coming out in like, a couple of weeks. And I saw that, and I saw this interview that he was giving on like, talking about his child that passed away, and we're honoring the memory. And I was thinking about my problems. And I'm like, perspective, I'm like, wow, like, the fact that I can't, I don't know what it was like something dumb with, with technology, and like, Who the hell freakin cares, like, my kids are healthy. We can afford to live where we live, we have a roof over our head, we have food. And it's like you're worrying about like this kind of stuff, when there are people out there that have actual problems. And one of the benefits of having parents who came from, you know, that immigrant mentality is, you know, they grew up with

nothing, they were dirt poor. No money didn't speak the language. And so sometimes I remind myself, I put, like, the context that I'm going, you know, the problem is that I have a new perspective, because it's just pales in comparison to what other people are going through.

Lisa Osborne Ross 37:58

Yeah, it's perspective, right. And it's also generosity of spirit. Also exposure. So if you sat in this beautiful room that I've already talked about, but if you sat here all day, and just did your work, you would be so unaware of the world around you. And we wouldn't have that perspective, which is why it's so important to engage in the world around you to be with people who are different than you or spend time with people who disagree with you. It just broadens your, your worldview. And it makes you a better, stronger, more interesting and a more empathetic person. Yeah, but at the same time, I had a friend sends to me one time, I was beating myself up about feeling badly about something because like, you know, the world was imploding. And she said, Yes, but pain is relative. And if you feel that's what you feel, you know, don't water it. But if that's what you feel, that's what you feel, and she also shared, I think this is another thing I was thinking about in terms of like, the balance, how do I stay balanced? I also firmly believe that if something is meant for me, I'm going to have it. And if it's not, there is nothing that me or anybody else can I do to deliver it. And so when I release myself to the universe of luck, you know, I'll do the best I can and what's going to happen is going to happen, then, you kind of free yourself up from a lot of a lot of challenge and a lot of struggle.

Jacob Morgan 39:27

I mentioned last 15 minutes or so I like to focus on specific action items and things that leaders can actually bring back to their teams, their companies their lives. In one of the things that you just mentioned, I thought was very interesting. And you said you surround yourself by people who disagree with you. How, how do you do that in a way that is constructive and not antagonistic? Because it's easy for people to disagree with you and say, Lisa, that's stupid, like, you know, get out of here, versus people who are going to give you I don't agree with you because here's a different way that you should look Got it? Do you actually have I don't know what advisory network a team of peers who you go to where you purposely do want them to challenge you and question you.

Lisa Osborne Ross 40:11

Let me rephrase that. I don't surround myself with people who disagree with me, because the example that you gave showed that that would not be productive and helpful. I surround myself with people who are not afraid to disagree with me. Okay, well, myself with people who understand that I want them to challenge me, I want them to poke holes. And very often if I have an idea, or I say something, I'll say, Okay, tell me why that doesn't make sense. So and so but giving people license, and my core team is very good about that, because we trust each other. Okay. Other and the thing that I I'm sure, I can't say I hate the most, because I'm sure confident there are things I hate more than this, but a sycophant. Yeah, I just cannot stand and you can see them a mile away, you can see them a mile away. And, you know, I I've referenced, you can see that I am a woman of color, in this world, in America in a position that is mostly held by straight white men. And so that makes me different. And that makes me unique, and that has its own set of opportunities and its own set of challenges. But as a part of that, I surround myself with people who have a different point of view. You know, so I'm private school, educated my entire career. So I'm not going to surround myself with people like that I'm from the East Coast. So I

want people who are from different parts of the world, my chief of staff is from the Midwest, I have other members of my team who are on the West Coast, I have some in the south, I have some who were not born here. So they have a very different perspective. And but having a diversity of thought, and a representative team is critical. And I think anyone in a leadership position has to be brave and bold enough to do that.

Jacob Morgan 42:07

How do you respond when you get that, that challenge or that disagreement or that feedback, because part of it is of course, being able to receive it, but part of it is also knowing how to respond to it. I don't know if a story or situation comes to mind when somebody disagrees with you and how you handle that. But I feel like that's something a lot of people leaders, especially, are uncomfortable with, because they assume they're in the leadership position. How dare you, you know, you shouldn't be disagreeing with me, I should be the one disagreeing with you. How do you do that and keep the ego in check at the same time.

Lisa Osborne Ross 42:41

So one, that model is so old school ineffective, to put yourself in a position and assume that because you were in a leadership position that you were always right, and that no one can challenge you. And so you know that I talked frequently about the changing role of the CEO, and people who were perfect for that job. Even five years ago, this is not the right job for them right now. Because you one of my colleagues during COVID, renamed the CEO rather than the Chief Executive Officer, she said, It's the chief empathy officer. And so and bravery, is being disagreed with bravery is listening to other points of view, and I am by nature, a brave person. I also have an ego I offer I said to somebody the other day, I didn't get the humble gene. And, and so but I respect people who say, You know what, I think you can do it a different way. I can hear it. As long as I know, it's a coming from a good place and be it's going to take us to a better place. I can't hear it, and I don't respond well. And I have to say that I'm so fortunate in my workplace that this is where if ever, if the feedback is coming from if it's malice, or if it's agenda driven. Yeah, I have so very little of that, if any in my workplace, and so and and very tactically, when I hire people, I'm looking at a couple of key positions in my leadership team right now. And I have said to them in the interview process, would you be willing to challenge me? Will you be willing to tell me when you think are wrong, or I'm going to make a mistake? And if I see someone hesitate, or if they dance around it, then I worry that they may not be the right person for my team?

Jacob Morgan 44:38

Yeah, I think I think it's an important criteria to think about, but how do you balance the the power versus the humility because even you said right, you have a little bit of an ego. You achieve this position of power, but at the same time, you need to be humble you need to be you need to have humility, you need to stay grounded. And if that that path Hour kind of goes too high and the ego doesn't be kept, doesn't get kept in check in problems start to happen. So how do you how do you keep that in check? Because I don't think necessarily ego is bad? No, it's bad when it gets out of control.

Lisa Osborne Ross 45:15

Yes, I am very clear on outcomes. And I can listen to anything if I think it's going to make whatever I'm doing better. And so that's how I can balance it. So I'm about to make a decision, that is going to be

terrible, and it's going to be poorly regarded. And if it's going to have a really negative impact on people have saved me from myself now. You know, I mean, it's rare, I can't think of any time I've done that. But your job when you work with me is to make me better to is to make our work better. You asked for a story, a blind the issue, but there was an issue that you can probably figure out that happened earlier this year. And my Chief of Staff challenged me and she said, You are so vocal in right out the box on all of these other issues. But you were hesitant on this. And I was really angry with her. And I was like, I'm not hesitant, and I am I'm, I'm approaching it, I'm talking about it, but I'm trying to think through. And then I told her just last week when I did her review, you challenged me, I didn't like it when you said it. But you were right. I was hesitant, and I appreciate you sharing that with me. And I respect you for it. And it's what I expect of you. So, you know, because I'm human. I'm human.

Jacob Morgan 46:45

Yeah. And it seems like leaders also play a certain role and responsibility, right? If you want to create that culture where people are okay to challenge you and question you and make you better, then you need to also not punish them. We're doing that, right. Like you're not fired for challenging me.

Lisa Osborne Ross 47:02

In fact, quite the contrary, I also have done reviews where I've said, You need to say more and have a point of view, you need to diversify your thinking and you need to bring something to me. Besides the Yes. I've also done those reviews too. But it works both ways. So I naturally give feedback. It's just it's how I'm wired. And so right when when we finished this engagement, Tara Valles, who's my extraordinarily marketing partner, I will say to her, how did it go? And she'll tell me honestly,

Jacob Morgan 47:37

I thought it went amazing. And it was the best interview you've ever done. There's what she's gonna say,

Lisa Osborne Ross 47:41

might say that about you, Jacob, she might say that about you. She'll say, I thought you were really strong here. I thought you maybe got a little weedy here. You made me nervous here, or she'll say, You kicked it out the ballpark, but she will give me an honest assessment, which is why I value her.

Jacob Morgan 47:58

I like that. One of the things you mentioned earlier is you talk a lot about how the role of the CEO Yeah, and even how leadership is changing? Yes. Can you talk a little bit about how is that role changing? And what does that mean for leaders out there as far as things that they should be doing? Mindset skill sets? What are some action items that people can start taking based on how that that role is changing?

Lisa Osborne Ross 48:24

One, I think you have to put yourself in other people's shoes. I think empathy piece making a decision, you have to put yourself in other people's shoes to when you have to be bold enough to say I don't know, because we don't know everything all the time. We have to be brave and bold enough to say, I'm worried about this. You know, we're paid to make everybody feel confident. But I can say I'm worried I'll fix it. But I'm worried about this, we will get to a different place because our audiences are so much

more sophisticated. And their expectation is not for perfection. And I think that this is the biggest change that the expectation of leaders is to be honest, to be transparent. To have integrity and to have empathy. Now, of course, you have to also manage your p&l. Of course you have to manage profitability, of course you have to make sure that your ESG platform is solid and straight. But you also have to be human. Yeah. Because we're working with what humans and you know, we did we we started tracking this in the Edelman Trust Barometer, probably when I first came on board five years ago, the importance of activism or the increase of activism. Employees are activists, students are activists. constituents are activists we're about to see this in the midterms. People feel the need and the obligation to, to be engaged and to be involved in to say something, and to try to make things better. That's hard for a leader because it's easier to say, Jacob, I said, do it. But you know what, Jacob, I need you to come to work, I need you to feel good about work, I need you to participate, I need you to engage, and me telling you to do it, I'm going to lose you. And I think the most productive thing that I got in terms of some feedback about my leadership style, one of my colleagues said to me, he said, Listen, we trust you. You may not always give us what you want, what we want, you may not always say what we want you to say. But we know that whatever you do, and say, comes from a thoughtful place. It is secured and informed by a lot of different opinions. And we trust you for that. And most importantly, we know that you will tell us the truth, whether we like it or not. And I think that that is the role of the CEO now. Yeah,

Jacob Morgan 51:11

yeah, I think part of it is right. There's also this challenge. And I've talked to a lot of CEOs on this show. And one of the things that they tell me is that there's a lot of fear around, you know, people want transparency and authenticity. But at the same time, if you say the wrong thing, people are very quick to come after you, especially with social media, right? The pitchforks, it's like it's, it's, it's tough. But hearing your talk kind of made me think that maybe it's not so much the opinion that people disagree with is that they don't have insight into the process. So they don't know how did the CEO? Or how did this executive come to that decision. So if you were to say, you know, like I because you said for you, for example, people know that you get a lot of different opinions, you talk to a lot of people, you do your research, and then you share the opinion. And if people disagree with you, then they know the process that you put in place to get to that decision. Whereas for a lot of executives and CEOs, it seems like they say things, people might disagree with it. But they have no idea how this executive or this leader got to their decision. So I think if you give people insight into your process, your decision making processes, a leader that can probably also be very, very helpful.

Lisa Osborne Ross 52:20

Yes, where, where and when and how it's appropriate. The other thing too, like, I can't tell you everything, yep, I just can't, I can't tell you everything. But what I will often say is, these are the principles that I try to live by, and that keep me sane. Every decision I make is informed by a lot of different opinions. One, two, I go into that decision making. And this is the counsel I give others with a pure heart, but thick skin. So as long as I know, in my heart of hearts, that I'm doing the right thing, when the arrows come, I got to be able to bounce them, as long as I know, in my heart of hearts that it was informed. And I also recognize Jacob that whatever I do, may be too far. It's too much for someone else. And it's not enough for another person. But as long as it's informed. It is representative, and it is directed toward good. I can sleep at night.

Jacob Morgan 53:25

Great advice. Maybe last question for you, before we wrap up is around how you deal with failure. So a Have you ever had a professional failure or just I don't know, client project client got mad and just tore up like something bad that happened? And then when failure does occur? What do you do? Do you beat yourself up over it? Do you I don't know. What's your approach to failure?

Lisa Osborne Ross 53:51

I believe failure is part of the process. I often say to people, if you have not failed at something that means that you have not been brave or bold enough in your thinking, you have been too safe. Yeah, failure is part of the process. Realistically, can I fail a lot? No. Can I fail? And it is material? No. But I encourage people. I'm like it's okay to fail, but fail and keep it moving. You always ask for stories here. When I was at another agency, I had a colleague. And we he and I ran two different accounts, but they were the biggest accounts in our office. Both of those accounts were lost on a Friday. And on Monday I like I was sick all weekend like oh my god, I've got to go to my leadership meeting. We got to talk about it and so forth. And so we're going around the room and you know, people are waiting for me and my colleague to speak. So my colleague comes up to me first and I said I think everybody knows that we lost X account over on Friday. I take full responsibility for it. This is the financial impact that it's going to have, these are the things that I'm going to do, etc, etc. And it got it was hard. And then you know, a couple of people are skipped. And then my colleague speaks and he talks about everything else. And then he's like, Yeah, I think you guys heard about the X account. Unfortunate. Wow. You know, that's so bad. And I'm like, WTF? Oh, my God, you lost that account, just like I lost my account. So the other thing I learned about failure is in mistakes. account for it, acknowledge it, but then keep it moving.

Jacob Morgan 55:33

Like, your counterpart didn't want to acknowledge that. Yeah.

Lisa Osborne Ross 55:37

Like, I'm like, okay, dude, I can't even believe you're not going to acknowledge this. But yeah, put myself in a position where everybody's like, so what's going to happen? Lisa, what are you going to do? How are we going to pick it up? Man thing. And so what I also learned about making a mistake is acknowledge it. But keeping moving after that, like I already talked about that. I'm moving on.

Jacob Morgan 55:55

I love it. Lisa, I feel like I could talk to you for hours and hours and hours. I have a big list of questions

Lisa Osborne Ross 56:02

to all your guests, huh? No, no, no,

Jacob Morgan 56:04

no. Why don't you let people know? Where can they go to learn more about you? If they want to get in touch with you? Do you contribute anywhere LinkedIn where where can people find? Yeah,

Lisa Osborne Ross 56:15

I'm not on any social media except for LinkedIn. And I'm pretty vibrant and pretty active on LinkedIn. So that would be the best place.

Jacob Morgan 56:23

Awesome. Well, Lisa, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to really appreciate it.

Lisa Osborne Ross 56:27

I enjoyed it. Thank you. And thanks, everyone

Jacob Morgan 56:29

for tuning in. And my guest again, Lisa Osborne Jones and you can find her on LinkedIn. I'll see you next week. Hey,

Lisa Osborne Ross 56:36

downs, are you kidding me?

Jacob Morgan 56:38

Oh, my God. Did I say Jones?

Lisa Osborne Ross 56:40

I thought you were joking. I thought you were trying to be funny and it didn't work.

Jacob Morgan 56:44

No, I misread. Let me redo that last part. We're gonna cut that. I don't know why. I don't know why I said

Lisa Osborne Ross 56:52

because I said you could fail but not like that, Jacob.

Jacob Morgan 56:56

No, that was pretty bad. Let me redo that is

Lisa Osborne Ross 57:01

Osborne Jones whose name is Sam.

Jacob Morgan 57:03

I have no idea. I don't even know Elise I was born Jones. My guest again, Lisa Osborne Ross will try it that better. Better that time and I'll see all of you next week. I have a new push stop record.

57:15

Oh,