

00:00

Um, I mean, it's so I thought it was a podcast audio only, but then I went to your website and it's both audio and video. What's the final end product you're looking for?

**Jacob Morgan** 00:11

Yeah, we do audio and video and we just published the whole whole thing. Okay. It's just meant to be like we're hanging out at a coffee shop. I mean, I'm sure you've done a lot more formal interviews. Mine are way more like casual and just kind of like hanging out chatting about stuff. So it's not it's not meant to be, you know, anything too crazy.

00:31

Sounds great.

**Jacob Morgan** 00:33

Alright, any other questions that I can answer for you?

00:37

I don't think so. Jacob plenty we can jump right in.

**Jacob Morgan** 00:40

All right, cool. I'll do a much longer recording. I'll do a much longer intro before it goes live. And then I'll get all your details and stuff like that. But unless anything else, I'll jump right in if that's okay with you.

00:55

The only question I had. So your image is hazy, which is fine. As long as mine's not is. So I don't know if it's on my end or your end. It's pixelated.

**Jacob Morgan** 01:05

Yeah, well, the reverse side sometimes because it's uploading and recording at the same time. Sometimes. It has a hard time doing that. But it's actually going to record directly to your computer and then upload it so don't don't hang up right when we're done. Give it like 20 seconds and it'll upload your your audio and video. Okay, got it. Oh, and how do you what's the proper way to say your last name? Paul? sulit. Por su les. Okay, good. Himanshu. postally. All right. Cool. Anything else? We're going to jump right in?

01:38

Let's let's start. Okay. Well, I

**Jacob Morgan** 01:40

guess a natural place to start would be to get a little bit of background information about the company and about you. So for people who are not familiar with you, or cornerstone, what do you guys do? How many employees do you guys have?

01:58

Yeah, good question, Jacob. So Cornerstone on demand. We are the leader in learning management software. We have about 4000 employees around the world, about 7000 customers, roughly about 100 million users. And we you know, we are the leaders in managing talent and learning and upskilling. I joined a year ago to the date, so anniversary date here our first year, and then took on as the CEO, essentially, you know, when clearly capital took this company private from being a public company. And they did that in October of 2001. And they asked me to come out as a CEO, and I joined in January of 22.

**Jacob Morgan** 02:41

Wow. And how did you get involved in all this? So where were you from originally? And what was your career path and trajectory, to ultimately becoming CEO of Cornerstone today?

02:54

Yeah, so originally from Bombay, India, all the way on the other side of the world, by trade, an engineer and electrical engineer, you know, my career progression began in I actually started as a hardware engineer working for IBM, repairing computers, which I thought was a cool way to build a career with oscilloscopes, and soldering irons and all of that. And then I realized there's, you know, only a finite number of instances where, you know, this really adds value, given the computer revolution that was going on, mainframes, are getting phased out. minis and micros are coming in the PC revolution that just started. And I moved to software. And in December of 1989, I came to the United States for a small startup ERP company in the Bay Area. And both my wife and I actually who's also a qualified engineer, joined them as programmers. And then essentially, you know, either because I wasn't very good at programming, or maybe because I was good at managing and somehow got into the management track, and then moved from being, you know, head developer to being VP of r&d to being a CTO. And then since then, large organizations like sage, multibillion dollar company, like epic horror, multibillion dollar company, my career progressed as a general manager, essentially focused on all things product and go to market until I became the president at Epicor. But I was managing the entire portfolio. And now the CEO. So you know, I've managed marketing and managed, go to market I've managed all aspects of product but essentially, you know, a techie by heart and someone who gets really excited about innovation and technology.

**Jacob Morgan** 04:50

Very cool actually had a Steve Murphy on the show from Epicor. Was it last year, maybe? So small, small world so What is it about the United States specifically? Like, why did you decide to come here? Did you have other choices of places that you could go to what What made you come here, and I only ask because my parents are immigrants, they came from the Republic of Georgia, and my dad would always tell me these stories about how he would watch these films, you know, on TV, and because of the films that he would watch, you know, in the, in the 70s, and 80s, poor tie of portraying, you know, American culture and stuff like that, he really became fascinated with the United States, and ultimately, is one of the reasons why he wanted to end up here, was it something similar like that for you are

05:37

not not as romantic, essentially, you know, this was India in 1989, which was an entirely different country than what India is today. I mean, it couldn't have changed as much in those 3540 years,

compared to you know, most westernized countries. India, at that time, had a the choices you had were limited, you know, essentially, it sounds like a cliché, but you became an engineer, you became a doctor, you became a lawyer, or you became something else. And if you became an engineer, the sort of the place to be the technology Mecca, for all things related to, you know, the whole digital revolution was the West Coast of America. So it was that more than anything else, you know, having been exposed to companies like IBM, the, and frankly, I came here on a one year project, I had no plans, you know, look kind of locked up the house and, you know, get a dog to go to someone to take care of, and then came here saying, wife and I on the same project and said, let's explore the country, get some experience and go back. And that's when the US was booming, you know, the.com bubble had just started to build. And it really was the place to be. So the attraction was more that than sort of, and then everything else, obviously, it's America, right? All the other grand newer of being here in early 90s, was all appealing and continues to be, but then the world has changed since then. And we become more of a global planet.

**Jacob Morgan 07:09**

It's crazy that you were working with your wife at

07:13

that. We all make mistakes. It was great. We It was initially, you know, it was a very exciting project that we were on. This was sort of the Google just kind of searched for yellow pages before it existed. And the company, the startup company was man track, the project was at US West, they were looking at getting rid of the Yellow Pages, maybe you're too young to remember,

**Jacob Morgan 07:40**

I remember the yellow,

07:42

the yellow pages, and the way to digitize them so that you could actually go search for some name without having to you know, flip through 300 pages in a yellow book. So that essentially was a innovation back in, you know, the early 90s.

**Jacob Morgan 07:57**

It's actually pretty, I haven't thought about the Yellow Pages in salon. But it's insane to think that there used to be a time when if you want it to find long ago, yeah. Where if you wanted to find the business nearby, you would literally open this three to 500 page book, go through alphabetically, and start calling them and there was no reviews, you didn't know who was good, who was not you had no context around it. Like, I can't imagine if that's how things were like today. And you know, you wanted to go to a restaurant,

08:34

Jacob nuts, the best way to appreciate quality of service and human to human communication and collaboration. That's a darn good place to start. Because you had to very quickly build a relationship, establish yourself, build a relationship, sell something, and then move on. And you go sort of through that, though, you go through those trenches. And, you know, a lot of things seems seem easier today.

**Jacob Morgan** 09:02

Yeah. But I mean, today, it's hard to imagine being able to go to a restaurant, being able to go on a date with somebody being able to stay at a hotel, going to a city going on doing like anything without looking at reviews and looking at, you know, having some context like I can't imagine today saying, hey, hey, Blake, you want to go out for dinner somewhere? And she says, Sure, where do you want to go? And I'm like, Well, let me get to the yellow pages, you know, and flip open and find a restaurant or like Zagat guide, or it just seems nuts to not have this digital information today. And it's like you said it's

09:37

Yeah, word of mouth and proximity. You went to the place next door or till someone told you about the place in the other town, and then you draw, they're using a Thomas map that you had open and you looked at the page number and the grid in the quadrant. You found the place and you went and had a meal there.

**Jacob Morgan** 09:54

I remember what was it Mapquest. I remember like printing out you'd have to print out directions on a piece of paper and I would drive somewhere. And I would have the directions like in the car with me on a piece of paper and I would be making sure that I didn't miss the turn. Yeah, we've come come a long, long way since then. Do you remember the first job you've ever had, and what that job was where it was what you were doing?

10:19

Yeah, I did an internship at a company called Crumpton and greaves, which is a manufacturing shites, it's still a company that's around, it's a global unit, my job was to get these big motors that came down the assembly line, I had to check the RPM on them by using this fancy tool to see the speed and see if it was within the tolerance, you know, a great learning because he had the entire blue collar workforce and I was white collar intern through engineering college doing this, every time a motor would come by, I would hear someone screaming a number out from from from some of the factory floor. And what they were mocking me is by the sound, they were able to predict the RPM that I had to then measure that basically told you where the knowledge worker is it and then I got I became great friends with them. And they sort of you know, it's the same relationship between a nurse and a doctor. They do it long enough. I don't know exactly where it is. And the lesson in humility is no matter where you work, you go to those people to get things done. And you sort of don't, you know, overuse scientific artifacts and technology to sort of, you know, Trump that that was a great learning from in my first internship.

**Jacob Morgan** 11:33

What, what year was that?

11:36

That was 1985 85.

**Jacob Morgan** 11:39

Wow. When you think about how work has changed in the past, you know, 3040 ish years. And I would imagine 85, you know, there's no laptop computers, no cell phones? And what, what was it like to actually work in the 80s? What was leadership? Like? Was it command and control? Everybody came in a suit and tie cubicles? Like when you contrast the period of working then versus now? What are some of the big changes and evolutions that really stick out for you?

12:11

That's a great question that the period of 8590 was also a period of heavy automation assembly lines. And so there was a lot going on. So that same question could have been asked from a worker in the 70s, and the 60s, and the worker in the 80s would have said, you know, life is so much better. And the whole, you know, the Kaiser and all the innovation that had happened with assembly line with, you know, lean manufacturing was just starting. Culturally, look, you took a lot of pride in your work, you know, that when you have limited automation, every widget that is produced becomes important, whether it's a piece of code being written, or a motor going through an assembly line, you have a lot of accountability, and, frankly, a sense of ownership on everything that happens. Because you are the experience you have is very engaging. It's you know, I guess you could liken that to a nurse in a triage or a doctrine, a triage, who every experience they have is unique and meaningful. Every knowledge worker, whether you're blue collar, white collar, kind of went through that, it was quite intense. And the day ended, when the day ended, at five o'clock, when you left that factory, the office, even if you wanted to, there was no way to conduct work anymore, unless you decided to stay back. And you know, you took the midnight shift and all of that, but so work was more defined. It had boundaries, it was intense. And then it was done. You compare it to today, the the experiences, you know, way more important and what you do level of automation takes away a lot of the manual stuff from your work. But work is essentially never done. And you're always in a sense of, of some form of connection back with work. So there were there were a lot of positives, and there were challenges to overcome. We have overcome a lot of challenges today. And there are new challenges that we are dealing with with the future of work, which probably are going to be more immense than the ones that we had to overcome.

**Jacob Morgan** 14:21

Do you think people used to work? I don't know if you would say harder. But I guess I could say harder. Do you think people used to work harder they used to be more loyal? They used to be I don't even know if tougher is the right word than they are now because it seems like in today's environment, like I look at my dad right and I even look at when I was younger and I had some of my first jobs. You know, I worked a lot you know, there was no conversations around employee experience employee engagement. There is no you know, you want yoga in office. You want free food. Are you crazy? You know, I think about some of the even my dad's some of the stories that he tells me about some of the first jobs that he had that he had. I mean, it's, it's totally different than it is today. And it seems like in today's landscape, part of me wonders, I've asked a lot of these CEOs this question, and I get very different responses when it's like on camera and off camera, and I asked them, Do you think people still want to work? Do we still have the same desire or appetite for work today that we did years ago? Because at least when I look around, you see kind of it and even just in casual interactions that I've had when I go to restaurants, if I have people who come to my house to help me with something like, I don't know, sometimes I get this question of like, do people even want to work anymore, like service is bad, or you don't get the same attitude, or people don't look like they want to be there. And you hear all

these stories inside of organizations, people don't even want to show up to the office anymore, and they want equity and they want free food and bonuses. And it just it seems like such a different world now than it was even 10 years ago. So I know, it's kind of a tough question. But do you think people still want to work?

16:10

It's a good question, Jacob. Because I worry about that a lot, especially in the blind business, we are on what is going to be that future of work. So let's go back first. Firstly, work was essential, right? You put food on the table because you had a job, there weren't a lot of jobs. So the job you got meant a lot to you. Your day was structured, you you walked in, you know, there was a coffee break, we all went to that coffee machine and the you know, you hear cliches or watercooler conversation, coffee machine conversation that were real conversations, you were talking to people there, your break got done, you went back and you produced whatever essential things you produced, you had a lunch break, which was a lunch break, you had a cafeteria, you went down there, you ate, you came back. And then work was done. The sense at the end of the day of work was you were exhausted, exhausted, probably more mental, because a lot of work was repeated work, there's a lot of reap repeatability in work, choices being minimum, you enjoyed what you did, and you always tried to do it a little better, because promotion was very sequential. If you produced 2x, of whatever you're supposed to produce, the chance that you would get promoted and make 2x money. If you produce half X, you know, you wouldn't be as productive. But then you were done. And then at the end of the day, whether it was you know, 6pm or 7pm, or 5pm, depending on what kind of work you did, you then had a chance to deal with a whole different set of worldly issues that exists today. In there weren't as many distractions. So once again, it was very mitigated. So I don't think people work harder or people got burnt out more I you know, I think that would be a gross generalization. But there was simplicity, a level of essential illness, predictability, and a level of monotony in the work that got done, at least in the 80s. And then obviously, things started changing rapidly after that compare and contrast to where it is today. There wasn't as much a sense of entitlement there was, you know, I don't want to use the word honor, but great honor and respect in some ways and what you produced, and then you will, yeah, maybe that's what it is back to work.

**Jacob Morgan** 18:24

Yeah, maybe it's the honor and respect. And I wonder if we still have that same level of honor and respect for the work that we do. Because, you know, there's a lot of talk, in today's environment, we need to entice people to get back to work. And you know, when I talked to my dad, or when I talked to, you know, some people who've been in the workforce for a long time, they're like, What, are you crazy, you need to be enticed to go to work. And he would say, you know, when I was younger, nobody needed to entice me to go to work, like, the job was what, like, the paycheck, the work, I wanted to do that. And today, just hearing these conversations, and obviously, it goes to a lot of you know, we had COVID, and we had stimulus packages and stuff like that, where we were giving people money. And now we're kind of at this point where we're trying to get people to come back to work. And it just seems like such a crazy thing to think about, especially when you look back 1015 20 years, like the thought of having to entice someone to come to work just seems crazy. I don't know. Maybe I'm crazy. Do you ever think about that? Isn't does that not seem weird to you?

19:30

You know why it doesn't seem as real to me as it does to many of my colleagues that you know, I have the same debate with is you're gonna look at it in the context and backdrop of the world we live in and how much that has changed, nothing to do with work, whether it's, you know, for the first time in the history of mankind, you'll have four generations at work. You got, you know, with very different expectations of have experiences with very different sort of cultural nuances depending on what region you come from a, b, we've gone from a agrarian economy to an industrial economy, and you're now in an experiential economy, where whether it's the Uber you hail or the Starbucks you go to or the thing you order on Amazon, the experience matters more than the actual product and the the experiences are memorable. In terms of what the software provides, it's a more global world than you ever would have imagined. Right? I mean, you I was in Japan two weeks ago. And while you know, you're immersing yourself in the Japanese culture, you can go into a McDonald's, you can walk into a Starbucks, I went to Starbucks and ordered the exact same drink that I get here in Irvine, California, without batting an island, that context has changed, wealth has changed GDP, the ability to have disposable income, the ability to be able to support a lifestyle greater than what you could has all changed. So it's only right to expect that the way people work will be different. And then on top of that, you had, you know, a once in a century pandemic, that what what 911 did to transportation, I think the pandemic is doing to the future of work. It's raising fundamental questions around big cities, and then the inflation didn't help on top of that, dealing with traffic, you know, dealing with a sequential work environment. And we all were forced to prove to ourselves that it was perfunctory when I didn't need to be in Sydney one week and Dubai The next week, just because everyone thought we had to, I was perfectly capable of doing that business sitting at home. So when you add all those, then we shouldn't be surprised how much has changed from workers expectation of the work to be done. And our systems and technology needs to start accommodating that because I don't think that's ever going back.

**Jacob Morgan** 22:00

Does any of that ever worry you as far as how things are changing? Whether it's cities, or leadership, or offices, or just expectations that people have from from companies and work? And even just like the social and political climate, right? There has been over the past few years, a lot of leaders and CEOs are very worried about canceled culture and what they say and what they get in trouble for what gets posted on social media. Does any of this stuff freak you out a little bit where you're kind of like, wow, I mean, this is I'm kind of like walking on

22:33

eggshells? Yeah. No, not really, Jacob. Here's what worries me it what firstly, worries me is just mental health and mental fatigue that this world is going through today. Whether it was the market buying a car, you go to the car dealership, you mentioned restaurants, you mentioned all of that. People are just tired, people have no patience, people have lost the ability to you know, and it's a growing problem. So that that's issue number one. And all this future work or, you know, we live in an extremely distracted economy, which we didn't have growing up, especially in India, one TV channel to shard two forms of bread, one cereal, you know, things are pretty predictable. And you can say we don't have choices, but we didn't know that we did not have choices. And we're perfectly fine with it. When I

**Jacob Morgan 23:22**

remember when I was younger, yeah, when I was younger, you know, my idea of fun when I was younger was I lived on a street, and there would be a bunch of other kids there. And it was like, well, you want to go have fun, go play street hockey with your friends, and we would get rollerblades and we would go out and play in the street. And, you know, there was no like phones and all this stuff that we're doing now gaming online like crazy people. And it's just we were stuck in front of our screens. And we forget to go outside. And I have two young kids, a two year old and a six year old. And I keep talking about this with some of my friends who have young kids too. And we're, you know, it's a little scary to think about what this is going to mean for the future for young kids that we have now, especially when you hear about the impact that social media has on them. And part of me wonders like a second. Yeah. Did the kids even play outside?

24:14

That I mean that that's an issue in itself. My challenge is, I think broader than that. Is there I mean, we used to call it stupid time. We had stupid time where you had nothing to do and three people sat outside. And we wondered about everything from the neighbor to the universe because we had time on our hands to have intellectual debate on topics that were relevant or irrelevant. I have three kids I don't know when they get time a to debate what's right and what's wrong and be look canceled culture and all that I'm fine with it. In fact, we had it coming that the pendulum had swung way on the other side and now now it's swinging back. I'm not worried about what I say as long as you're being authentic. I think people understand and I As long as you, but I don't I worry about a culture of victimhood, when you feel you know, the planet was taken away from me and everything was that I was deprived of everything, which in itself may be good over a period of time, because it'll there'll be a call to action. I don't want this generation spending a lifetime, just feeling like victims, and just being against every system that was put in place without the will to change it. So the conversation I have with young adults, including my kids is, I agree there were mistakes made. I agree, the reason why canceled culture is here, but do something about it just don't get worked up and be mad and angry about it all the time. Because that doesn't solve anything, either.

**Jacob Morgan 25:42**

Yeah, and there's a big difference. And I suppose this also goes back to organizations and what makes for successful leaders and what makes for a successful employee, right? I mean, it's very easy to walk around and point out the problems, it's totally different to point out the problems and say, here's an idea for a solution and how we can fix it. And part of me also feels like we're we're very good at pointing out the problems, and talking about the problems, but not very many people are good at being proactive and trying to come up with a solution that makes sense. And that's again, I mean, I see that a lot too. And you see that online, and I see that with the people I work with. And it's like, oh, this is wrong, this is wrong. We need diversity inclusion, we need employee, we need better leadership, we need this and that and that it's like, Okay, that's great. What's that next step? What do you have ideas on how you can improve this? And that's oftentimes where a lot of people can give people Yeah, and a lot of times that some people take a step back, and they say, Oh, that's not my job. Like, that's so and so needs to figure that out. And it's yeah, that worries me

26:45

as leaders. What does culture does, it calls you out, as a leader who's only one person, you can no longer be one person in the office, the other person in the evening at an office party, a third person at home, a different person, when you're with buddies, you know, the having a locker conversation, you are one person, you better be who you are as a leader. Because if you try to be someone else, in this highly social connected world, you will get called out so that we are seeing that in the layout in the political arena, that then I quite like that. Because you know, that brings a level of authenticity, in who you are as as as a human being, doesn't mean you all have to be the same. And you could be an angry person, you could be a short tempered person, you could be a loving person, but that is who you are. You can be someone else after work, you know, eating pizza with a bunch of your buddies, and then saying things that you wouldn't have said at work. Those days are gone.

**Jacob Morgan 27:43**

Yeah, no, I couldn't agree more. Well, when you think about kind of the business landscape as a whole, what are some of the big trends that you're paying attention to just in the business world in general? And I know we touched on some of them. Are there any other big trends that as a CEO you're focused on?

**28:01**

Yeah, let's talk about at least a few. One is the experience, right, no matter how good your experience, the next, the favorite thing I have is, your last best experience is your next expected experience. So you are ordering a book on whatever website and then you're using a piece of software that better be as good as that last experience you had, right? I have a car that updates itself at 230 in the morning, surely don't tell me your software cannot do that, because it has been proven to be done. So that change in experience creates tremendous opportunities on the periphery and edges. And we'll sort of restart weeding out the winners and losers. That's one. Artificial intelligence has struggled to find its home. And I think it's finally around us. I mean, I always say with technology, people overestimate the initial impact and underestimate the eventual impact, right with growing up, you'd watch Star Trek, and you'd watch the doors open and close as Captain Kirk walked by. And you said, wow, when is that going to happen? You're going into a shopping, you are in the grocery store, you don't even notice anymore, that's happening around you, the whole world is working like that. So AI as well as a sort of a metaphor in terms of giving recommendations, projections, advice, etc. Is ubiquitously starting to surround us today. And there's good and bad in dealing with it. And that's a trend that you you know, better start paying great attention to, because it's real. It's an even in the work that we do learning management, you know, I if I knew Jacob well enough, I would be able to give you the right amount of learning at the right time as you're consuming it and be able to, you know, upskill you guys going forward. So that's a major trend you're looking at. Globalization has been for the last 50 years people have talked about globalization, globalization at scale today. creates opportunities for you to penetrate markets that otherwise, you know, either geographically geopolitically culturally would have been, you know, hard to penetrate the sort of standard ethos that social media has made available for, whether you're a kid in Botswana or you know, an engineer in Bangalore, you have the same access to information now. And that has happened. And the last one is, and there are many, I'm just speaking, some for our conversation today is sort of the democratization between an employee and an employer on the terms of engagement, that no longer is, I'm your employer, you're the employee, let me tell you how things work. Or I'm giving you a 2.5 out of five performance rating, because last June, you missed

the deadline, that those days are gone. It's like skill me teach me, tell me fire me, you know, promote me, do it in the flow of work, do it now. Don't sort of gauge me on some scale and compare me with peers? Because you know, I'll quit the next day. Just a few Jacob, we could go on. But I think these are important to sort of double click on.

**Jacob Morgan 31:11**

Yeah, that makes sense. It's funny, I was actually looking at. I was like to do research on guests. And one of the things that he did, I looked at your blog, which obviously you haven't published in a while, but do you remember the first the first post that you ever wrote on your blog?

31:30

I don't remember I. Yeah. I used to be more active blogger back then than I am today. For sure.

**Jacob Morgan 31:37**

Yeah, it's funny, because the very first post that you ever wrote was May 21 2008. And it was called Welcome to the experience economy. So ah, it seems like okay, yeah. So it seems like this is something that you've been thinking about for close to 15 years now. And you talked about Nordstrom and

31:57

again, hopefully, yeah, bringing that to life in in what we do. Look in the value chain, I believe the way entropy is going to flow in the world is, you know, move keep moving everyone up the value chain. If you're a tax preparer, don't spend your time doing mundane taxes, go research on some complex articles, if you're a virologist, you know the vital splicing has been done by CRISPR. You go start applying some algorithms, and so on and so forth. So that experience just allows us to innovate faster. And it sort of democratize knowledge and information to a broader part of the world, taking away sort of the, you know, haves and have nots that used to exist back in the 70s and 80s.

**Jacob Morgan 32:46**

Yeah. What is the typical day look like for you? So CEO, or 1000 person plus company? What time are you waking up and going to bed and what happens in between?

33:00

I wouldn't necessarily use this as a go forward benchmark for a lot of people, but I don't sleep a lot, I sleep four to five hours a night for about four or five nights, and then I'll get a seven hour night, and then I'm back to four to five hours a night. I like waking up early, I wake up at 435 in the morning, typically, it gives me You know, I love my morning cup of tea. And it gives me time to sort of catch up on what happened in the world. You know, and you would think things couldn't possibly have changed in those, you know, six, seven hours, there's a lot that changes, you know, you look at markets, you look at sports updates from around the world, I'm a big, big sports fan, you look at you know, I use curating tools like Flipboard so that I'm reading articles that are relevant to me rather than sort of what you know, people want to tell me about. I spent a lot of time on that, that being a global company, there's always emails as always slack updates that I catch up on. And then by the time seven o'clock rolls around, I'm ready for a break. I mean, I you know, whether it's breakfast or watch TV or go for a

walk or I used to run I don't run as much NO EXCUSE living in California just don't. And then when you come back, you start your regular day. And you you're you know, I think a lot of the grunt work of sort of getting ready for the day is taken care of because you have context coming in. Look at day it when I first joined my task number one was to build a solid executive leadership team, which I have now so I don't have to do what I had to do then, knowing that you know, I have an amazing team working with me for me. I would like to spend 25 30% of my time in a day connecting externally, customers, partners, analysts, board people, and I try to do that I try at least two or three customer calls, visits, if nothing else, emails We have, you know, fantastic enterprise customers, I travel a lot in terms of, you know, we got customers all over the world, employees all over the world. And then you know, the thing is, we have a weekly revenue call that I never miss, we have one on ones that my whole team on a BI BI weekly basis, I never miss. And then everything else is sort of up for grabs. What, you know, I used to give advice to someone I was mentoring. And I said, take your calendar, or Outlook calendar, or whatever you use your Gmail calendar, and everyday, try to cut it in half, and then take the half that has been cut out and put a big block there saying hold, and then just leave it open. And don't use that for anyone, if you if you have an admin, let them do it for you, if you don't you do it yourself. And then don't have a plan. I mean, I really, usually between 12 and two, my admin blocks off his hold, and I have no plan, then if nothing else, I'll have lunch and go for a walk, or, you know, it'll be something that that'll fill that. And I you know, dinner with the family and watch some television at night or do some reading, I love to read I don't read as much. And then by 10 3011, you know, start start getting ready for bed.

#### **Jacob Morgan 36:16**

I like the importance of having that, that time to yourself. To think I try to work on that as well. You know, I mean, I try to exercise almost every day. But I think just having time. It's funny, sometimes my wife and I tease each other, right? Because we'll, we'll be hanging out. And it's very tempting just when you have nothing to do to look at your phone. And for me, I'm doing a lot of chess puzzles, or reading the news and stuff like that. And sometimes my wife will be, you know, reading something. And we started to get into this habit when we see the other person reaching for the phone and just say, hey, just sit there and be bored for a few minutes. It's not going to just just relax. Because you know, when when we were kids, you had lots of times you were bored. And to your point, like there were lots of times where you just go sit outside on the driveway with your friends. And you would just talk and like figure out play hide and seek again, buying something to

37:08

do three and look down.

#### **Jacob Morgan 37:10**

Yeah, exactly. And now you just have this device, where you know, God forbid you have five minutes with nothing to do you turn to your screen. So I really like having that focus time of not doing anything. Before we talk about some some tips and action items for leaders, I wanted to ask you one kind of fun question I saw on your Twitter profile. It says you are fascinated and bewildered with quantum physics and I wanted to find out why. And what what is your interest and fascination with quantum physics?

37:42

Yeah, I've been doing a lot of reading recently, that there was a recent nobel prize that went out to three people was finally proving out entanglement as a possibility. But the nascent see of this is, you know, Stark, that they did that on an object the size of a canoe, they were able to shoot a photon on both sides and get them entangled. And now we have you know, we wondering about what happens, a million light light years away, look, science has gone through explosive changes, right? We had the sort of linear Newtonian physics, which was distance, velocity, time, everything was constant. Einstein came in and blew that theory away and said, No, no, wait a minute, time and space are our you know, and deterministic, and very relative to one another. Unless it's the speed of light. That's the only constant. And then quantum mechanics came and blew that whole theory thing. Yeah, until you get to a quantum level. And then Einstein's theory largely doesn't hold in many areas. Because it's all probability, it's all you know, you kind of have the electron is a foam. It's not a particle. It's not even a particle until you measure it. And then I don't get into all of this, the most recent breakthrough gets into the observer. So everything is relative to the observer. It's like a dream, the dream exists only because you're observing it. If you stop observing it, the dream doesn't exist, then you start reading ancient Hindu civilization and the Vedanta is where the observer was the metaphor. And now we'll try to connect those two. So, you know, obviously, my intellect is extremely limited compared to the art of the possible, but it's fascinating enough, if there's nothing else, Jacob it tells us how early we are, like kind of like the pandemic, how early we are in the innings of understanding humanity, and how little if anything, we know a and yet we've been able to design all these great devices around the world. So it's humbling, you know, thinking about it, that's my take on it. I mean, that's why I'm interested.

#### **Jacob Morgan** 39:46

I had actually interviewed Thomas Zurbuchen. He was the former NASA Science Chief, I think he just stepped down and we talked a little bit about science and space and he gave context just on you know, the universe that oftentimes Most people just don't think about right, we take for granted that we live on this little blue planet. And so I like that you have this fascination with something seemingly unrelated at all to software and what you're doing. But it seems like you use that like it helps give you perspective in the work that you're doing and gives you curiosity and something to challenge how you think. Is that important for leaders to have something like that outside of their core scope of work? Under

40:28

100%? You know, you were going to talk about leadership. My three aspects of leadership, and I look at this in every interview that I have every conversation with a leader are number one, and the highest of the three rate is intellectual curiosity. Number two is situational awareness. Number three is managerial courage. So you could say one is IQ, it's not really IQ. It's just, you don't have to have a high IQ to just be curious about everything. I mean, I'm curious, when I go visit a customer is, you know, what was the outcome of what the customer used in my product? What changed? You know, how did you know a petroleum company get to a zero footprint? How did a healthcare company invent the vaccine? And what role did I play because these are all our real customers? Situational Awareness is, you know, being the moment if you're talking to a board, you're talking to a fellow executive, you're talking to a staff member, you're talking to the doorman who's opening the door for you be situationally aware, because everyone has a role in your success. And I think this is very, and a lot of my interviews I do in restaurants over lunch, because that's where the situational awareness is, there was a story, I think Warren Buffett used to go tip the waiter to mess up someone's order, just to see how they react. I

mean, you ordered eggs, and you got pancakes, what are you going to say, is about situational awareness. And the final thing is courage. You have to have the ability to be the lone voice standing up and saying, No, it could be your team. It couldn't be a customer, it could be a board. If you have a strong belief system in something. And you sort of give up just because somebody pushed you, then I don't think that's a towering strength as a leader.

**Jacob Morgan 42:18**

Yeah, no, I think those are great. Okay, so let's transition to the the action items, advice for leaders out there. And first question for you on that is, is staying relevant? Obviously, the world of work is changing quite a bit. I mean, even the pandemic, has really changed the way that we have to think about work and even lead. What do you do as the CEO of such a large company to stay relevant to make sure that you're keeping up with the pace of change, leadership styles approaches? In general, how do you stay relevant for yourself?

42:55

Yeah, good, good question. And in my 33 years of working, everything is centered around me, right. And we talked about some of that computers, phones, all that it starts with that curiosity. I think if you're sort of almost like a child, like Curiosity around how things work, it allows you to stay relevant and grounded, because you're always listening you, I and then going back to my point on quantum physics, when you realize how little we really know, as humanity, surely you're going to listen to the next guy, because there is a distinct chance that, you know, they may be half your age, that they may know something that that you don't. So curiosity also means really listening, not hearing. And I, you know, we've all had executive coaches have told us that they don't go in and sort of nod your head and you know, be on the phone, and then pretend you're listening, and then walk away and say, That was a waste of time. Well, you shouldn't even have gotten out the managerial courage to say, and I know that at times, I'd say, I really can't have the conversation now. Because I don't have the time, the energy, the sort of stamina for this conversation. So so that's the that's just the context is, is just be open minded. Be curious, be a good listener. Secondly, is I am a voracious reader and reader. No, I mean, you see books behind me, I wish I was a great book reader. You you read you things, you know, he does Wikipedia if there's nothing else on when I joined, everyone was talking about skills ontology, and I went, what the heck is ontology? Well, took me five minutes to understand what an ontology is, right? So it continued to invest in learning and understanding or to be relevant. And the third one is be vulnerable. Because if you're not vulnerable, you're not going to learn, you're not going to be irrelevant. It is, you know, I have had conversation with someone, they've explained something to me and I've said, I'm sorry, I didn't understand anything that you said. Can you educate me on what this means? Can you educate me? How does machine learning algorithm work. So can you educate me how you build this financial model? Because I don't understand it. And I don't understand the terms you use. If you're comfortable saying that you suddenly change the conversation, because he doesn't have to he or she doesn't have to pretend they know more than you, because you already told them you don't. So you know, and that is, you know, obviously, it's not easy, because we all have strong opinions. I'm a strong minded person. So there are times where it's like, all that is good. But this is my decision, and I'm going with it, but at least be open to listen to what comes in. And for that. I know, you didn't ask me, but one trick to doing that is build a team that is as diverse as possible. You know, it's almost like a Rubik's Cube, diverse, and not just gender, race and all that diversity. They're thinking that

experiences, you know, I have some very seasoned people, I have some very young and career people. And it just brings that sort of when you're making a big decision, you just get a diverse set of thought.

**Jacob Morgan** 45:59

So you mentioned something that immediately piqued my interest, because it's the topic of a new book that I'm working on, which is going to come out, I think, probably October of this year, and it's specifically around leadership and vulnerability. So I wanted to maybe explore that a little bit more. Why is that such an important theme for leaders to understand? And how do you define and think about vulnerability? What does that actually mean to you?

46:27

Yeah, that's a good question. Because it's a balance vulnerability shouldn't be seen as fear, weakness, uncertainty, and indecisiveness in, in decisiveness. Because those are qualities that will drop your followship quite a lot, you can still be very confident, you can be very comfortable. You can be very unemotional, and yet look at someone and say, I don't understand what you said, or, you know, it'd been we've all had cases, especially in a pandemic, where someone lost a dear one, it's okay to put a hand on someone's shoulder. And if you're tearing up, you're tearing up saying, I can't believe how you must feel or let me tell you what happened to me. It's the sort of the new modern leader, the new modern social leader has to come to grips, I believe, with the fact that knowledge is so ubiquitous, that you're not special because of some skill you harbor, you know, it's your own sort of the, the guy, the quarterback, who can you know, you're on a Tom Brady, who can throw, actually not a big fan, but anyway, you are who you are, because of a combination of factors that got you there, and just be open minded about it. So I mean, the so vulnerability to me is that is, again, higher than vulnerability for me is authenticity. If you're just a tough person, then don't pretend to be vulnerable, you know, don't don't sort of create a sense of vulnerability, because people will see right through it. But be who you are. I had a boss who once told me and he was a French guy. So he said it with a great amount of emotion, saying, learn to live in your own skin, stop trying to get into someone else's skin, because it's not yours. So that it's a start with the authenticity, be vulnerable and things that just today I had an experience when I told someone that. And then at the end of the day as a CEO, it's your call, right? I mean, I hold myself 100% accountable for every decision that gets made at the end of the day. But it doesn't mean you know, I can't go and be if I'm emotional, though. That's fine.

**Jacob Morgan** 48:44

Yeah. Yeah, like that being your own skin instead of trying to get into somebody else's. I think that's an important way to think about it, vulnerability, which is an important aspect. When you think about some of the most crucial skills or even mindsets for leaders, do any of them come, you know, what comes to mind for you? And how do you go about practicing them? I think that's really the important thing, right? We talked about things like curiosity, we talked about things like vulnerability, how do you actually do these things? I think that's where a lot of leaders struggle to kind of make that leap.

49:20

Yeah, I let's start with the reverse. The harder part is understanding and accepting things you're not good at. And you're fundamentally always gonna be weakened because you get to a certain age and

you're not going to change who you are. And then ensuring that you accept it and you surround yourself with people who are good at that. You know, I'm more of a visionary. I have an idea. I can work with you on the idea I can give you matters of importance, feedback and bring you data points. I can bring you experts. I'll be the worst one to put that idea into a process and be able to you know, join all the dots for you, because that will mess up my whole idea. I should stop at that point and hand it over to someone more capable. It's like invulnerability saying, I have exhausted my intellect. Now it's time for you to exhibit yours and be able to do that. But it comes back to your question on, you know, how do you go about it? Firstly, I don't think you overthink it. You know, a lot of people said, Hey, CEO, billion dollar company, how are you going to deal with all of that? There is no roadmap, right? Nobody tells you everything that's going to happen in a year, there could be good days, bad days, it could be a lawsuit one day, there could be an employee issue the other day, as long as you spend time preparing for it, you know, I think this is very important, I think, beginning of the day, think about what your day is going to be and spend some time preparing for it. Any important meeting I my ear nose to block 30 minutes before that call, including one we're just having, so that I could spend that 30 minutes focused on nothing, but the conversation I'm going to have, and not sort of run between people didn't you multitask? You know, we would have had two brains. If we had to multitask, we have one brain, we only single task. So I don't know if I'm answering your question. And maybe we should dig more into it. But planning preparation is important. Follow up afterwards is extremely important. And then sort of doing a quick post mortem, in my mind, when at the end of our call today, I'm gonna go back and say, What could I have said differently? And sort of not, you know, beat myself over it, but include that the next time I do something like that, ya

#### **Jacob Morgan** 51:41

know, and I think that's, you know, the actionable piece there, I think is really, really important for a lot of leaders to remember, like, how do you practice curiosity, the vulnerability stuff, you know, going from the I know, I need to do this to how do I actually do this, I think is a very, very important step for leaders to understand. What do you do to make decisions in tough spots? Ai, again, billion dollar company, 4000. People, a lot of leaders listen to this show. They're constantly trying to figure out how do I make the best decisions? How do I make the right decisions? What happens if I make a mistake? Do you have some sort of a framework or process that you use to go through to make good decisions the right way?

#### 52:26

I do. And I'm not by any means saying it's perfect. There are many ways to do this. So as a leader, if I was given a challenge, here is how I would go through it. At first, I would have a gut reaction to it that I would note saying, either I think it's a good idea or a bad idea. The answer is for you know, it's two years, whatever that is, experience teaches you things that you use your gut and you say, I think it's this anyone in a personal life, by the way, you missed your flight and something went wrong. And now you gotta get somewhere at first, what is that thing that came to your mind? And you because the human brain has a strange way, it at times like that have a whispering an answer to you, that has a good probability of being right. Then you shut up and listen, then you open yourself and say, Hey, guys, what do you think? You don't tell them? The answer is four or two years or no? Is it? What do you all think? To me? That's hard, because I just want to get done with it. Because people move at different velocities. Someone's like waxing on for 15 minutes trying to formulate an answer. But when you ask a

question, you better be prepared to shut up and listen, you get people's opinion, you go back and you could do this order matter of days, months, weeks or minutes, depending on what the decision is. There could be somebody could have broken in and somebody else calls you and says there's a guy holding people at gunpoint downstairs, what do you want to do see that same decision can can work versus a board telling me hey, next quarter, I want to see improve profitability? What are you going to do? So both those cases, I started with my own belief system and experience because that's the only reason you get to experience and value for experience. I opened it up, be vulnerable, ask people for questions, try to be the dumbest guy in the room, saying, Hey, I have no idea how would you do this because you really get that in your pick that back and you either agree with the decision you made you tweak it, or you reverse it, there's an example. It's a little confidential so I can give you at work where just last week I had to completely reverse a decision based on areas that convinced me and that's fine. I you know, I'm not going to come back and say, Well, you know, I doesn't know my call, I'm gonna say, based on the feedback so and so gave me You know, I think we're gonna do this now. So I think that's a structured framework. If you have a trusted ally, which is not always easy, could be a mentor could be you know, I talk a lot too. My wife, someone whose objective doesn't have you know, a dog in the fight and can give you that feedback, go ask them, and they may not understand the details behind it, but you will get a reaction from them. And then then make a decision, make it your decision and make it singular. Don't go and say, you know, hey, board, you know, my team thinks I'm going to do this. And it's like, we have decided, and we're going to do that, or, you know, tell tell the burglar downstairs we already negotiate, or whatever it is, make it a singular decision, and then own it. After that.

### **Jacob Morgan** 55:37

I like the importance of ownership there. I remember I was interviewing was the former president or CEO of Microsoft, the United States. And I was asking her, what makes the big difference between a mid level leader and a senior level executive, like why do some people get promoted? And why do some people not? And she told me the differences in their mindset. And she said, the mid level leaders think of themselves as implementers. And what separates the top level a top level executives is they think of themselves as owners. And as soon as as a leader, you can make that shift and move from being an implementer to being an owner. All of a sudden, that's a different way to think about it, because her rationale was that implementers take somebody else's vision and somebody else's ideas, and they make them a reality. But the owners are the ones that come up with their own vision, their own idea and try to make those a reality and a vision. So it kind of goes like Kate Johnson, was it? Yeah. So you Okay, yeah. You Yeah, I saw I love that. And it talks. It fits very nicely to kind of what you're saying about ownership, too, instead of kind of passing the buck and shielding yourself from any accountability. It's awesome. Yeah. Well, any other leadership tips or advice, or things that you want to share, before we wrap up, that we didn't get a chance to talk about?

### 56:59

Look, the the very definition of a leader is being challenged. And you know, we don't have to name the person who bought a big social media company, and they are redefining what a leader, you know, what's in bounds, what's out of bounds. There are people who may decide to mimic that there are people who may decide to criticize that. But you know, somebody just asked me the other day, who's your role model? I don't think that's a finite answer, I think that are characteristics and leaders that you try and imbibe. And there may be areas that you may even be stronger than them even, you know,

there could be a world leader that you then ignore. But I would say, you know, don't try to become that one person. Once again, this is your skin. But if there are aspects, you know, I am a great fan of Steve Jobs design. I'm a great fan of Elon Musk's innovation. I'm a great fan of Bill Gates, egalitarian and altruistic work that he's doing Benny Hoffs ambition that he's had. And I follow this and I read and I met and you know, I learned but they I think as a leader, the world is changing what a leader is you're not sort of the G. Jack Welch leader is sort of everybody needs to look like that and behave like that. I think that time has come and gone, you are who you are. So all I would say to that,

**Jacob Morgan** 58:26

I think that's an awesome way to to wrap up great parting words of wisdom. Where can people go to learn about you, your company, anything that you want to mention for people to check out?

58:38

Yeah, [www.cornerstone.com](http://www.cornerstone.com) or [csod.com](http://csod.com), learn about, you know how my ambition is to get everyone on the planet, learning and upskilling we have 100 million users, every three seconds a cornerstone class gets taken. So point 1% of the global population is read is using our software every three seconds. That's a lot of responsibility. And then demonstrable solely at LinkedIn. You know, I love to collaborate, you can send me a LinkedIn message, chances are in 24 hours, you will get a response from me. So you know, I'm happy to connect with your readership and your viewership. And I Jacob, I applaud you for the work that you do and how honest your questions and your discussions are. And you know, talk about leadership and vulnerability, you expose a lot of that, although you meet some really important people around the world. So good job. Well,

**Jacob Morgan** 59:36

I appreciate that. Thank you very much. And hopefully people will connect with you and find you on LinkedIn and check out the company website. And for those of you tuning in, hope you enjoyed the conversation and I will see you next week. All right, let me push stop record